

Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline  
Addie Candib, American Farmland Trust  
Aslan Meade, Thurston Economic Development Council  
Brian Estes, LINC Foods  
\*Brice Montgomery, WA State Dept of Social and Health Services  
Caleb Gwerder, WA Farm Bureau  
\*Chad Kruger, Washington State University – Office of Research  
Chris Cary, Food Northwest  
Chris Elder, King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks  
Chris Voigt, Washington Potato Commission  
Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition  
Colleen Donovan, WA State Farmers Market Association  
\*Derek Sandison, WA State Dept of Agriculture  
Diane Dempster, Clark County Food System Council  
Jamielyn Wheeler, Northwest Harvest  
\*James Thompson, State Conservation Commission  
Jennifer Otten, University of Washington – Food Systems  
Jon DeVaney, WA State Tree Fruit Association  
Judy Warnick, WA State Legislature  
KayDee Gilkey, WA Association of Wheat Growers  
\*Kyle Unland, WA State Department of Health  
\*Leanne Eko, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Linda Neunzig, Snohomish County  
Marcia Ostrom, Washington State University - Food Systems Program  
Mary Dye, WA State Legislature  
Mary Embleton, King Conservation District  
Melissa Spear, Tilth Alliance  
Mia Gregerson, WA State Legislature  
Nate Lewis, WA Farmland Trust  
Patrick "PJ" Cawley, Charlie's Produce  
Rebecca Saldaña, WA State Legislature  
Richard Conlin, Conlin Columbia Partnership for Cities  
Tim Crosby, Thread Fund  
Tom Salzer, WA Association of Conservation Districts

*\* Member chose to 'stand aside' for voting. A 'stand aside' does not count against consensus*

February 2, 2026

To:

Rep. Laurie Jinkins  
Speaker of the House

Sen. Jamie Pedersen  
Senate Majority Leader

Rep. Drew Stokesbary  
House Minority Leader

Sen. John Braun  
Senate Minority Leader

Rep. Timm Ormsby  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Sen. June Robinson  
Chair, Senate Ways & Means Committee

Rep. Mia Gregerson  
Vice Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Sen. Derek Stanford  
Vice Chair, Senate Ways & Means Committee

Rep. Nicole Macri  
Vice Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Sen. Chris Gildon  
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Ways & Means Committee

Rep. Travis Couture  
Ranking Minority Member, House Appropriations Committee

cc: Rep. Kristine Reeves, Vice Chair, Consumer Protection & Business Committee

Re: Statewide Food Security Strategy

Dear Members of the Washington State Legislature,

The Washington State Food Policy Forum (Forum) is a public-private partnership established in statute to identify and advance solutions that strengthen Washington's food system. Its statutory goals include increasing the availability of Washington-grown foods, reducing food insecurity, improving coordination among food policy entities, and supporting the viability of small and mid-scale agriculture.

The Forum convenes diverse stakeholders from agriculture, public health, food access, conservation, and government to develop consensus recommendations that enhance food security, support farm viability, and improve coordination across the food system.

The Forum met in 2025 to identify timely and actionable priorities to pursue in the 2025–27 biennium, and this is what informed our [2025–2027 Report to the Legislature \(October 2025\)](#). A priority for the Forum in 2025–2027 is Food System Coordination for Food Security.

**FOOD POLICY FORUM  
APPOINTED MEMBERS**

Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline  
Addie Candib, American Farmland Trust  
Aslan Meade, Thurston Economic Development Council  
Brian Estes, LINC Foods  
\*Brice Montgomery, WA State Dept of Social and Health Services  
Caleb Gwerder, WA Farm Bureau  
\*Chad Kruger, Washington State University – Office of Research  
Chris Cary, Food Northwest  
Chris Elder, King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks  
Chris Voigt, Washington Potato Commission  
Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition  
Colleen Donovan, WA State Farmers Market Association  
\*Derek Sandison, WA State Dept of Agriculture  
Diane Dempster, Clark County Food System Council  
Jamielyn Wheeler, Northwest Harvest  
\*James Thompson, State Conservation Commission  
Jennifer Otten, University of Washington – Food Systems  
Jon DeVaney, WA State Tree Fruit Association  
Judy Warnick, WA State Legislature  
KayDee Gilkey, WA Association of Wheat Growers  
\*Kyle Unland, WA State Department of Health  
\*Leanne Eko, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Linda Neunzig, Snohomish County  
Marcia Ostrom, Washington State University - Food Systems Program  
Mary Dye, WA State Legislature  
Mary Embleton, King Conservation District  
Melissa Spear, Tilth Alliance  
Mia Gregerson, WA State Legislature  
Nate Lewis, WA Farmland Trust  
Patrick "PJ" Cawley, Charlie's Produce  
Rebecca Saldaña, WA State Legislature  
Richard Conlin, Conlin Columbia Partnership for Cities  
Tim Crosby, Thread Fund  
Tom Salzer, WA Association of Conservation Districts

