

TILTH PRODUCERS POLICY UPDATE

Anne Schwartz, Blue Heron Farm, Rockport, WA

TILTH PRODUCERS IN WASHINGTON, DC

Tilth Producers is an active member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Our Policy Intern, Ariana Taylor-Stanely, represented Tilth Producers at the NSAC annual meeting in Washington, DC this past January. The meeting focused on identifying priorities (see below) and developing implementation strategies for the next Farm Bill. While in DC, Ariana also met to discuss these issues with Maria Cantwell and other Washington State legislators. According to Ariana, "our representatives expressed support for sustainable agriculture, but will need continued pressure from us all season to turn that support into votes." Visit the Tilth Producers Policy Blog (<http://www.tilthproducers.org/policy/policy-blog/>) for a full summary of her trip.

NSAC FARM BILL 2012 PRIORITIES

- ◊ Local and regional food system-building policies in the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act
- ◊ Beginning farmer enabling policies in the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act
- ◊ Sustainable agriculture research programs
- ◊ Working lands conservation programs
- ◊ Food safety policies supportive of sustainable agricultural production and processing
- ◊ Preserving mandatory conservation funding
- ◊ Funding Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG) program, and Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)

TILTH PRODUCERS FUND

The Dean of Students at WSU's College of Agriculture, Dan Bernardo, has announced an Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Summit will be held April 20, 2012 in Seattle. Tilth Producers will participate in a discussion focused on the future of organic and sustainable agricultural research at WSU. This event will mark the beginning of a university-driven campaign to develop a \$25 million "Endowment for Organic Research" at WSU. Tilth Producers is meeting on a regular basis with Melissa Bean, WSU Development Specialist, to develop a "Tilth Producers Fund" within this endowment. The goal of the "Tilth Producers Fund" is to aid in developing a Tilth legacy with permanent involvement in creating and funding research priorities. We will continue to update members on these developments

CONTINUED FUNDING FOR SENIOR AND WIC PROGRAMS

Midway through the legislative session, we've already seen a big success with the overwhelming support to continue funding the Farmers Market Nutrition Program Senior and WIC coupon program by the House and Senate. The Departments of Health, and Social and Health Services manage these programs that provide vouchers to low-income mothers, children, and seniors to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local growers at farmers markets across the state. These programs cost the state \$100,000 and leverage \$900,000 federal dollars into local economies while giving aid to low-income families to buy healthy food from Washington farmers.

STATE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SMALL FARM INTERNSHIP BILL

The Small Farm Internship Bill (SB 6392) bill passed in the Senate committee unanimously with a vote of 47 to 0. The program was expanded to include five new counties, totaling 14 counties: San Juan, Skagit, Whatcom, King, Thurston, Kitsap, Jefferson, Spokane, Pierce, Yakima, Chelan, Grant, Kittitas and Lincoln. The new legislation extends the pilot program for five years.

RULES AT A GLANCE FOR WASHINGTON STATE SMALL FARM INTERNSHIP BILL (SB6392)

- ◊ Annual farm sales must be \$250,000 or below
- ◊ Maximum limit of three interns hosted at once
- ◊ Farm owners are responsible for paying into workers' compensation account (\$0.30 to \$0.90 per hour)
- ◊ Interns must not replace experienced workers
- ◊ Internship must be educational in nature, as agreed upon by the farm owner, intern, and program leaders.

MANDATORY LABELING OF GMO EFFORTS

Recent late attempts to pass a statewide mandatory labeling rule for genetically modified foods (GMO) failed to make it out of committee. There are a number of similar legislative labeling bills gaining support around the country. Tilth Producers will continue supporting these efforts and engaging members as appropriate.

Farmers, seed producers, and eaters in San Juan County are circulating a petition that calls for a county wide ban all GMO crops. Tilth Producers will be watching this closely and urges our San Juan County members to engage in these efforts. For more information, please contact Ken Akopiantz at swiftbay@yahoo.com.