



# Snohomish County Focus on Farming

Summer 2007

[www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org); click on "Focus on Farming"

## Stay Current!

### Mark your calendars – 2007

- Evergreen State Fair –  
August 23 – September 3
- Fall Farm Festival –  
*Harvest Jubilee*  
Stanwood/Camano Island/  
Silvana: September 22  
  
*Farming Yesterday and Today*  
Arlington/Marysville:  
October 6 & 7  
  
*Sky Valley Fall Farm Festival*  
Monroe: October 13  
  
Sultan/Startup/Goldbar:  
October 20  
  
*Snohomish Festival of Pumpkins*  
Snohomish: October
- Focus on Farming IV  
Conference: November 29

### Website/e-mail alerts

Visit Snohomish County's Focus on Farming website for information about county activities, classes, workshops, and more. The message board is a great resource for events and educational opportunities. You can also sign up to receive e-mail alerts and get the latest news.

Visit [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org)  
and search for "Focus on Farming"

## Public Events Increase Visibility for Farmland

### Snohomish County Agriculture Display at the Evergreen State Fair, August 23 – September 3, 2007

#### Everything Farming

For 12 days, interactive and photo displays, raised bed gardens, tractors, bees, and countless activities from contests to tastings will help tell the story of agriculture in Snohomish County.

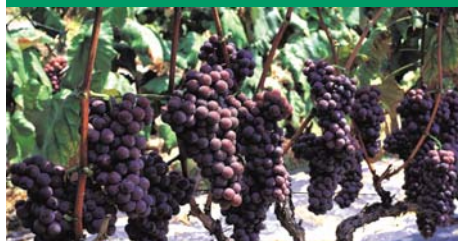
#### From French Fries to Fuel

A biodiesel display will inform visitors about crops, production, and uses, and will demonstrate the conversion of raw material to fuel. For each of the fair's 12 days, an estimated 400 gallons of waste oil from food vendors at the fairgrounds will be made into biodiesel, which will then fuel all of the fairground's tractors.

#### Did you know?

Wine grapes are a relatively new and promising agricultural crop for Snohomish County.

Between our warming climate, lots of sunlight during the summer season, and new varieties, wine grapes offer yet another option for agricultural entrepreneurs.



#### Grape Stomp

Cheer on barefoot celebrities as they stomp grapes into juice with just brawn and speed. Each weekend, four-minute heats with three teams of three will compete to see who can make the most juice, which will be collected in clear plastic jugs. The team with the most juice will be declared a winner.

#### Farmers and Chefs

Farmers-of-the-day and chef demonstrations feature local crops and growers. Chefs will use locally grown products in their cooking demonstrations, and this year, an outdoor grill will be provided by Russell Lowell of Russell's Restaurant & Bar in Bothell. At least one of the cooking demonstrations will be offered in both English and Spanish languages.

Be sure and stop by the display at the Fair's west entrance. Let us know what you think, and what you'd like to see in the future.

## Share Your Farm Memories with Folks at the Fair

Help make the connection between farms and food by sharing your farm memories with thousands of fairgoers. Bring your farm photos to the fair, new or old, from Snohomish County or beyond.

Post them on a kiosk where they'll be on display throughout the fair for all to see. After the fair, your photos will be added to the County's Focus on Farming online scrapbook. Good quality, non-returnable photocopies are preferred. For more information, visit [snoco.org](http://snoco.org) and search "farm scrapbook."



## "From Soils to Sales" Focus on Farming IV Conference, November 29

Climate change, energy technology, finding new markets and capitalizing on the latest trends are the major themes of the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Focus on Farming Conference. One of the highlights will be keynote speaker Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow for Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Dr. Kirschenmann operates a 3,500 acre organic farm in North Dakota, is an international leader in sustainable agriculture, and is a long-time educator. Kirschenmann Family Farm was certified organic in 1976 and was one of the first to make the transition from conventional farming methods. In addition to winning many awards for his work, Dr. Kirschenmann has written extensively about agriculture and sits on many boards. His farm has been featured in national publications, including *National Geographic*, *The Smithsonian*, *Audubon*, *Business Week*, *Gourmet* and the *Los Angeles Times*. He was profiled in an award-winning video, "My Father's Garden."

Breakout sessions will feature workshops and panels offering success strategies under the following themes: Water – Too Much or Too Little, Marketing, Local/Organic, Nursery, Environment & Farming and Finance.

The gourmet lunch returns with some of the Northwest's best chefs, including Russell Lowell of Russell's Restaurant & Bar and Seth Caswell of Stumbling Goat. Beef and produce growers, oyster producers, local coffee roasters and bakers will all supply delicious regional products.

The conference gets underway at 8 a.m. on Thursday, November 29 at the Lynnwood Convention Center. Registration begins in September and advance registration is advised to reserve your place (see [www.focusonfarming.org](http://www.focusonfarming.org) for details). The cost is \$30 per person, and \$40 after November 15 and at the door. In addition to the workshops and keynote address, the registration fee includes morning coffee and baked goods, lunch, and the evening wine & cheese tasting. For more information, visit: [www.focusonfarming.org](http://www.focusonfarming.org).

