

# Skagit County Agritourism Situation Assessment



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Prepared for:



Skagit County Planning and Development Services  
1800 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon WA 98273  
Contact: Peter Gill, Long Range Planning Manager  
[pgill@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:pgill@co.skagit.wa.us)

Prepared by:  
**BERK**  
STRATEGY ■ ANALYSIS ■ COMMUNICATIONS

Lisa Grueter, AICP, Principal, Project Manager, Policy Lead  
Chloe Kinsey, Associate, Analyst  
Jescelle Major, Associate, Engagement  
Vivian Saveth, Associate Principal, Situation Assessment Lead  
Ben Silver, Senior Associate, GIS

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## Key Findings

Skagit County is reviewing what agritourism means to the county agricultural community, residents, and other stakeholders as well as the fit of agritourism in the Comprehensive Plan vision and the Growth Management Act (GMA) resource land protections. This Situation Assessment is designed to describe the economics of agritourism, assess current policy and code allowances, and provide case studies. Key findings are highlighted below and elaborated in the remainder of this assessment.

### AGRITOURISM DEFINITIONS AND NATIONAL TRENDS

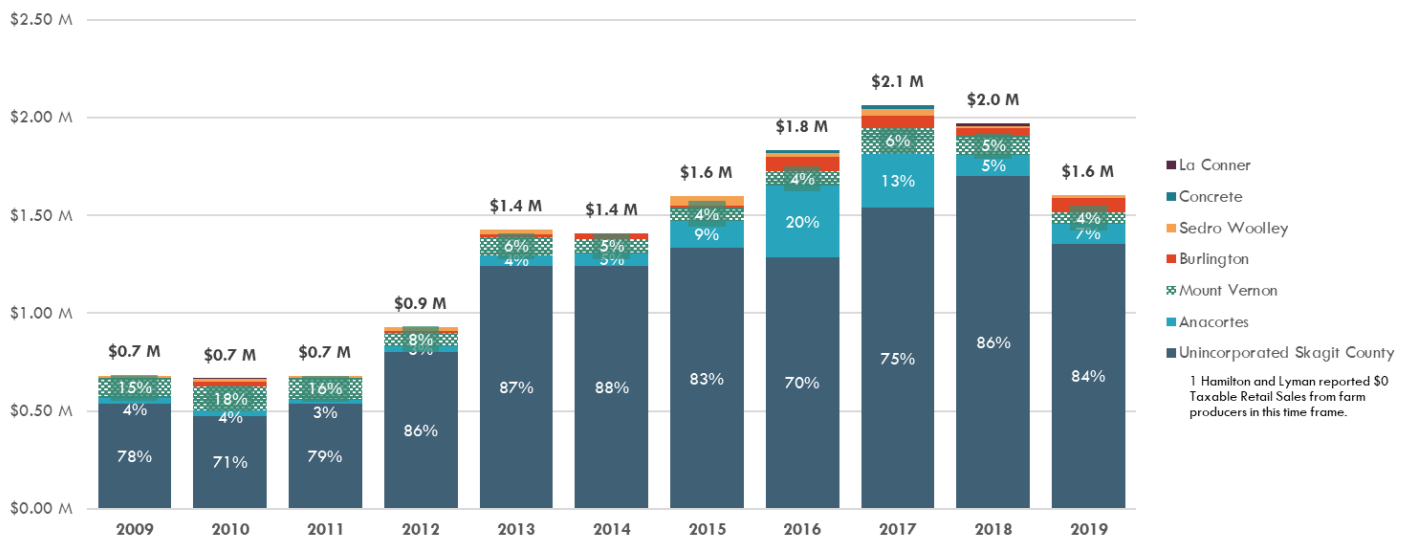
- **Agritourism definitions vary and involve five types of activities – education, entertainment, direct sales, outdoor activity, and hospitality – which differ in depth of connection to the primary agricultural activity at that site.** Policy definitions of agritourism are also important. State laws, including those in Washington State, define agritourism and create liability protections for “agritourism professionals.” The Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) at RCW 36.70A.177 protects agriculture of long-term significance for principally agricultural use and allows for some accessory uses that support the agricultural activity. See Appendix A for an example range of state laws.
- **Agritourism can bolster a producer’s income and the local economy.** National and state research shows:
  - Supply and demand for agritourism is increasing.
  - Evidence is mixed on whether agritourism has substantial direct income impacts on individual farm operations. Farms report the highest agritourism revenues associated with grapes, fruit and tree nuts, and specialty livestock.
  - The economic impacts of agritourism can extend well beyond the farm’s borders and/or the site of the agritourism activity, through employee spending and spurring additional local tourism spending.
- **Agritourism operators tend to have smaller farms, be female-led, and be run by older farmers.** Those closer to population centers tend to have more agritourism revenue, though those in remote rural areas are most likely to take up some form of agritourism activity.
- **Care should be taken in the type and location of agritourism to address:** protection of the land base for **primary use of agriculture**, contribution to the community’s quality of life, **avoiding excess traffic** interfering with agricultural activities and rural character, support **diversity of jobs and opportunities**, and support **opportunities for the community to learn about local food** and support the local economy.
- **Regarding level of activity, agritourism visits can range from 200-1,000 visitors a year.** In the Western US, the median number of visitors was 500 in 2018; most operators are open 100 days or less per year, but a quarter were open to agritourism year-round.

