



Sustaining Ag in a Divided Landscape: Insights from the State of Washington

*Farm Foundation Roundtable
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Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

Role of WSDA

- Assure the quality (sanitary and phytosanitary inspections), safety (Food Safety Modernization Act), and availability (food assistance programs) of the food supply.
- Manage the registration, distribution, use, and disposal of pesticides and fertilizers.
- Protect the state's natural resources by preventing and controlling plant and animal diseases.
- Support marketing the state's agricultural products at the local, national, and international level.



About Washington Farms

- **32,076** – total number of farms (2022). Most farms are family owned.
 - **300+** - variety of crops grown in Washington.
 - **\$12.06 billion** – market value of crops and livestock only (2023).
- **\$1.99 billion** – value of apples, state's top crop
 - **89%** - percent of Washington farms considered small farms
 - 82% - less than 180 acres
 - 67% - less than 50 acres



Top 10 Commodities in Washington*

(2023)



1

APPLES

\$1.991 billion



2

CATTLE

\$1.332 billion



3

MILK

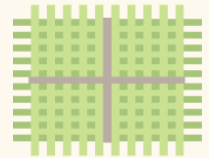
\$1.331 billion



4

POTATOES

\$1.160 billion



5

HAY

\$861.7 million



6

WHEAT

\$672.2 million



7

EGGS

\$405.9 million



8

HOPS

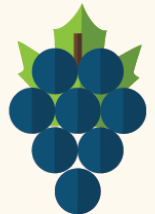
\$405.8 million



9

ONIONS

\$383.7 million



10






















GRAPES

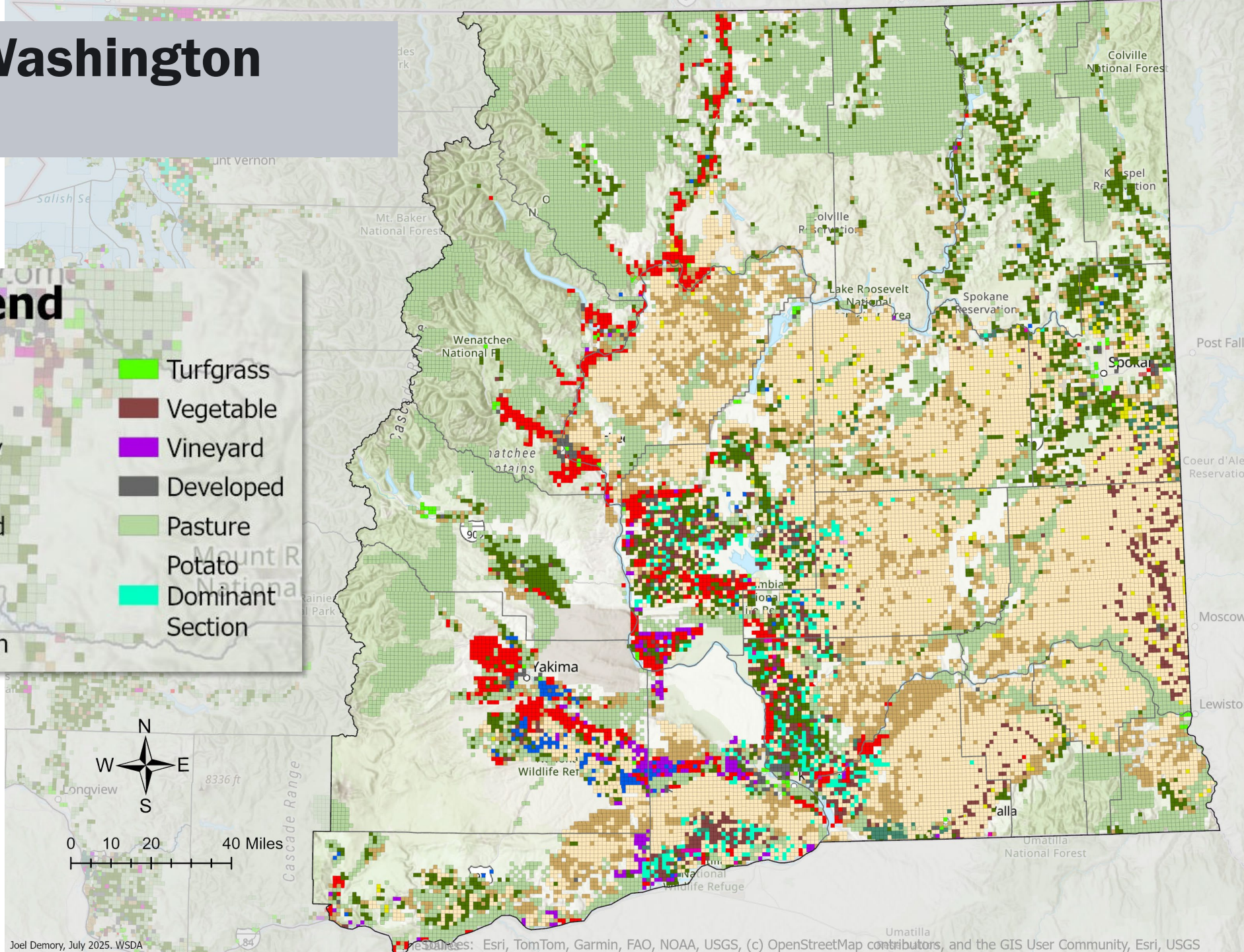
\$309.3 million

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, unless otherwise noted. *USDA statistics exclude cannabis.

2024 Eastern Washington Crop Map

Legend

Crop Group	
	Berry
	Cereal Grain
