

Business of Farming/Marketing

Session 1: Government Contracting & Produce Program Opportunities (Panel)

Presenters: *Cheral Jones, Agency Contracts, Consulting & Oversight, WA State Dept. of Enterprise Services; Edwina Martin-Arnold, Office of Minority & Women Business Enterprises; Servando Patlan, Contracts & State Legal Services; Jean Hales, Economic Alliance Snohomish County; Tricia Kovacs, WA State Dept. of Agriculture; Rebecca Linville, DES WEBS & Contract Opportunities; and John Holeman, Monroe Correctional Complex*

Description: Moderated by Cheral Jones of WA State Dept. of Enterprise Services, this panel will raise awareness of opportunities for farms to partner with government, to participate in state contracting opportunities through bidding or subcontracting, to register in “WEBS” the state’s vendor registration system and search for or be notified of opportunities, to learn about our state’s initiatives to engage diverse businesses, how to become a WA certified small, women, minority or veteran owned business and the benefits of being certified, and to learn about our state’s agricultural programs that help bring local healthy foods to Washington schools and prisons while providing produce-related educating and training.

Session 2: What’s New for You in the 2014 Farm Bill?

Presenters: *Chris Bieker, Farm Service Agency; and Jo Lynne Seuffer, Risk Management Agency*

Description: USDA officials provide the latest scoop on new and improved programs. Learn about federal resources available to help small acreage farmers navigate the financial and production risks of farming and ranching.

Session 3: Certification Workshop: Benefits of Being a Certified Minority and/or Women-Owned Business

Presenter: *Edwina Martin-Arnold, Office of Minority & Women Business Enterprises*

Description: The Office of Minority and Women Business Enterprises’ (OMWBE) Certification Workshop is a course where attendees can learn about state and federal certifications for lucrative government contracting. Attendees will learn who is eligible for the program, and they will receive valuable assistance with the application process. In addition, benefits of certification will be highlighted, which include free advertising through the OMWBE website, a free subscription to the Daily Journal of Commerce, and loan assistance for those who are state certified through the Linked Deposit program.

Session 4: Working Effectively with Your Processor: Getting Local Meat to Local Markets

Presenter: *Kathryn Quanbeck, Program Manager for Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN)*

Description: Getting local meat to local markets often takes you through a maze of processing options, confusing regulations, distribution headaches and marketing challenges. In this session, we'll discuss the different types of inspection available, cover relevant meat processing regulations and help livestock producers decide which marketing options might be best based on size and scale, processing needs and business goals.

Hot Topics

Session 1: Growing and Malting New Varieties of Local Grain

Presenters: *Wayne Carpenter, Founding Partner of Salish Coast Enterprises; Bob Rock, Partner at Skagit Valley Malting and Brewing Instructor at Skagit Valley College*

Description: There has been a fast growing interest in the beer and spirits business for using locally grown grains in the craft products. What if “LOCAL” was also REALLY better and unique? What if the quality and flavor REALLY was better? This region, west of the Cascade Mountains, North of Eugene, Oregon and South of mid Vancouver Island in Canada is the only one like it in North America. There are only five others like this in the world. The grains grown in this region have some exceptional advantages. What are they? Washington State University and Oregon State University have grain breeding programs so thousands of test plots for these grains are grown in Corvallis, OR and Mount Vernon, WA for these programs each year. This session will discuss these and other aspects of selecting, growing and then malting varieties of grain that are NOT normally available to brewers, distillers and bakers anywhere. We will discuss growing issues, harvesting, special care requirements and the improved brewing mechanics, as well as the wonderful FLAVORS available here in this region.

Session 2: Growing Asian Medicinal Herbs in the Northwest

Presenters: *Matt Ferguson, E.A.M.P., Vivian Henderson, Farmer and Cofounder of Northwest Asian Medicinal Herb Network; Tim Ross, DAOM; Mercy Yule, EAMP, Acupuncturist, Arborist and Cofounder of the Northwest Asian Medicinal Herb Network*

Description: In this workshop, the Northwest Asian Medicinal Herb Network and friends will present an introduction to domestic production of Asian medicinal herbs. This will include a brief history of the development of the industry, current market forces, special issues in growing quality medicinal herbs, plant sourcing, and the necessity for a coordinated effort. Then, medicinal herb growers will discuss their favorite herbs for the Northwest.