### SKAGIT COUNTY AGRITOURISM AND ECONOMICS

- Skagit County has the second-highest acreage of agricultural land among Western Washington counties.

- Skagit County was home to 1,041 farms operations and 97,700<sup>1</sup> acres of land in farm operations, including cropland, pastureland, and woodland, as of 2017.
  - The long-term trend appears to be towards a small number of very large, profitable agricultural operations and a large number of very small operations that focus on agritourism and other activities to supplement their income.
- The top agricultural products by acreage are grass/hay, potatoes, shellfish, field corn, and barley. The top agricultural products by value are potatoes, nursery/floriculture products, dairy, miscellaneous crops, and field crops.
- No federal or state estimates of direct sales, retail sales, or income from agritourism captures a full and reliable picture of agritourism activity in Skagit County.
  - If counting direct produce sales in the definition (2017 Census of Agriculture), up to 20% of Skagit County farms could be considered to participate in agritourism. The most limited definition of direct income from agritourism (hayrides, etc.) places the number of operators at more like 1% of Skagit County farms and a minute fraction of sales.
- Taxable retail sales can provide a rough proxy of participation in agritourism. State sales tax applies to products such as plant starts, flowers, value-added products such as candles, soap, Christmas trees, and decorative items. Thus, farms reporting taxable retail sales may be a rough proxy for participation in agritourism activities. About 7% of farms paid sales tax in 2019. The tax is applied at the point of sale so a farm-made soap sold at a city farmer’s market would appear in the city’s figures. Since 2009, these types of sales have grown at a rate equivalent to 9% a year. See Exhibit 1.

**Exhibit 1. Taxable Retail Sales reported by Skagit County Crop and Animal Producers, 2009-2019**



Sources: Department of Revenue, 2020; BERK, 2021.

<sup>1</sup> The Census of Agriculture’s estimate of land in farm operations includes cropland, pastureland, and woodland. Its estimate of cropland and pastureland *only* totals 85,300 acres, similar to WSDA’s estimate of 84,100 total acres in crop and pastureland.

- In Skagit County, the economic impact from regional festivals, tourism promotion, and induced spending can dwarf direct farm sales and fees for agritourism activity. These festivals rely on the presence of agriculture, outdoor recreation, and rural appeal to draw tourists.
- There are dozens of existing operations that offer some form of agritourism (see Appendix D). The activities offered across these farms are wide-ranging, including u-pick operations, plant nurseries, farm tours, gift shops, cafés, events, rentals, weddings, lodging, farm stays, classes, workshops, tasting rooms, restaurants, corn mazes, and hayrides. (See Appendix D.)
- Inventoried agricultural activities and current use parcels are found throughout the county, but particularly in the Ag-NRL, RRv, and RRc-NRL zones. Agritourism activities are found in every region of the County but typically west of I-5. Agritourism appears associated with smaller parcels most often.
- Skagit County Code allows for a range of uses that are intended to help supplement farm income aside from growing crops and raising meat. See Appendix B. The most common uses that are either permitted outright or require a special use permit include: agricultural accessory uses (including public farm views, u-pick, tourism which promote local agriculture), bed and breakfasts, and seasonal roadside stands. Temporary events are allowed up to 24 days per year. Farm based business uses (e.g. value add production) are allowed in zones focused on lands of long-term significance for agriculture. The addition of seating to a farm based business or seasonal roadside stand is considered a restaurant and not allowed. Wedding venues are not considered related to agricultural production and thus not permitted as temporary events.
- In the last few years, there have been Comprehensive Plan amendments and permit requests to allow a wider range of agritourism activities, e.g. wedding facilities, on-farm restaurants, etc. The County intends through this study and a stakeholder engagement process to consider what agritourism means to the County’s agricultural community, rural residents, and others. Future agritourism policies will fit the Comprehensive Plan vision and GMA resource land protections.

## CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLE POLICIES

The study team selected three case studies – Marion County, Oregon and Snohomish and Thurston Counties in Washington State – based on their: (1) proximity to major population centers, (2) range of agricultural products, and (3) trends in growing agritourism. The case studies differ in their range of regulatory approaches to agritourism – more restrictive zoning (Marion County), evolving agritourism zoning (Snohomish County), and a flexible overlay zone (Thurston County). Key questions addressed for each example include:

- What is the definition of agritourism?
- What were the policies enacted?
- What is the status of agriculture in terms of economic impact and participation by producers?
- What is the condition of agritourism, e.g. trends, permitting, and effects on rural character?

Exhibit 2 compares each county. In summary:

- Marion County has more agricultural acres and operators than other counties, though its numbers of agritourism providers are fewer than Skagit County. This is likely due to its stricter allowances for

agritourism in Marion County where the state policy on agricultural land protection is highest. Due to producer interest and need to supplement income combined with proximity to a population center, agritourism and farm-direct sales are growing in popularity and are happening on a wide range of farm sizes. There is an effort to map and collectively market the sites online. Economic development staff at the County would like to see more flexibility in the range of uses allowed to bolster the agricultural economy in the community that was also hit hard by last season's fires.

- Snohomish County has the lowest market value of products but the highest reported agritourism receipts and operators in the Census in Washington State. It has a wider range of allowed uses around agritourism, and its administration and Agricultural Advisory Board has a focus on supporting agritourism and new farms. The County and partners offer classes to producers regarding promotion of their products. Due to interest in operating small farms by "tech workers" moving in from other counties, agritourism has increased especially on the 5-10 acre lots. With it has come issue around traffic that may exceed rural road capabilities. Agritourism traffic has been seen as an opportunity for some new producers to benefit from pass-by visitors as they start their own enterprises.
- Thurston County has more farms in number than Skagit County but a much lower agricultural base. It has a flexible agritourism overlay code that has made it easier to establish agritourism. The community is more aware of local products and supports local producers through agritourism. The program hasn't caused an increase in use of land for farms.

**Exhibit 2. Comparison of Agricultural Economic Conditions per Census of Agriculture 2017 (in 2020\$)**

County	Total Farm Acres	Number of Farms	Market Value Products Sold	Direct Sales Income	Agritourism Receipts	Code Flexibility for Agritourism
Skagit County	97,664 Average size: 93.8	1,041	\$322.7 million	\$7.0 million (191 farms)	\$210,000 (12 farms) Local survey: See Appendix D.	Allowed in most rural and ag-related zones: Farm stands and agricultural accessory uses promoting tourism, e.g. farm tours, u-pick. Farm-based businesses for value-add activities allowed in designated agriculture zones. Special Use: B&B and Temporary events. CUP: Outdoor outfitters.
Marion County	288,671 Average size: 104.6	2,761	\$740.8 million	\$6.0 million (429 farms)	\$383,275 (25 farms) Local survey: 75 farms	Allowed in designated agricultural land: Farm stands, wineries, and cider. Other agritourism – temporary, limited number per year.
Snohomish County	63,671 Average size: 41.0	1,558	\$170.5 million	\$5.3 million (280 farms)	\$4.9 million (67 farms)	Allowed in rural and agricultural zones: Farm stands, u-pick, corn mazes, displays, farm bakeries, cider press, etc. allowed. Seasonal uses allowed (e.g. craft). Public events and assemblies and wedding facilities (in existing buildings) allowed.
Thurston County	62,250 Average size: 51.9	1,200	\$190.6 million	\$4.1 million (197 farms)	\$1.1 million (30 farms)	Overlay in agriculture and rural zones: Many exempt and permitted activities, e.g. farm stands, u-pick, tours, markets, home stays, wineries, breweries, tourism.

