

Kitsap County Agriculture Land Use Survey - Summary and Analysis

6/18/2025

Summary

The Agriculture Land Use survey was completed by 18 respondents. Overall, the survey findings reflect a strong alignment among agricultural stakeholders in Kitsap County around key priorities: preserving farmland, enhancing farm economic viability, and reforming regulatory frameworks to better accommodate the realities of agricultural operations. Respondents demonstrated consistent support for key land use goals, with five out of six goals receiving over 72% "Strongly Agree" ratings.

Policy mechanisms such as appointing an agricultural advisory council (supported by 55.6% "Strongly Agree"), creating a local PACE (Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement) program (61.1%), and updating conditional use regulations (72.2%) received strong endorsement. Similarly, over 66% of respondents strongly supported code revisions to allow shipping containers and farm equipment, and 66.7% supported establishing clear definitions of "gardens."

The respondents also underscored the importance of balancing environmental stewardship with flexible, site-specific regulation—reflected in 50% or more support for context-sensitive regulatory reforms. The feedback highlights both the opportunities and the urgent needs facing local agriculture — particularly with respect to market access, affordable land, resource availability, and responsive governance. These insights offer a clear foundation for policy development, interagency collaboration, and future planning efforts aimed at sustaining a resilient, economically viable, and environmentally responsible agricultural sector in Kitsap County.

A. General Characteristics

Land Ownership Status

- 100% of respondents reported owning their land outright.

Size of Agricultural Property

- Respondents' parcels ranged widely: approximately 33% under 10 acres, 39% between 10–40 acres, and 28% over 40 acres.

Zoning Designations

- A majority of parcels (approximately 61%) were located within Rural Residential zones; 22% in Rural Wooded, with the remainder in other rural categories.

Current Land Use

- Over 80% of respondents reported active agricultural use. Approximately 55% also reside on the land, indicating mixed-use properties.

B. Agricultural Activity

Primary Types of Agricultural Production

- Production types included vegetables (72%), fruits (61%), livestock (50%), hay (33%), and value-added products (28%).

Sales and Distribution

- 67% used farm stands, 61% sold at farmers markets, 50% offered CSAs, and 33% had wholesale accounts.

Future Agricultural Intentions

- 72% expressed intent to expand or diversify operations. Barriers cited by 44% included zoning, permitting, and economic conditions.

C. Challenges

Land Use Regulations

- 66% identified permitting or zoning as obstacles to expanding or sustaining farm operations.

Environmental Regulations

- 61% cited concerns over critical area regulations, especially wetland buffers and stream setbacks.

Economic Viability

- 72% indicated that high land costs and insufficient infrastructure were significant threats to viability.

Access to Resources

- 56% reported difficulty accessing labor and technical assistance; 50% cited water access or irrigation rights as major barriers.

D. Opportunities

Incentives for Conservation or Agricultural Easements

- 77.8% strongly supported purchase or transfer of development rights (PACE/TDR); 11.1% were neutral or unsure.

Educational or Outreach Programs

- 66.7% supported expanded educational resources and peer networking opportunities.

Infrastructure Investments

- 72.2% supported shared processing and storage infrastructure to support economic viability.

Regulatory Reforms

- Strong support (66.7%) for clearer agricultural exemptions, and 61.1% for streamlined permitting processes.

E. Coordination & Governance

County Role in Supporting Agriculture

- 83.3% agreed or strongly agreed that Kitsap County should take a more active role in agricultural support services.

Preferred Governance Models

- 55.6% favored forming a farmer advisory board; 33.3% preferred integration into existing planning bodies.

Partnerships

- 72.2% endorsed closer coordination with organizations like WSU Extension, land trusts, and conservation districts.

F. Policy Priorities

Land Protection

- 72.2% strongly agreed on using zoning and conservation tools to preserve farmland.

Farm Viability

- 66.7% supported enhanced market access and economic policy supports such as right-to-farm protections.

Environmental Stewardship

- 50.0% emphasized the need for environmentally responsible farming within flexible regulatory frameworks.

Flexibility in Regulation

- 61.1% favored risk-based, context-sensitive regulatory revisions instead of blanket mandates.