



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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## **Gov. Gregoire proclaims Aug. 3-9 as Washington Farmers Market Week** ***Farmers benefit from direct sales to consumers at more than 125 markets***

OLYMPIA – Farmers markets are gaining in number and popularity as consumers increasingly seek fresh local foods. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) join Gov. Chris Gregoire in proclaiming Aug. 3-9 as Washington State Farmers Market Week—a time to recognize the benefits of farmers markets to Washington residents.

“Agriculture is the cornerstone of Washington’s economy,” Gregoire said. “Farmers markets provide a unique opportunity to support our local growers, purchase fresh, healthy produce, and at the same time, get out and enjoy your local community.”

Many farmers markets are hosting special events to celebrate Farmers Market Week. For a directory of farmers market locations, a farmers market week challenge with prizes, and more information on the WSFMA, visit [www.wafarmersmarkets.com](http://www.wafarmersmarkets.com).

“Farmers markets play a key role in rural and urban locations and are increasing in popularity every day,” said Janie Morris, president of the WSFMA and manager of the Puyallup Farmers Market.

“People come for fresh fruits and vegetables, artisan cheeses, meats, farm-made jams and jellies and fresh-cut flowers,” Morris said. “They stay for the welcoming community atmosphere. Sales will continue to rise as people become aware of why it’s important to support sustainable farming and local economies.”

The number of markets in Washington has more than doubled from a decade ago, increasing from 60 in 1998 to more than 125 sites in operation today. Statewide, farmers markets reported \$55 million sales in 2007, up from \$38 million in 2006. Most of these dollars go directly to Washington family farmers.

“Farmers markets are important meeting places that contribute to the economic and social vitality of communities and the markets educate consumers about their food and where it comes from,” said Patrice Barrentine, WSDA Small Farm & Direct Marketing program coordinator. “The growth of the farmers market movement is driven by consumer demand for locally grown food. It gives producers more opportunities to sell their products and consumers more flexibility to buy high-quality produce.”

As part of their commitment to support local communities, Barrentine noted that several markets—including the Olympia and Chehalis farmers markets and the Seattle-based Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance—raised funds to support farmers who suffered losses during last December’s flooding. Most of those farmers are again selling their products at markets this season.

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WSDA has worked to increase consumer awareness of the convenience and value of farmers markets. The department has provided grants to assist more than 20 different farmers market projects. In July, WSDA awarded additional market promotion contracts worth \$55,000 to support farmers markets.

WSDA helps small farm operators comply with state and local regulations and policies as they market their crops and food products. Support also is given to farmers who sell their commodities through community-supported agriculture shares, sales at their farms, farm stores, produce stands and you-pick berry fields.

With technical expertise from the Washington State University Small Farms Program, WSDA published the Washington State Farmers Market manual, available on the WSDA Web site at

<http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm>.

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