

Sustainable Farms and Fields (SB 5947)



Overview: The Sustainable Farms and Fields bill (SB 5947) addresses agricultural emissions by creating a grant program to incentivize farmers to adopt practices designed to sequester carbon or reduce emissions. Carbon Washington is advocating for its passage in the 2020 legislative session.

By engaging rural residents, conservatives, and our natural resource economy in the solution, this bill is not only better policy, but also better politics. The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program:

- Provides resources for farmers and rural communities.
- Invests in cost efficient and effective approaches to address climate change.
- Supports other conservation goals such as erosion control and habitat restoration.
- Provides technical assistance funds to the conservation districts to support farmers implementing Sustainable Farms and Fields practices and aligned conservation goals.

Background: In 2019, the Sustainable Farms and Fields bill was introduced in the Washington State legislature with bipartisan support and passed the Senate. The bill did not advance in the House Rural Development, Agriculture, and Rural Development. However, a budget proviso directed the Washington State Conservation District (WSCC) and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to conduct a gap analysis and lead a stakeholder engagement process. The WSCC led these efforts in consultation with the WSDA.

Stakeholder Process: To solicit input on a Sustainable Farms and Fields program, the WSCC and Carbon Washington reached out to and collaborated with farmers and food system stakeholders in the fall of 2019.

WSCC Stakeholder Engagement and Recommendations

- The WSCC led two meetings and released a survey to solicit input from a diverse group of stakeholders across the state.
- Overall, there was **interest in a new grant program** administered by the WSCC to support farmers in adopting practices that sequester carbon and reduce emissions.
- **90% of the 119 farmers surveyed said they were likely to adopt climate-friendly farming practices** if the Sustainable Farms and Fields program was established.
- Based on stakeholder engagement, WSCC recommends establishing a Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program, ensuring that a new grant program does not take funding away from existing conservation programs, including funds for conservation districts to offer technical assistance to farmers to adopt new practices, and considering marginalized farmers and farmers from low-income counties.
- The final WSCC report can be found [here](#).

Carbon Washington Outreach and Collaboration

- Carbon Washington reached out to over **250 farms and food system stakeholders** to solicit input on the bill
- Following the WSCC report, Carbon Washington worked directly with **stakeholders, including many who initially opposed SB 5947, to further develop and improve** the bill language.
- **Over 65 farms and organizations from across the state** have signed onto a [letter of support](#) for the Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program. Supporters include Tilth Alliance, Northwest Farmers Union, Family Wineries of Washington State, The Nature Conservancy, Wilcox Farm, Finnriver Farm and Cidery, and Bale Breaker Brewing Company.

More information about Carbon Washington's advocacy of this program can be found at <https://carbonwa.org/carbonwas-sustainable-farms-and-fields-campaign/>