Session 3: NW Regional Seed Systems

Presenter: *Micaela Colley, Executive Director of Organic Seed Alliance (OSA)*

Description: A movement is underway in the Pacific Northwest (PNW) to create resilient regional seed systems. The unique climate of the region is prime for growing seed of many vegetable and grain crops. The organic community, from farmers to breeders to retailers and chefs are also working together to develop new varieties that are expanding regional food production and markets. Hear stories from the field of successful models for integrating on-farm organic plant breeding, and seed production into diversified farming operations. Learn about the collaborative work of Organic Seed Alliance and others in the NW creating a regional seed system including the Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative (NOVIC), the Culinary Breeding Network (CBN), and initiatives to support organic farmers expanding regional seed production.

Session 4: Hard Cider for Good Times

Presenters: *Sherrye Wyatt, Executive Director of Northwest Cider Association; Carol Miles, Professor in the Dept. of Horticulture at WSU and Horticulture Specialist at WSU Mount Vernon NW WA Research and Extension Center*

Description: Once America's favorite drink, cider is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. beverage industry today. Since the "fruit of the boom" exploded in 2009, the Northwest is quickly emerging as a cider powerhouse. Already famous for growing more apples and pears than any other part of the country, the Northwest has proven it has what it takes to become a world class cider region. Learn about the basics of cider apple varieties and current research at Washington State University (WSU); opportunities for cider making training for both growers and cider makers offered by the Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC); and what the Northwest Cider Association (NWCA) and U.S. Cider Makers of America (USACM) are doing right now to help shape the future of the growing cider industry.

Livestock Production

Session 1: Mobile USDA Livestock Processing Units – What’s in it for me?

Presenters: *Panel from 3 county mobile units (Whatcom, Skagit, Pierce)*

Description: Mobile USDA units and their effectiveness to get livestock to different markets, their availability, and how you can participate. 3-4 members of the various county mobile units will be on hand to discuss the various efforts in each county. What’s working, what’s not, how to get involved, the benefits, etc.

Session 2: USDA Grass Fed Certification

Presenter: *Steve Ross, National Assessment Services Supervisor with USDA, AMS, LPS, Quality Assessment Division*

Description: Steve will be talking about the new USDA Grass fed Certification. Come and learn about what opportunities are out there for you when you raise and market grass fed livestock for market.

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Session 4: Mobile Poultry Processing . . . this Unit is for YOU!

Presenter: *Fred Berman, Project Manager for Client Services, Rural Cooperative Development, Agricultural Processing Initiative with Northwest Agricultural Business Center*

Description: Fred has been working with and on the new available mobile poultry processing unit available through the Northwest Agricultural business Center. This will be an OUTSIDE tour of the unit and not a classroom discussion. Come and learn about the unit, how it works, and how to get it to work for your operation!

Nursery/Greenhouse

Session 1: Grafting Vegetables

Presenter: *Carol Miles, Professor in the Dept. of Horticulture at WSU and Horticulture Specialist at WSU Mount Vernon NW WA Research and Extension Center Specialist*

Description: As far back as 500 BC, farmers in China have been grafting disease-susceptible cucurbit crops onto disease-tolerant squash rootstocks. Today in parts of Asia and Europe, up to 95% of watermelon, tomato and eggplant crops are grafted, primarily for disease control. This presentation will provide an overview of common grafting techniques for vegetable crops and an update of our vegetable grafting research based at Washington State University-Mount Vernon Research and Extension Center.

Session 2: The New Invasives

Presenter: *Sharon Collman, Horticulture and IPM Educator for Snohomish County WSU Extension*

Description: Discussion of the latest pests and diseases to affect horticulture in the Pacific Northwest and how to combat them.

