



**Snohomish County**  
**County Executive's Office**

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**Aaron Reardon**  
*County Executive*

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## Reardon names 10 to advisory group aimed at boosting local farm economy

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*Will vet broad action plan on issues raised at Focus on Farming Conference*

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today named 10 representatives from the agriculture community who will vet an action plan aimed at expanding farming's role in the County economy.

Reardon committed County government to producing the action plan after last November's highly successful Focus on Farming Conference, in which more than 350 local farmers, ranchers and growers met to discuss obstacles and opportunities for local agriculture.

"There's already a buzz about this plan in the ag community," Reardon said. "The plan will be performance-based. It will identify action items and measurable outcomes. And it will be built from the groundwork laid at the Focus on Farming Conference."

Issue areas to be addressed in the Snohomish County Agriculture Action Plan include:

- Farm regulation reform;
- Economic development;
- Outreach and education; and
- Cultural heritage.

"These four areas are intrinsically linked," Reardon said. "Each form a critical link in the agriculture chain. I firmly believe that creating a well-thought-out plan of action will spell success for Snohomish County agriculture. This administration is committed to that success."

Reardon's appointments to the Snohomish County Agriculture Action Plan Advisory Group include:

- Don Bailey - Farmer/owner of Bailand Farms, Inc., Snohomish Valley;
- Hank Graafstra – Owner/Operator of Country Charm Dairy, Arlington;
- Carolyn Henri, PhD. – Natural Resources Economist, Resource Consulting Service, Stanwood;
- Tristan Klesick – Farmer/Owner of Klesick Family Farm, Stanwood;
- Jackie Macomber – Farmer/Owner of Macomber Farm, Granite Falls, and chair of the Snohomish County Agricultural Advisory Board;
- Linda Neunzig – Farmer/Operator of Ninety Farms, Stillaguamish Valley;
- Dale Reiner – Farmer/Owner of Reiner Farm, Tualco Valley, and president of the Snohomish County Farm Bureau;
- Keith Stocker – Farmer/Owner/Operator of Stocker Farms, Snohomish Valley;
- Mick Lovgreen – Vice President of Operations, Twin Cities Foods, Inc., Stanwood; and,
- Rick Williams – Farmer/Owner of Williams Farm, Stillaguamish Valley.

“These people know what tools a farmer needs to succeed,” Reardon said. “All 10 have worked closely with my administration over the past year to promote local agriculture. They bring years of experience to the table.”

The advisory group members will take elements of the action plan and share them with other people in the agriculture community. They will propose any changes to the plan before Reardon formally releases it sometime in March.

During the past year, the Reardon administration has pursued an aggressive agriculture policy. It appointed John Roney to the newly-created position of Agriculture Coordinator; it raised the profile of Puget Sound Fresh, a marketing initiative aimed at finding markets for local produce; and it launched the Focus on Farming website that features information and links to valuable sources of business help for growers.

In addition, the November Focus on Farming Conference brought together leaders from government, farming community, business sector, and various agricultural agencies and institutions to start an action plan for the long-term success of local farming.

Snohomish County, one of Washington state's fastest growing counties over the past two decades, has seen a 26 percent decline in farmland over the last 20 years.

Yet there are still approximately 1,600 farms in the County today. The average farm size is 44 acres and the total land in agriculture is 69,000 acres. Just 30 percent of the farms in Snohomish County generate sales in excess of \$100,000 per year.

The total market value of Snohomish County products sold was \$126 million in 2002, the most recent year output was measured. Nurseries, greenhouses, floriculture and sod

represented just over 40 percent of the total. Milk and other dairy products accounted for roughly one-third of the figure followed by: Cattle and calves (8 percent); poultry and eggs (5 percent); crops such as hay (3 percent); vegetables, melons and potatoes (2 percent); and, fruits, nuts and berries (1 percent).

A relative newcomer to Snohomish County agriculture – aquaculture – accounted for 5 percent of the \$126 million total.

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