*\* Member chose to 'stand aside' for voting. A 'stand aside' does not count against consensus*

We appreciate the Legislature's attention to food security and support the alignment between legislation, such as HB 2238, Statewide Food Security Strategy, and the Forum's 2019–2025 recommendations. With this letter, we are sharing some of the Forum's current body of consensus recommendations.

Taken together, the Forum's recommendations offer actionable strategies to strengthen Washington's hunger safety net and advance food security more broadly.

## 2019-2025 Forum Policy Forum Consensus Recommendations

### Food Insecurity (2019)

- Expand produce purchasing initiatives prioritizing Washington-grown products (WSDA Farm to Food Pantry, DOH Fruit & Vegetable Incentive Programs, DOH Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, WSDA & OSPI farm to school programs)
- Maximize participation in nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, School Meals, Child & Adult Care Food Program, WIC)
- Address barriers to accepting and accessing benefits at farmers markets, farm stands, and non-traditional retailers

### Agricultural Land Protection & Availability & Next Generation Farming (2019, 2022)

- Support funding for tools to protect agricultural land from conversion to other uses and assist farmers in transferring and accessing land, including conservation easements and creative financing models (2019)
- Incentivize landowners to sell, rent, or lease to beginning farmers, while encouraging producers to take on land-based projects through means such as tax credits and Open Space Farm and Agriculture Program investments (2019)
- Enact policies that reflect the significance of protecting agricultural land, communities, and infrastructure, and place a high priority on this goal (2019)
- Require urban infill housing options to relieve development pressure on agricultural land (2022)
- Require agricultural impact statements prior to city annexation or urban growth area expansion (2022)
- Mitigate lost farmland through conservation of comparable adjacent farmland (3:1 ratio if not adjacent) (2022)
- Evaluate concentrating growth in LAMIRDs to prevent farmland loss (2022)
- Require agricultural impact statements for public projects that involve the acquisition and/or conversion of farmland (2022)
- Evaluate and clarify the relationship between the Growth Management Act and Watershed Management Act to plan for adequate legal water for agricultural purposes on lands zoned for or currently utilized for agriculture across the state (2022)

Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline  
Addie Candib, American Farmland Trust  
Aslan Meade, Thurston Economic Development Council  
Brian Estes, LINC Foods  
\*Brice Montgomery, WA State Dept of Social and Health Services  
Caleb Gwerder, WA Farm Bureau  
\*Chad Kruger, Washington State University – Office of Research  
Chris Cary, Food Northwest  
Chris Elder, King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks  
Chris Voigt, Washington Potato Commission  
Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition  
Colleen Donovan, WA State Farmers Market Association  
\*Derek Sandison, WA State Dept of Agriculture  
Diane Dempster, Clark County Food System Council  
Jamielyn Wheeler, Northwest Harvest  
\*James Thompson, State Conservation Commission  
Jennifer Otten, University of Washington – Food Systems  
Jon DeVaney, WA State Tree Fruit Association  
Judy Warnick, WA State Legislature  
KayDee Gilkey, WA Association of Wheat Growers  
\*Kyle Unland, WA State Department of Health  
\*Leanne Eko, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Linda Neunzig, Snohomish County  
Marcia Ostrom, Washington State University - Food Systems Program  
Mary Dye, WA State Legislature  
Mary Embleton, King Conservation District  
Melissa Spear, Tilth Alliance  
Mia Gregerson, WA State Legislature  
Nate Lewis, WA Farmland Trust  
Patrick "PJ" Cawley, Charlie's Produce  
Rebecca Saldaña, WA State Legislature  
Richard Conlin, Conlin Columbia Partnership for Cities  
Tim Crosby, Thread Fund  
Tom Salzer, WA Association of Conservation Districts

\* Member chose to 'stand aside' for voting. A 'stand aside' does not count against consensus

- Implement policies directing solar development to least-conflict areas, prioritizing rooftops, structures, and brownfields (2022)
- Substantially increase funding (\$100M) for farmland protection transactions to purchase development rights and agricultural conservation easements with priority given to historically disadvantaged farmers (2022)
- Fully fund state voluntary conservation programs to support the viability of agriculture and protect critical areas and habitat (2022)
- Increase financial and technical assistance for local governments and conservation districts, especially in at-risk, under-resourced counties to implement farmland-retention tools and support for the Department of Commerce to assess how local tools and regulations either enable or hinder agricultural viability (2022)
- Increase access to fresh food by supporting urban, peri-urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production (2022)