Session 3: Native Plants and Water Quality – Opportunities to Tap into – and the Pros and Cons

Presenter: *Peg Tillery, WSH&G Garden Editor and Writer and Retired WSU Kitsap Extension Educator.*

Description: This is a panel discussion. The panel consists of a Landscape Designer; Nursery Owner who grows native plants for restoration and landscaping; and a native plant educator who mentors and assists the public in making sense out of all the governmental mandates with regard to native plants in the landscape. Topics covered will be raingardens, shoreline and streamside plantings, maximizing profits in growing native plants for retail, lessons learned, caveats, warnings, the advantages to exploring this untapped business opportunities, and how to maximize profits. Additional topics will include marketing, working with engineering and planning staff at municipalities. The last 15 minutes will include Q and A. If you have specific questions please jot them down and email them to gardenmentor@yahoo.com so we can share the questions with the panel ahead of time.

Session 4: Neonicotinoids

Presenter: *Janet Poncelet, Member of Wilbur-Ellis Team*

Description: A discussion of the emerging alternatives to neonicotinoid pesticides coming to market as well as the latest research guiding choices for current neonic product use.

Regionalizing Our Food

Session 1: Building Local Food Economy and Increasing Access Through Food Hubs

Presenters: *Lucy Norris of Northwest Agriculture Business Center representing the Puget Sound Food Hub, Chris Iberle, Seattle Tilth and Melissa Turkington of North 40 Farm Food.*

Description: According to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, "Food hubs facilitate access to market by offering critical aggregation, marketing, distribution and other services to farmers and ranchers. By serving as a link between the farm or ranch and regional buyers, food hubs keep more of the retail food dollar circulating in the local economy. In effect, the success of regional food hubs comes from entrepreneurship, sound business sense and a desire for social impact." This panel will discuss a variety of food hub models in northwest Washington. Participants will learn what distinguishes food hubs from traditional distribution systems, and discuss the opportunities and challenges for farms, customers and planners in their efforts to strengthen local food economy and increase access to locally produced food.

Session 2: Mapping the Bioregion and its Foodsheds: A Participatory Exercise

Presenter: *Robert Thayer, FASLA, FCELA, Emeritus Professor of Landscape Architecture and Founder of the Landscape Architecture Program, Univ. of CA, Davis*

Description: One of the most interesting aspects of bioregional practice is mapping, particularly when many people participate. This unconventional workshop will engage the audience to record places of personal importance to their business or their connection to the region by means of notation on a very large map surrounded by butcher paper. Colored dots will be used for identifying farms, ranches, dairies, orchards, vineyards, markets, restaurants, distribution centers or nodes, commercial kitchens, etc., for each participant. Also, special places for conserving valued natural resources, wildlife, scenery, or cultural features will also be annotated. Participants will also be encouraged to write qualitative or annotative notes on butcher paper surrounding the map. The resulting map and "wallpaper," no doubt messy and packed with information, will serve to illustrate the spatial, and special, nature of the lifelace itself. The workshop leader will summarize the results, and "capture" the information for redistribution to participants after the conference.

Session 3: Western WA Climate Change Assessment: Farmer Insight Needed

Presenter: *Chad Kruger, Director of the Washington State University Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources*

Description: Farmers here is your chance to help design a research effort to assess climate change impacts on western Washington agriculture. What information do you need to know about the changes in climate? Research on the impacts of climate change on Pacific Northwest agriculture has rapidly evolved over the past decade. Early research studies focused on simple triage assessments to evaluate vulnerabilities while current work is focused on much more sophisticated assessments of the interaction between climate change, policy and farm management. This research has led to the development of significant scientific insights, assessment tools, and capacities for conducting management-relevant research. However, due to sources of available funding to date, most of this research has focused on the agricultural systems and crops located east of the Cascades in spite of the fact that west-side farmers seem to have more interest in the subject. The opportunity now exists to shift the research focus to the locations, crops and agricultural systems west of the Cascades, but doing so successfully necessitates additional engagement between scientists and stakeholders.

