



# Snohomish County Focus on Farming

Fall 2007

Office of Economic Development

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

## Stay Current!

### Focus on Farming IV: From Soils to Sales

Thursday, November 29, 2007,  
8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Check-in begins at 7 a.m.  
[www.focusonfarming.org](http://www.focusonfarming.org)

### Learn from experts about:

- Water – Too much or too little?
- Marketing Ideas and Success Strategies
- Local and Organic Options
- Nursery & Greenhouse Trends and Opportunities
- Environment & Farming
- Risk Management Tools



"Nursery is an important agriculture sector - #1 in Snohomish County and not far behind in other west side counties. This conference addresses issues that nurseries face, from how to ensure high-value return to the appropriate use of water in landscaping in light of growing environmental awareness."

– Jeanne McNeil, Executive Director,  
Washington State Nursery &  
Landscape Association

### *From Soils to Sales* 4th Annual Focus on Farming Conference to Emphasize Success Strategies for a Changing World

Agriculture will have to change more in the next few decades than it has in the past half century due to the many challenges the industry will face, according to Dr. Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow, Iowa State University's Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and conference keynote speaker. He would know. His 3,500 acre farm in North Dakota was one of the first to transition from conventional to organic, and now he works with farmers from around the world.

Dr. Kirschenmann will give the lunch-time keynote, *Meeting Agriculture's Challenges in a Rapidly Changing World*, at the fourth annual Focus on Farming conference, *From Soils to Sales*. The conference begins promptly at 8 a.m. on Thursday, November 29, at the Lynnwood Convention Center. Dr. Kirschenmann will give examples of what the world's farmers are doing to develop early versions of what "new agriculture" might look like.

Executive Reardon made farmland preservation and financial success for farmers a priority shortly after he took office in 2004.

"Innovation is essential to succeed in agriculture, and Snohomish County farmers are innovators," said County Executive Aaron Reardon. "Our future requires a strong agricultural base to provide open space and safe, healthy food for our citizens, so we have to continue to give our farmers the tools

they need to thrive. Creating a conference featuring nationally renowned speakers – experts, innovators and trendsetters - is one way we can do that."



*Linda Neunzig and Chef Holly Smith prepare last year's fabulous lunch.*

Following a welcome message by Executive Reardon, Congressman Rick Larsen will present an overview of the new farm bill and Washington State University's Chad Kruger will give the morning keynote, *Climate Change Impacts on Regional Agriculture*.

"Climate change and energy issues have the potential to create real problems for agriculture," said Mr. Kruger, who will present the latest information and strategies that farmers can implement in this changing context. "We have to get serious about changing what we can, now, to create a future where we can still be competitive."

Environment and water have emerged as two important themes this year.

**Continued...**

## Biodiesel Update

Snohomish County-sponsored biodiesel trials continue, and the Hyola canola seeds planted in April and May this year were ready for harvest on September 15. Harvesting continued until the heavy rain came and the crops fell (lodged), making them no longer harvestable.

Out of the 285 acres planted, 150 were harvested for a 300,000 pound total yield, which was dried in the Snohomish Valley. The drying trial at the County-owned Cathcart facility using methane gas from the Cathcart landfill was successful, with no contamination to the dry product. Once dried, the seeds are sent to Natural Selection Farms in Yakima to be crushed for oil, which will then go to Seattle Biodiesel to be processed into fuel. The meal will go to the cattle feed market.



Participating farms this year included:

- Bartelheimer at SnoValley Farms – 60 acres
- Bailey Farms – 40 acres
- Alden Organic Farms – 80 acres
- Jeff Burkett – 80 acres
- Reiner Farms – 25 acres

## Conference Continued...

Speakers from around the region and across the country will address issues such as on-farm water storage, water rights, and drainage; environmentally-friendly nursery technology and nursery trends; bio-energy and on-farm energy production; growing alternative grains; as well as selling products locally, organic certification, merchandising and risk management tools for farmers.

“Climate change, depleting water and energy resources will present us with incredible challenges and likely will make our energy-intensive, global food system increasingly difficult to sustain,” said Dr. Kirschenmann. “But that also presents us with incredible opportunities. We can likely thrive in our new circumstances if we get a head start.”

As in previous years, a gourmet lunch showcasing local food and chefs is a highlight of the day. Seasonal, farm-fresh ingredients will go to Russell Lowell of Russell’s Restaurant & Bar in Bothell and Seth Caswell of Seattle’s Stumbling Goat, among others, to create special dishes. Autumn Martin of Theo Chocolates will

create a unique confection just for the conference. For the second year, thanks to the NW Agriculture Business Center, a wine & cheese reception featuring Northwest products will cap the day.

“Opportunities for agri-business in Snohomish County are just beginning, as public sentiment and climate change offer new trends and new crops,” said Steve Pottle, Manager, Office of Economic Development. “The Snohomish County Office of Economic Development is pleased to lead the way by organizing a conference of such stature, providing resources for farmers that can contribute to their economic success.”

For a complete list of workshops, speakers, and chefs, visit [www.focusonfarming.org](http://www.focusonfarming.org).

### To register:

Visit the conference website to register online or download a printable mail-in registration form: [www.focusonfarming.org](http://www.focusonfarming.org). Cost to attend, which includes keynotes, workshops, lunch, networking, trade show, and the wine & cheese tasting, is \$30 until November 15, when the cost increases to \$40 (cost for youth under 18 is \$10 with pre-registration). For those without Internet access, please contact Adele Barilleaux at 425.388.3137.

