

# ADVOCATING FOR GOOD FOOD: A LOOK INSIDE WSFFN

Russ Lehman, Executive Director, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network

*"Whenever the Obamas seriously poked at Big Food, they were quickly outlobbied and outgunned; the food movement still barely exists as a political force." ~Michael Pollan, New York Times; October 5, 2016.*

Interesting thing, this sometimes very awkward intersection of capitalism and democracy. Any trip to a grocery store, or viewing of virtually any commercial message would make one believe that those who care about healthy, sustainably grown food must have all the power in the world. After all, marketers seem to fall all over themselves trying to put "natural," "healthy" or even "locally grown" on their products.

They do it because consumers are increasingly aware of, and insistent upon, real food that won't harm their health or the health of their kids. Organic products have shifted from being a lifestyle choice for a small share of consumers to being consumed, at least occasionally, by a majority of Americans. National surveys conducted during the early 2000s found that two-thirds of surveyed shoppers had purchased organically grown foods.

## WHAT WSFFN DOES

The Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network aims to leverage this economic voice to increase the political voice, changing the disconnect between marketplace and political realities. We work on the policy and advocacy needed to build and nourish a food system that nourishes our bodies, our environment and our communities.

Does carrying out this mission mean fighting for something, or fighting against something? Do we fight for food security... or against food insecurity? Do we promote and celebrate organic and sustainable farms... or reject conventional, chemical-heavy industrial "food" production systems? The answer is simple: both are necessary. Of course we absolutely must tell those who are doing wrong how to change direction for the greater good. We also must let them know how to do it the right way.

One program we have helped to create and grow throughout the state is called Farm to School. This program helps connect schools and local organic farms so that school children learn where and how real food is grown, and local farmers gain markets for their products and thus increase their economic viability. This effort, with its many dedicated and committed staff and volunteers throughout

the state is a win-win-win example of what is possible for healthy food, healthy farms, and public awareness.

Along with our close friends at Tilth Alliance, and a great many others in the "Food Space," we are committed to fixing our food system so that all people have access to food that is good on every level: not only clean, healthy, delicious but also ecologically and socially regenerative.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Find out what actions you can take to promote good food in our state by visiting the WSFFN website: [wsffn.org](http://wsffn.org).

## WSFFN POLICY UPDATE: GROCERY INDUSTRY FINED

In November, a Washington state court ordered the Grocery Manufacturers Association to pay a U.S. record \$18M fine because their own documents showed that the trade group wanted to insulate individual companies from consumer blowback for opposing a food labeling initiative in 2013. The grocery industry believed it could evade disclosure and had distributed talking points to members advising them to deny that they were funding the anti-I-522 campaign.

Now we (and obviously, they) know that the public feels very strongly about food quality and about money in politics overpowering public interest. To help prevent the likely \$50M the industry has spent on this from going unnoticed, we are widely disseminating this information.