	Commercial Tree
	Flower Bulb
	Green Manure
	Hay/Silage
	Herb
	Melon
	Nursery
	Oilseed
	Orchard
	Other
	Seed
	Shellfish
	Turfgrass
	Vegetable
	Vineyard
	Developed
	Pasture
	Potato
	Dominant Section



Washington's Top Export Destinations & Export Products (2024)



Top Export Destinations

Canada	\$1.3 billion
Japan	\$1.1 billion
Mexico	\$908.2 million
China	\$692.6 million
South Korea	\$508.2 million

Top Export Products

Frozen French Fries	\$1.1 billion
Fish and Seafood	\$939.9 billion
Apples	\$845.2 million
Wheat	\$651.9 million
Dairy	\$563 million

Factors Affecting Viability of Washington Agriculture

Major pressures on the agricultural industry

- Increasing input costs, especially labor
- Low commodity/crop prices
- Reduced funding for technical support and research
- Regulatory burdens
- Weather/climate impacts
- Water scarcity
- Pest pressures (Japanese beetle, little cherry disease, blight)
- Impact of trade barriers/lack of emphasis on market growth



Photo credit: Dr. Andrea Bixby Brosi, WSU

Situation Summary



- High input costs, low commodity prices, regulatory burdens, lack of expanded trade opportunities, and labor shortages are driving down profitability and driving up farm consolidation.

- As an agency supporting the agricultural industry, ***our focus is to attempt to improve farm viability, encourage workforce development, and to increase market access.***

Agricultural Viability Study

- Intends to shed light on challenges producers in Washington are facing and works with partners at every level – local commissions, state agencies and Legislators – to develop sustainable solutions.
- Conducted by WSU IMPACT Center in partnership with WSDA.
- Two-day conference held May 2024
- Final report available fall 2025.