## Snohomish County Fall Farm Festival Promises Family Fun for All

Remember your last hay ride? Or when you last saw a draft horse pull a plow? This fall, farm communities throughout the County are inviting the public to share some wholesome family fun on the farm. Day-long festivals in the Stanwood, Arlington, and Monroe areas feature hay rides, farm tours, agriculture displays, workshops, kids activities and, of course, plenty of farm-fresh eating opportunities.

Stanwood's *Harvest Jubilee*, held Saturday, September 22, revives a popular 1930s era event. Take a ride on a horse drawn wagon, see antique

and modern farm equipment, watch bees at work, eat fresh cooked sweet corn, enjoy a country breakfast or view historic photos. The Thrifty Lot and Floyd Norgaard Cultural Center will be the centers of activity with information booths, master gardeners, tractor rides, a petting zoo, tour maps, the daily schedule and no shortage of things to do.

"The festival is bringing together many people who share a recognition and appreciation of farming in our community," said Stanwood's Vivian Henderson. "We hope to increase awareness for agriculture, ultimately generating more

income for farmers, which will strengthen and sustain agriculture for future generations."

At least a dozen farms or related businesses in the Arlington/Marysville area will open their gates on Saturday, October 6 & 7 to visitors for tours, tastings, trolley rides and more.

**Farming Yesterday and Today** is an opportunity to see working farms in action, try your skill in a corn maze, meet farm animals up close, traverse along a 'zip' line, pick a pumpkin or savor a bouquet of aromatic lavender.

## Preserving our Roots, Planting our Future: Telling the Story of Snohomish County Agriculture

Snohomish County's deep agricultural roots have long nurtured the quality of life enjoyed by so many County residents today. Yet, the County's family-owned farms are facing tough economic times, with much farmland already lost to more profitable uses.

Snohomish County worked with Good Food Strategies (GFS), a food and agriculture-focused communications firm, to find out what farmers, agencies and the public really know about local agriculture, their perceptions, and their individual behaviors when it comes to food and farms. GFS reviewed news articles from the past three years; interviewed farmers, county employees, related agencies and the public; assessed informational materials; and came back with recommendations for sharing the story about local agriculture.

### What they found

Snohomish County agriculture today can be described as changing, diverse, at risk, and alive with opportunity. As any farmer can attest, dairy farms have decreased by the dozens, and much-needed infrastructure has all but disappeared. Farmland has been converted to new communities, and food from outside the region is easily available. But smaller scale, specialty farms have replaced large-scale commodity farms. Collaboration is opening up new markets and increasing awareness about local food and farms. Consumer interest in local food is growing, thanks to an increased desire for food that tastes good, farmers markets, and recent food scares.

But because local food can be more expensive, local farmers have a difficult time competing with supermarkets. Sales opportunities are increasing, but a reminder to buy local and support local farms is a message that must be communicated.



### Telling the Story

The County, its agencies and others are adopting the phrase, "Preserving our Roots, Planting our Future." More than just a catchphrase, it speaks to the County's farming heritage, and the important role of local farms to future generations. Beginning with the Evergreen State Fair, this message will be incorporated into the County's printed materials, published on the web site and included in public special events whenever possible. Lost farmland can't be reclaimed, but with innovative programs, entrepreneurial farmers, and a supportive public, local farms have the potential to thrive.

## Centennial Farms – Birkestol Farm Honored

Sisters Annabelle and Grace Birkestol (shown below - left to right) remember growing up with chickens, pigs, horses and cows. A dairy farm until the late 1950s, their home on Stanwood's Norman Road could be a tribute to their pioneering parents, Norwegian immigrants who settled in the area because of its large Norwegian population.

Ole Birkestol married Ingeborg Thorsen in 1922. When Ole died in 1936, Mrs. Birkestol ran the dairy. In the early 1940s, she built a modern 30-cow milking shed so she could be competitive and sell milk to the lucrative Seattle market.

The Guernsey cows no longer fill the barn and the peas gave way to corn silage, but the farm is still producing under the stewardship of Annabelle and Grace.

To see previous honorees or for more information, please visit [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org) and search: Centennial Farms.



## Mooosings from the Field

John Roney, Snohomish County Agriculture Coordinator, is on vacation, so his Mooosings column will return for the fall issue.



(Fall Festival continued from page 2)

Watch working dogs herd sheep, taste some freshly roasted coffee, or fuel up for the day with special farm breakfasts offered by local restaurants.

The **Sky Valley Farm Festival** will take place over two weekends, with a day-long festival in Monroe on Saturday, October 13, and another in the Sultan / Goldbar / Startup area on Saturday, October 20. Monroe visitors will learn about salmon conservation and habitat recovery and families can join in for story time about favorite farmyard friends. Visit the new Western Heritage Center Interactive Museum at the fairgrounds. A barn dance in Sultan

guarantees some old fashioned foot stomping, while a display of antique tractors provides a suitable backdrop.

Plans in each community are still developing, but there will be plenty to do! Thanks to the Festival of Pumpkins ([www.festivalofpumpkins.org](http://www.festivalofpumpkins.org)) for their inspiration and support.

Watch the website for more information as activities, vendors and locations are confirmed at [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org) and search "Harvest Festival."

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