

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*  
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**Snohomish County  
County Executive's Office**

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## **Executive Reardon's Focus on Farming Conference II**

### **Growing Success for Snohomish County Agriculture**

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon has issued a final call to farmers and others interested in local agriculture to register for the County's second annual Focus on Farming Conference, entitled "Growing Success for Snohomish County Agriculture."

The free, one-day conference will take place on Thursday, November 10, 2005, at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe. The doors will open at 7:15 a.m. with the program starting at 8:00 a.m. and continuing until 4:30 p.m.

"Agriculture adds economic and life-sustaining value to our county," says Reardon. "I would encourage anyone interested in helping to preserve this important industry to attend the Focus on Farming conference."

Reardon launched the Focus on Farming Conferences soon after taking office in 2003 as a way to help sustain and grow agriculture in Snohomish County.

Snohomish County's existing agricultural industry employs 1,255 people and is a \$127.3 million industry. Across the nation, small and medium-sized farms are struggling to stay in business. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, as many as six out of ten farm households lose money on their farm operations each year, and an average of 330 farms go out of business each year.

"Snohomish County is no different says," Reardon. "Our local farmers are under intense pressure from a variety of economic forces making it difficult for them to remain profitable. The conference is intended to help generate interest and new ideas on how to strengthen and grow this vital industry."

Reardon will open this year's conference with a brief progress report on the Agriculture Initiative. Joining the County as co-sponsor of this year's event is the local chapter of the Washington Farm Bureau. Steve Appel, Washington Farm Bureau President, will take the podium following Executive Reardon to provide an update on his organization's efforts to save working family farms both locally and nationwide.

Other featured speakers for the day will include Read Smith, a wheat farmer from Eastern Washington, recognized as an innovative leader in finding new opportunities for increasing profits for farming; William Brookreson, Deputy Director from the Washington State Department of Agriculture and Craig Ladiser, Director of Snohomish County Planning and Development Services. Ladiser's department has been spearheading the effort to simplify and streamline local, state and federal regulatory processes for local agriculture.

The conference program will include fifteen breakout sessions on such topics as, "The Future of Snohomish County Dairy Farming", "Exploring the Options of Agri-Tourism", "Organic Certification Labeling for Your Farm", and "Bio-Fuels: Is this a Practical New Crop for our Farmers?" The full conference program can be viewed on the County's Focus on Farming website at [www.co.snohomish.wa.us](http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us), click on "Focus on Farming."

The Focus on Farming II Conference is open to non-farmers and students as well as working farmers. While many of the sessions are designed to provide new and innovative information to commercial farm operators, anyone with an interest in growing foods on a small acreage may find the program very useful. Students considering a career in agriculture would certainly benefit from attending.

A lunch and snacks of local foods will be provided. While there is no charge for the conference, pre-registration is required. To register, contact Cheryl Sullivan, 425-388-7492.

For additional information about the conference, please contact John Roney, Agricultural Coordinator at 425.388.7112, or email: [jroney@co.snohomish.wa.us](mailto:jroney@co.snohomish.wa.us).

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