### Alleviating Barriers to Small & Mid-Scale Farm Viability & Market Access

(2019)

- Offer technical assistance and market-readiness support to farmers, co-ops, and distributors so they can meet market needs
- Improve the capacity and purchasing ability of schools and other institutions to buy and use Washington farm products, including funding incentives
- Increase purchases of Washington farm products with procurement policies and better visibility and promotion of Washington products in the marketplace

### Regional Food Infrastructure and Institutional Procurement for Economic Development (2019)

- Support efforts that increase the availability of regional-scale ag-related infrastructure (including processing, storage, aggregation, and distribution) to increase the economic viability of small and mid-sized agricultural businesses
- Identify funding and financing mechanisms for capital investment in regional food system infrastructure that is needed for rural food and ag entrepreneurship-based economic development
- Build statewide capacity to coordinate and share information among local projects so that we can build complementary regional systems that connect and work as one whole statewide system

### Impacts of Climate Change (2019, 2025)

- Work with policy makers, university researchers, Tribes, and agencies to project future agricultural water availability needs across the state, and to identify strategies to reduce water use conflicts (2019)
- Promote research and programmatic investments in agricultural viability, resiliency, and market development (2019)

**FOOD POLICY FORUM  
APPOINTED MEMBERS**

Aaron Czyzewski, Food Lifeline  
Addie Candib, American Farmland Trust  
Aslan Meade, Thurston Economic Development Council  
Brian Estes, LINC Foods  
\*Brice Montgomery, WA State Dept of Social and Health Services  
Caleb Gwerder, WA Farm Bureau  
\*Chad Kruger, Washington State University – Office of Research  
Chris Cary, Food Northwest  
Chris Elder, King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks  
Chris Voigt, Washington Potato Commission  
Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition  
Colleen Donovan, WA State Farmers Market Association  
\*Derek Sandison, WA State Dept of Agriculture  
Diane Dempster, Clark County Food System Council  
Jamielyn Wheeler, Northwest Harvest  
\*James Thompson, State Conservation Commission  
Jennifer Otten, University of Washington – Food Systems  
Jon DeVaney, WA State Tree Fruit Association  
Judy Warnick, WA State Legislature  
KayDee Gilkey, WA Association of Wheat Growers  
\*Kyle Unland, WA State Department of Health  
\*Leanne Eko, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Linda Neunzig, Snohomish County  
Marcia Ostrom, Washington State University - Food Systems Program  
Mary Dye, WA State Legislature  
Mary Embleton, King Conservation District  
Melissa Spear, Tilth Alliance  
Mia Gregerson, WA State Legislature  
Nate Lewis, WA Farmland Trust  
Patrick "PJ" Cawley, Charlie's Produce  
Rebecca Saldaña, WA State Legislature  
Richard Conlin, Conlin Columbia Partnership for Cities  
Tim Crosby, Thread Fund  
Tom Salzer, WA Association of Conservation Districts

*\* Member chose to 'stand aside' for voting. A 'stand aside' does not count against consensus*

- Ensure agricultural adaptation resources are well coordinated, funded, and staffed to support farmers in making informed business decisions in a changing climate (2019)
- Develop a strategy and policies to ensure water availability for Western Washington food production; establish an Office for Western Washington Water using the same managing principles, funding, and statutory authority as the Office of Columbia River (2025)
- Request Office of Columbia River collaborate with the new Western Washington office to conduct a comprehensive study of future water supply and demand, opportunities to expand water resources while protecting instream flows, and estimates for agricultural production needs (2025)
- Create a Senior Food Water Policy Advisor position within Washington Department of Agriculture with liaison responsibility to Department of Ecology, State Conservation Commission, Department of Natural Resources, WDFW, and other agencies (2025)

Please review the [\*\*Appendix: Detailed Forum Recommendations by Food System Component 2019, 2022, and 2025\*\*](#) for more information.

**These recommendations reflect the Forum's expertise and commitment to strengthening Washington's food system, and we hope that they serve as a valuable resource as you consider policies to improve food security for all Washingtonians. These recommendations were developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and consensus-building processes, representing areas where diverse food system actors have found common ground. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the Forum's work and recommendations further. Please feel free to reach out if we can provide additional context or information.**

Sincerely,

Washington State Food Policy Forum