
SENATE BILL 5484

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Senator Shewmake

1 AN ACT Relating to supporting Washington's food production system
2 by providing technical assistance in support of improved voluntary
3 environmental stewardship; amending RCW 89.08.610, 89.08.615, and
4 89.08.630; adding a new section to chapter 89.08 RCW; and creating a
5 new section.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that Washington's
8 farmers and food processors are vital to the local and global food
9 chain. The legislature also recognizes the seriousness of climate
10 change and is committed to improving Washington's resilience to the
11 impacts of climate change on all business sectors, including
12 agriculture. Moreover, the agricultural community can play a key role
13 in combating climate change by increasing energy efficiency,
14 utilizing more green energy resources, increasing carbon
15 sequestration, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Washington has
16 a tradition of voluntarily engaging farmers with technical assistance
17 to achieve objectives of the state. Therefore, it is the intent of
18 the legislature to establish a program that provides additional
19 technical assistance to farmers and food processors to help increase
20 energy efficiency, further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and

1 increase carbon sequestration, all while reducing long-term operating
2 costs and creating new market opportunities.

3 **Sec. 2.** RCW 89.08.610 and 2020 c 351 s 2 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 The definitions in this section apply throughout this section and
6 RCW 89.08.615 through 89.08.635 unless the context clearly requires
7 otherwise.

8 (1) "Advisors" means sustainable farms and fields advisors.

9 (2) "Carbon dioxide equivalent emission" means a metric measure
10 used to compare the emission impacts from various greenhouse gases
11 based on their relative radiative forcing effect over a specified
12 period of time compared to carbon dioxide emissions.

13 ~~((+2))~~ (3) "Carbon dioxide equivalent impact" means a metric
14 measure of the cumulative radiative forcing impacts of both carbon
15 dioxide equivalent emissions and the radiative forcing benefits of
16 carbon storage.

17 ~~((+3))~~ (4) "Climate-smart practices" means those best management
18 practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse
19 gas emissions.

20 (5) "Commission" means the Washington state conservation
21 commission created in this chapter.

22 ~~((+4))~~ (6) "Conservation district" means one or a group of
23 Washington state's conservation districts created in this chapter.

24 (7) "Cooperating areas" means a group of conservation districts
25 that will share access to the services of an advisor.

26 (8) "Sustainable farms and fields plan" means a site-specific
27 suite of recommendations that can help a farm or food processing
28 facility increase energy efficiency, utilize more green energy,
29 sequester carbon, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

30 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 89.08
31 RCW to read as follows:

32 (1) The commission shall develop a network of sustainable farms
33 and fields advisors whereby groups of conservation districts will
34 hire, host, and share the services of sustainable farms and fields
35 advisors. These advisors will provide consultations and develop
36 sustainable farms and fields plans for interested farmers and food
37 processors to help them reduce their carbon footprint by increasing
38 energy efficiency, utilizing more green energy, sequestering carbon,

1 and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The advisors will also inform
2 conservation districts, farmers, and food processors about local,
3 state, and federal funding opportunities, such as the sustainable
4 farms and fields grant program, to implement practices that help
5 achieve these goals to reduce the carbon footprint.

6 (2) A new position is established within the commission that is
7 responsible for coordinating the advisors, disseminating current
8 information about energy efficiency and climate-smart practices and
9 funding opportunities, applying for grants, writing progress reports,
10 and other duties as needed.

11 **Sec. 4.** RCW 89.08.615 and 2022 c 180 s 501 are each amended to
12 read as follows:

13 (1) The commission shall develop a sustainable farms and fields
14 grant program in consultation with the department of agriculture,
15 Washington State University, and the United States department of
16 agriculture natural resources conservation service.

17 (2) As funding allows, the commission shall distribute funds, as
18 appropriate, to conservation districts and other public entities to
19 ~~((help))~~ implement the projects approved by the commission.

20 (3) No more than 15 percent of the funds may be used by the
21 commission to develop, or to consult or contract with private or
22 public entities, such as universities or conservation districts, to
23 develop:

24 (a) An educational public awareness campaign and outreach about
25 the sustainable farm and field program; or

26 (b) The grant program, including the production of analytical
27 tools, measurement estimation and verification methods, cost-benefit
28 measurements, and public reporting methods.

29 (4) No more than five percent of the funds may be used by the
30 commission to cover the administrative costs of the program.

31 (5) No more than 20 percent of the funds may be awarded to any
32 single grant applicant.

