



Snohomish County
County Executive's Office

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Aaron Reardon
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Farmers get economic pick-me-up as Snohomish County Executive signs key changes to agriculture rules

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*Larger produce stands, farmers markets, processing facilities, social events
expand economic options for family farmers*

SNOHOMISH – Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today signed changes to the County's agriculture code aimed at giving family farmers more productive ways to use their land and stimulate the local farm economy.

Executive Reardon, joined by Snohomish County Council chairman John Koster and members of the Snohomish County Agriculture Advisory Board, signed two ordinances beside Bailey's Vegetable Stand, owned and operated by local farmers Don and Barbara Bailey. Just beyond the spot where the County Executive signed the changes were rows of locally grown cucumbers, corn, sunflowers and zinnias, potatoes and herbs.

The agriculture code changes signed by Executive Reardon were put together by the Agriculture Advisory Board over the past four years.

“A top goal of my administration has been to provide our local farmers and ranchers with new opportunities to increase their production, enter new markets and improve their bottom line,” the County Executive said. “The ordinances signed into law today do all of those things and I want to congratulate the Agriculture Advisory Board for their work on these important changes.

“People talk about preserving farmland in Snohomish County, making it more productive so our family farmers can prosper. This is the sort of effort that Snohomish County government – working in partnership with farmers, growers and producers – can play a key role in fostering.”

The two ordinances signed by Executive Reardon today give farmers the opportunity to locate on their property:

- Farm stands of up to 5,000 square feet in size;
- Farmers markets;
- Facilities that process farm products;
- Bakeries;
- Businesses that support farming;
- Kitchens; and,
- Farmland enterprises such as wedding venues and other social events.

Jackie Macomber, chair of the Snohomish County Agriculture Advisory Board, called the ordinances an important step forward for local agriculture, which is a \$260 million a year industry that employs more than 6,000 people at more than 1,250 farms.

“I do believe the changes to the code will give farmers the confidence they need to move forward and invest in their agricultural goals,” Macomber said. “It gives them confidence and security. We just know that this will encourage more agricultural people to come into the area.”

Koster said, “Snohomish County government is working diligently to keep Agriculture viable. The Ag Code amendments are an exciting step in the right direction and we will continue to examine other changes that will benefit Snohomish County farmers and ranchers. In addition to the Ag Code amendments, we are very close to implementing phase 1 of the Transfer of Development Rights program, which is another major step in our efforts to protect precious Agricultural lands from development.”

Under the new law, at least half the produce sold at stands or farmers markets would have to be grown, raised or harvested in Snohomish County.

The Reardon administration has launched several farm-related initiatives during its first eight months, including:

- The appointment of a high-ranking official, John Roney, to be the local agriculture community’s point-of-contact with the County;
- The launching of “Focus on Farming,” a web page that helps guide local farmers through the thicket of County government;

- Coordinating a meeting of local farmers with Juli Wilkerson, head of the Washington State Department of Trade and Economic Development;
- Working on the County's 10-year Comprehensive Plan update and new educational programs.

In addition, Reardon will host the Snohomish County Focus on Farming Conference, a summit of farmers, producers, the business sector and local government officials who want to improve the economic climate for local farmers. The event will be held Thursday, November 18 from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Evergreen Fairgrounds in Monroe.

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