## County Ag Display at the Evergreen State Fair: A Hopping (or was that stomping?)... Good Time

The County’s 2007 Agriculture Display at the Evergreen State Fair was busier than ever this year. A full schedule of contests, taste-offs, chef demonstrations, farmers-of-the-day, children’s activities, ice-cream making, grape-stomps, and more were planned to keep things hopping the entire 12 days of the fair. Thanks to all who participated and Evergreen State Fair staff!



*Veggie creatures, ice cream making and a grape stomp all added to the fun...*

## Snohomish County Fall Farm Festival Farms Showcase Diversity and Abundance Found Right Here

September 22 marked the beginning of Snohomish County's first Fall Farm Festival, a series of farm-focused events throughout the County. While every event was different, each opened farms to the public, and all held activities and entertainment to draw visitors from around the region.

The *Harvest Jubilee* kicked things off with activities in Stanwood, Camano Island and Silvana. Hands-on demonstrations, farm tours, hay rides, cow pie bingo, and children's activities were plentiful. Arlington & Marysville followed with *Farming Yesterday & Today* with on-farm tours and demonstrations. Monroe kicked off the *Sky Valley Fall Farm Festival*, which concluded in Sultan, Startup and Gold Bar with art, chocolate and a foot-stomping barn dance. The well-established *Snohomish Festival of Pumpkins* joined in with pumpkin

picking, corn mazes and special harvest events.

The festival was created at the request of Snohomish County farmers as a way to help raise public visibility for local farms. The event was supported by a grant from the Snohomish County Lodging Tax Fund.

"I'm glad Snohomish County Dairy Women were able to participate in the festival. It was very exciting to be a part of the first one. I am in awe of the agricultural diversity that was represented. What a wonderful opportunity for people to connect with their food source and see all the elements that go into the making of fresh, local products."

— Linda Zorn,  
Snohomish County Dairy Women

Stay tuned for next year's festival dates!

## Ag Sustainability: Developing a Community-Driven Vision for Agriculture



Carol Krause &  
Executive Reardon

Snohomish County farmers are innovative, and public awareness about open space, food safety and food miles continues to increase. But is this enough to sustain agriculture, and keep it thriving into the next century? The ad hoc Snohomish County Economic Development Action Team asked for more assurance, and recommended earlier this year that a public visioning process take place.

An oversight committee was formed, and on Tuesday, October 30, Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon kicked off the County's Agriculture Sustainability

Project at The Farm at Swans Trail, owned by Ben & Carol Krause.

The project, to be facilitated by the County's Office of Economic Development with oversight by a steering committee made up of the Agriculture Advisory Board and others, will engage the public to create a long-term sustainability plan for agriculture. A collective vision by an engaged public is essential to ensure that enough land will remain available for farming, that individuals will value their local farms, and that safe and nutritious food will remain available for all.

This groundbreaking project will result in not just a community-driven, community-owned vision for agriculture, but an actual business plan for economic viability that will last long into the future.

## Critical Areas Regulations Provisions for Agriculture

All cities and counties in Washington are required to adopt Critical Areas Regulations by the state Growth Management Act (GMA), and jurisdictions must review, evaluate, and possibly revise their regulations every seven years.

Snohomish County's Critical Areas Regulations have been updated after a multi-year public process, including open discussion with the agricultural community regarding the competing mandates of the GMA to both protect critical areas and maintain and enhance the vitality of agriculture industries.

A dual set of regulations now applies to agricultural activities in Snohomish County, a result of legislation by the state. Regulations remain the same regarding agricultural activities in rural and agricultural resource land areas. New provisions, however, will apply to agricultural activities occurring in urban growth areas. The County Council found it necessary to create the unique set of protections to balance critical areas with the needs of commercial agriculture for long-term sustainability and innovation.

For more information, visit: [www.snoco.org](http://www.snoco.org) and search "CAR 2007 Update." New provisions can be found in chapters 30.62A, 30.62B and 30.62C.

## Field Notes

Ryan Hembree, Agriculture Coordinator

As a life-long resident of Snohomish County, I've seen many changes to both the rural and urban communities, which helped provide the foundation for me to become involved in local government. Over the last six years, I've worked in the County's Planning & Development Services department (PDS), primarily focused on agriculture viability, farm policy and public involvement. I've worked at length with the Agricultural Advisory Board, mapped the County's designated farmlands, worked with farmers on policy and regulation changes that better support their work, and helped develop farmland preservation programs.



John Roney, Executive Reardon, Ryan Hembree

As with my predecessor, John Roney, my door is always open to farmers. This next year will be a continuation of moving forward the recommendations of the Snohomish County Agriculture Economic Development Action Team (SAEDAT). These strategies for economic recovery and expansion of Snohomish County's agriculture industry, together with Executive Reardon's Agriculture Action Plan, have the potential to elevate the

County's agricultural economy on the world stage – and at the local farmer's market. These efforts also benefit the local urban consumer, who has ever greater access to fresh, healthy food.

Strategies currently on the table include working with local cities and farmers to create a County-wide farmland preservation program, while another would establish an agriculture support organization that could provide direct support to farmers.

I encourage you to contact me if I can assist you in any way, or if you have ideas that we can work together on to ensure a viable, long-term agricultural economy.

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**Executive Office**



Focus on Farming Newsletter