33 (6) Allowable uses of grant funds include:

34 (a) Annual payments to enrolled participants for successfully
35 delivered carbon storage or emissions reduction;

36 (b) Up-front payments for contracted carbon storage;

37 (c) ~~((Down payments on equipment;~~

38 ~~(d) Purchases)) Cost-share purchases of equipment;~~

1 ~~((e))~~ (d) Purchase of seed, seedlings, spores, animal feed, and
2 amendments;

3 ~~((f))~~ (e) Services to landowners (~~, such as the development of~~
4 ~~site-specific conservation plans to increase soil organic levels or~~
5 ~~to increase usage of precision agricultural practices, or design and~~
6 ~~implementation of best management practices to reduce livestock~~
7 ~~emissions)) including, but not limited to, the development of site-
8 specific sustainable farms and fields plans and climate-smart
9 practices, providing financial assistance to implement best
10 management practices that increase carbon sequestration in soil
11 organic matter levels and standing vegetation, reduce livestock and
12 soil greenhouse gas emissions, reduce fossil fuel usage and
13 greenhouse gas emissions through increased usage of precision
14 agricultural practices, and increase energy efficiency and
15 utilization of green energy;~~

16 ~~((g))~~ (f) The purchase of compost spreading equipment, or
17 financial assistance to farmers to purchase compost spreading
18 equipment, for the annual use for at least three years of volumes of
19 compost determined by the commission to be significant from materials
20 composted at a site that is not owned or operated by the farmer;

21 ~~((h))~~ (g) Scientific studies to evaluate and quantify the
22 greenhouse gas emissions avoided as a result of using crop residues
23 as a biofuel feedstock or to identify management practices that
24 increase the greenhouse gas emissions avoided as a result of using
25 crop residues as a biofuel feedstock;

26 ~~((i))~~ (h) Efforts to support the farm use of anaerobic digester
27 digestate, including scientific studies, education and outreach to
28 farmers, and the purchase or lease of digestate spreading equipment;
29 and

30 ~~((j))~~ (i) Other equipment purchases or financial assistance
31 deemed appropriate by the commission to fulfill the intent of RCW
32 89.08.610 through 89.08.635.

33 (7) Grant applications are eligible for costs associated with
34 technical assistance.

35 (8) Conservation districts and other public entities may apply
36 for a single grant from the commission that serves multiple farmers.

37 (9) ~~((Grant applicants may apply to share equipment purchased~~
38 ~~with grant funds. Applicants for equipment purchase grants issued~~
39 ~~under this grant program may be farm, ranch, or aquaculture~~
40 ~~operations coordinating as individual businesses or as formal~~

1 cooperative ventures serving farm, ranch, or aquaculture
2 operations.)) Conservation districts and other public entities,
3 separately or jointly, may ((also)) apply for grant funds to operate
4 an equipment sharing program.

5 (10) No contract for carbon storage or changes to management
6 practices may exceed 25 years. Grant contracts that include up-front
7 payments for future benefits must be conditioned to include penalties
8 for default due to negligence on the part of the recipient.

9 (11) The commission shall attempt to achieve a geographically
10 fair distribution of funds across a broad group of ((crop types, soil
11 management)) commodities, climate-smart and energy efficiency
12 practices, and farm sizes.

13 (12) Any applications involving state lands leased from the
14 department of natural resources or the department of fish and
15 wildlife must include ((the)) that department's approval.

16 **Sec. 5.** RCW 89.08.630 and 2020 c 351 s 6 are each amended to
17 read as follows:

18 (1) By October 15, 2021, and every two years thereafter, the
19 commission shall report to the legislature and the governor on the
20 performance of the sustainable farms and fields grant program and the
21 sustainable farms and fields advisors.

22 (2) The commission shall update at least annually a public list
23 of projects and pertinent information including a summary of state
24 and federal funds, private funds spent, landowner and other private
25 cost-share matching expenditures, the total number of projects, and
26 an estimate of carbon sequestered or carbon emissions reduced.

27 (3) By July 1, 2024, the commission, in consultation with
28 Washington State University and the University of Washington, must
29 evaluate and update the most appropriate carbon equivalency metric to
30 apply to the sustainable farms and fields grant program. Until this
31 equivalency is updated by the commission, or unless the commission
32 identifies a better metric, the commission must initially use a one
33 hundred year storage equivalency that can be linearly annualized to
34 recognize the storage of carbon on an annual basis based on the
35 storage of 3.67 tons of biogenic carbon for ((one hundred)) 100 years
36 being assigned a value equal to avoiding one ton of carbon dioxide
37 equivalent emissions.

38 (4) The grant recipient and other private cost-sharing
39 participants may at their own discretion allow their business or

1 other name to be listed on the public report produced by the
2 commission. All grant recipients must allow anonymized information
3 about the full funding of their project to be made available for
4 public reporting purposes.

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