This workshop will provide the ground-work for a new effort exploring the climate change research and information needs of west-side agricultural stakeholders. We will provide a brief overview of current research insights, tools and capacities; conduct a live audience response survey to establish priorities; and engage in discussion of specific concerns and needs that matter to west-side producers.

Session 4: Strengthening WA's Food Systems – Challenges and Opportunities

Presenter: *Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow for the Leopold Center and President of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, New York; Mardi Solomon, Coordinator, Whatcom Farm-to-School Support Team and Member of the Whatcom Food Network Steering Committee; Victor Colman, JD - Director, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition and Co-Chair of WA State Food Systems Roundtable; Brad Gaolach, WSU CAHNRS/Extension, Community Sustainability Specialist and Regional Food Policy Council Member*

Description: Washington's food system remains complex and confusing. It delivers both obesity and hunger. Food production values rose 6% to almost \$10 billion, but farmer income dropped. Food is costing more to produce but farmers are making less profit, and in fact, less than 10 cents of every consumer food dollar gets to the farmer. Our average farmer is 58.8 years old. We are losing ground, literally. From 2007–2012 the state lost 45,000 acres of farmland per year. Across the country communities are grappling with how to strengthen their food systems. Keynote Speaker Fred Kirschenmann will bring his national perspective to a panel discussion of three scale-specific approaches in Washington: the Whatcom Community Food Assessment Update, the Regional Food Policy Council and the recently emerging Washington State Food Systems Roundtable, tasked with developing a 25 year food system vision and strengthening Washington's food system thru policy and collaboration. Join Fred and local food system leaders to discuss opportunities to strengthen Washington's food systems.

Sustainable Ag Education (SAgE)

Session 1: Agroecology Fundamentals

Presenter: *Karen Hills, Ph.D. in Crop Science from WSU*

Description: In this session we will discuss some important concepts of agroecology and give examples practical applications for applying ecological principles on the farm to enhance production and environmental outcomes. Participants in this session will gain an understanding of how diversity, ecological interactions and whole systems approaches can improve productivity of agricultural systems.

Session 2: Intercropping Methods for Resilient Production

Presenter: *Rob Smith, Viva Farms employee and manager of the development of the SAAgE student farm and curriculum*

Description: A core component of agroecology is the interrelationship of varied plant species within a diverse ecological system. This section will explore how complimentary species can be selected and managed to maximize production and maintain sustainability within the system, focusing on the resource requirements and characteristics of mutually beneficial neighbors. The discussion will focus on concrete examples and real world situations, giving participants a sound understanding of maximizing the benefits of plant community interactions.

Session 3: Temperate Agroforestry Systems and Practices

Presenter: *Jason Niebler, Founding Director of Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAgE) Collaborative*

Description: Agroforestry is an integrated land use system that can improve whole farm productivity and ecosystem services through the simultaneous or sequential management of field crops, tree crops, pasture and animals, and native vegetation. Whereas agroforestry is common in the tropics, it is an innovative and emerging land use in temperate environments. This session will introduce participants to agroforestry concepts, appropriate and scalable practices, such as alley cropping, silvopastures, windbreaks, riparian buffers, and forest farming, and the benefits derived from their multiple functions. We will then explore perceived opportunities for viable agroforestry farm development through participant reflection and discussion.

Session 4: Environmental Services of Farmland Habitat

Presenter: *Claus Svendsen, Department Chair for Dept. of Environmental Conservation at Skagit Valley College*

Description: Increasingly, ecologists are realizing the economic values that natural and semi-natural lands produce for the wellbeing of societies. Ecosystem services are the goods and services provided by natural and cultural landscapes but not captured in the formal economy. In addition, ecosystem services are critical for supporting socio-cultural values, the economy, and the sustainability of societies. This session will focus on methodologies to maintain and improve ecosystem services on small agroecological farm systems. Furthermore, an overview of techniques and management strategies that incorporate beneficial wildlife for crop production will be outlined; especially techniques to reduce harmful birds, rodents, and insects. Finally, the session will conclude with a work session where participants will get the opportunity to analyze their own farm to see what techniques and strategies that could be implemented.