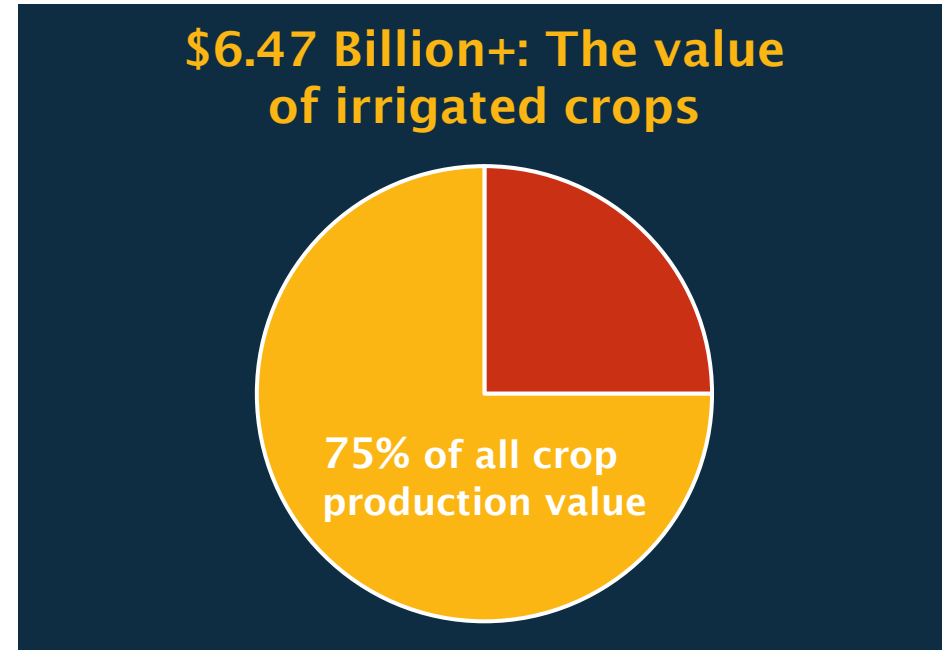
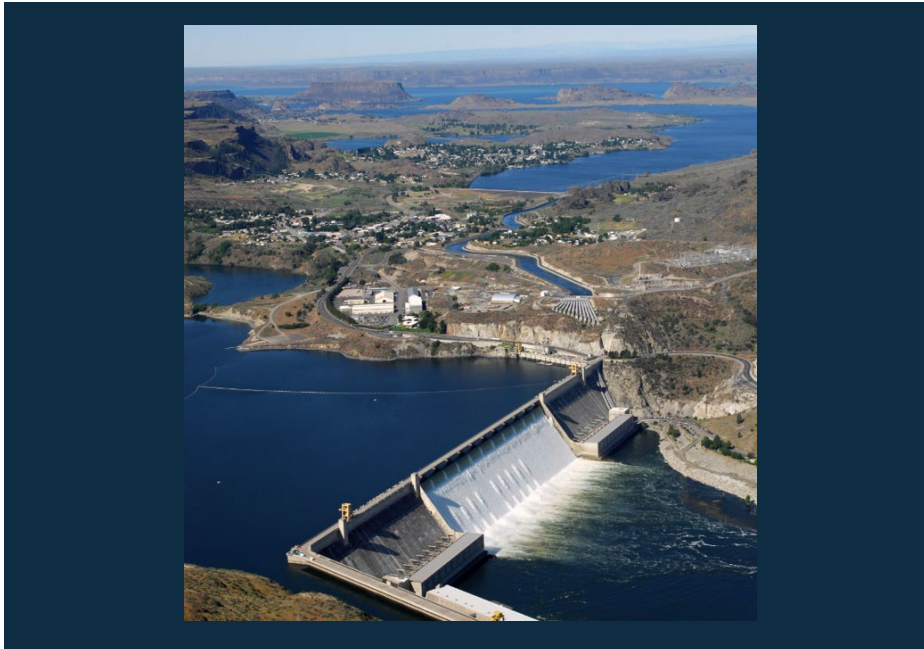
The Role of Technology in Agriculture

- **Precision Agriculture:** Data-driven tools to optimize inputs like water, fertilizers and pesticides
 - Reduces environmental impact
 - Increases yield efficiency and resource use
- **Robotics & Automation:** Autonomous tractors, drone monitoring, laser weeders and more!
 - Addresses labor shortages
 - Improves efficiency & reduces operational costs
 - Enhances food safety through precision handling
- **Economic & Environmental Impact:** Remaining competitive while meeting sustainability goals



The Value of Irrigation to Agriculture

- Of Washington's \$8.6 billion crop production value, more than 75% of all crop value is derived from irrigated agriculture



- Need to expand water supplies for agriculture, fish (instream flows), and municipal/domestic uses

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)

- NASDA's role in US Ag
 - Represents state agriculture departments across all 50 states and territories
 - Advocates for state-federal collaboration on ag policy
 - Focus areas: trade, Food Safety Modernization Act implementation, animal health, land and water conservation, workforce development, and MAHA



Urban–Rural Divide: A Growing Challenge

Overview:

- Policies shaped by urban population and legislators
- Disconnect between urban priorities and rural/ag realities
- Labor, water, and environmental policies often hit rural areas hardest

Implications for Ag:

- Risk of losing support for critical infrastructure, transportation, and research funding.
- Need for bridging initiatives like legislative ag tours, urban-rural listening sessions, or ag education in schools to close the understanding gap



Washington Grown: A Strategic Outreach Model

- TV + digital campaign and social media connecting urban consumers to farming
- Builds public trust in sustainable, safe ag practices
- Adaptable model for other states or commodity groups
 - *Consumers who trust and know their local farmers are less likely to support policies that harm producers.*



Farm Bill

- 2025?
- Titles important to WA agriculture:
 - Conservation – NRCS Funding (Equip, RCPP, CRP, PL-566)
 - Nutrition – SNAP
 - Research – NIFA Funding (SCRI, AFRI)
 - Trade – MAP, FMD
 - Horticulture – Specialty Crop Block Grants





Questions

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