

WASHINGTON APA'S GAME CHANGING INITIATIVE
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS WORKING GROUP

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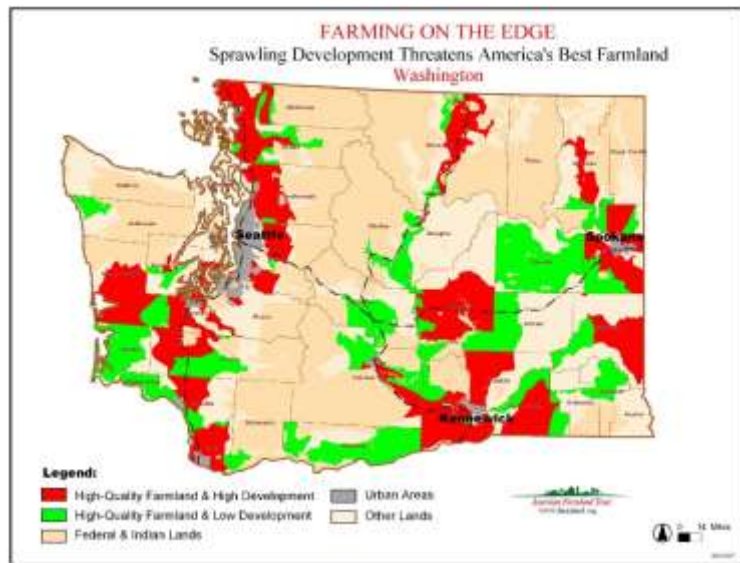
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Challenges for Sustainable Agriculture & Healthy Food Systems

Development is threatening some of Washington State's best agricultural lands. In a twenty-five year span (1982-2007) the state lost 356,000 acres of agricultural lands to development.¹ While this represents only 2% of total agricultural lands, 35% (124,700 acres) of the loss lands were considered prime agricultural lands (i.e. land with physical and chemical characteristics best suited for agricultural production).

Conversion of agricultural lands to development reduces the land available to grow local food and leads to negative environment impacts from the increased stormwater runoff and water pollution. Further compounding farmland loss are issues such as rising cost of land and the climbing average age of farm operators (57 years old) that threaten the economic vitality of our local farming sectors. The state's Growth Management Act currently puts the burden on counties to address



SOURCE: AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

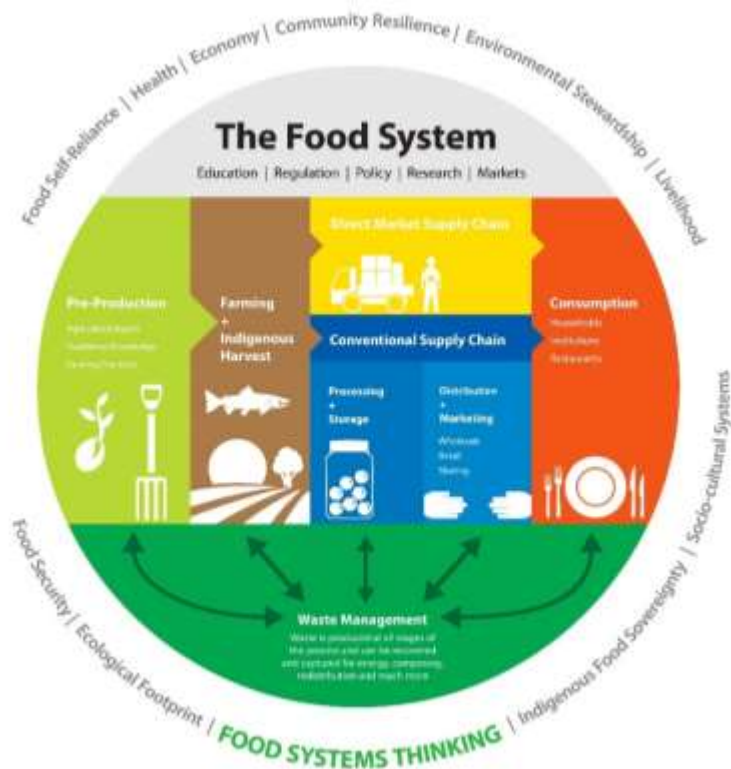
agriculture by identifying resource lands, but cities also need to consider the value of including and preserving access to food supplies, the economic benefits of agricultural lands, and the value of agricultural lands for healthy natural systems.

Lack of access to healthy food is also a factor in our national obesity epidemic among adults and children that is impacting communities throughout Washington. Ensuring that healthy food is accessible to all our communities is also a food system challenge – how do we provide long-term sustainable food for our cities? How can planners help remedy areas with limited healthy food resources (i.e. grocery stores, farmers markets)?

¹ National Resources Inventory (2007). Available at <http://www.farmlandinfo.org/statistics/Washington>.

Actions to Support Sustainable Agriculture and Healthy Food Systems

Efforts to mitigate these issues are occurring at the state as well as local level. In September 2013, Governor Jay Inslee announced one of the goals of his *Results Washington* initiative was to achieve a no net loss of farmland by 2015 and *increase* the amount of farmland by 100,000 acres by 2020.² In 2012, the Washington State Food System Roundtable, a broad diverse coalition of public and private partners, formed and was charged with creating a 25-year vision for a healthy, more coordinated food system. In addition, the state Department of Health and several county public health departments have received federal grants to improve healthy food access through planning tools (e.g. comprehensive plans) over the past five years.



SOURCE: SOUTHWEST BC BIO-REGION FOOD SYSTEM DESIGN PROJECT

To build and support healthy, sustainable communities, it is critical to consider the role of local food systems and provide planners with the tools and knowledge to address pressing food system challenges. The Sustainable Agriculture & Healthy Food Systems Working Group provides planners and community stakeholders with the information and tools to preserve agricultural land, encourage sustainable farming practices, and improve access to healthy food for all of Washington's communities.

² <http://www.results.wa.gov/whatWeDo/measureResults/environment.aspx>