



P.O. Box 1517
Bellingham, WA 98227

July 6th, 2009

Whatcom County Council
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105
Bellingham, Washington 98225

Dear Whatcom County Council,

SUBJECT: Resolution declaring the County Council's goals for farmland preservation

Futurewise Whatcom is the local chapter of statewide land-use advocacy organization, Futurewise, whose mission is to promote healthy communities and cities while protecting farmland, forests and shorelines today and for future generations. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the resolution put forward by Farm Friends regarding farmland preservation and recommended next steps for continued viability of a local agricultural economy in Whatcom County, and ask County Council to vote in favor of the resolution.

Citizens of Whatcom County support their farms and farmers. The 2007 Agriculture Census figures show a 125% increase in direct sales (end-consumers buying directly from the farmer) in Whatcom County since 2002. This is 5x the state average. In the Whatcom County Values and Beliefs survey released in January 2009, respondents indicated working farmland as the most important land type to conserve over the next 50 years, giving farmland an 18% lead of the next highest ranking land type. Additionally, respondents noted that in the next 50 years, protecting working farmland should be an urgent or high priority level for local government.

Whatcom County's own planning documents highlight the priority of farmland preservation for an agricultural economy:

- **Comprehensive Plan GOAL 8A:** Conserve and enhance Whatcom County's agricultural land base for the continued production of food and fiber.
- **Countywide Planning Policy I9:** The County and the cities recognize the need for the protection and utilization of natural resources and resource lands including agricultural, mineral, forestry and fishing. As part of a broad based economy, productive timber, agriculture and fisheries industries should be supported in a sustainable manner.
- **GMA Planning Goal 8, Natural Resource Industries:** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.

Please continue to provide a clear goal to shoot for in our community as a necessary guide for directing resources, staff time, and future planning policies, by voting in favor of the resolution before you to preserve farmland and the agricultural economy in Whatcom County.

Sincerely,

Cathy Lehman
Chapter Director
Whatcom County