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2017, BERK 2021.

Each county has identified some growing awareness or interest in agritourism, regulatory improvements, and conditions they wish to address to ensure rural quality of life. These and other counties are described in Appendix C.

**NEXT STEPS**

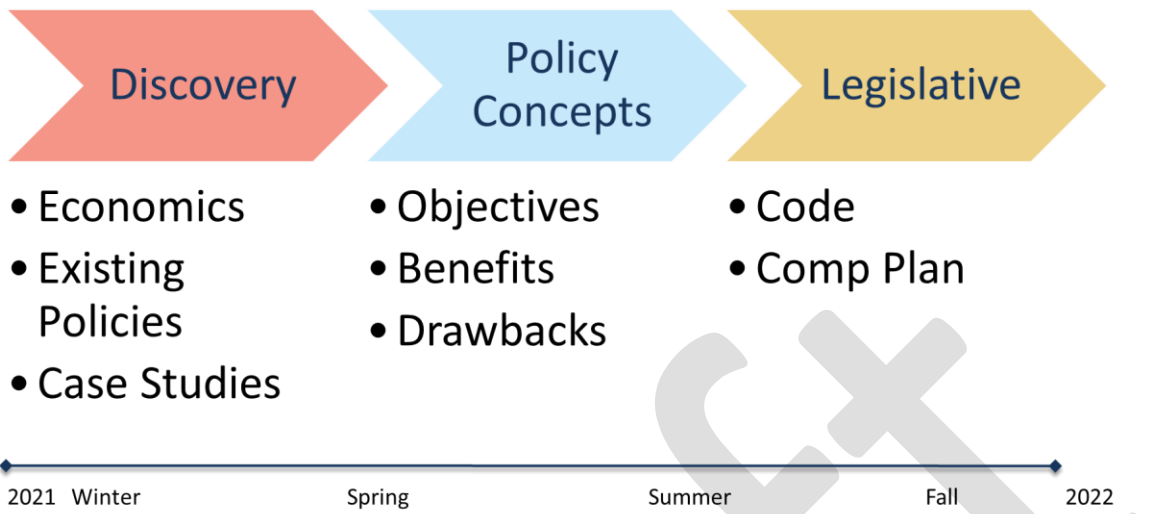
This Situation Assessment is part of a discovery phase to document current agricultural trends and conditions in Skagit County. It also shares current policies and regulations and contrasts that with case studies and other examples.

This Situation Assessment will be shared with stakeholders. Based on surveys, discussion groups, and meetings, the input and stories from producers, businesses, residents, and elected and appointed officials would be integrated into the study over Winter/Spring 2021.

Subsequently, policy options and evaluations would be developed in Spring and Summer 2021 and shared with stakeholders. Eventually by Fall 2021 legislative proposals would be shared.



**Exhibit 3. Agritourism Exploration and Analysis Process**



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## Introduction

BERK Consulting, Inc. is supporting Skagit County Planning and Development Services (PDS) in their evaluation of agritourism in Skagit County. The effort includes stakeholder and public engagement to develop a common understanding of agritourism and work with planners to propose amendments to the county Comprehensive Plan, land use map and development code to address agritourism.

The study also includes this Situation Assessment to lay out key concepts about agritourism and its impacts, available data on the existing agritourism economy in Skagit County, and lessons for consideration drawn from three case studies in comparable regions. This Situation Assessment will be augmented with findings from stakeholder engagement by the end of the study period.

## Definition of Agritourism

Agritourism is an ambiguous term with multiple definitions in policy and scholarship. While all typically address tourist activity in an agricultural setting, available definitions also vary on several key dimensions. These include:

- The setting or location of the activity (i.e., on a farm or in any agricultural setting, including off-farm fairs or markets)
- The authenticity or the degree to which the setting or location is a *working farm* (versus a historic farm, for example)
  - Further, the definition of working farm is another source of debate. The USDA definition of a farm is a holding that derives at least \$1,000 worth of revenue from the production or sale of agricultural goods<sup>2</sup>. This definition does not require that agricultural revenue be the sole or primary source.
- The types of activity engaged in by the tourist (e.g., lodging, tours, retail) and the degree to which it is connected to the farm's agricultural activity. Activities sometimes described as agritourism can range from attending a wedding on a farm to an extended working farm stay. (Gil Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rich, 2012; Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010)

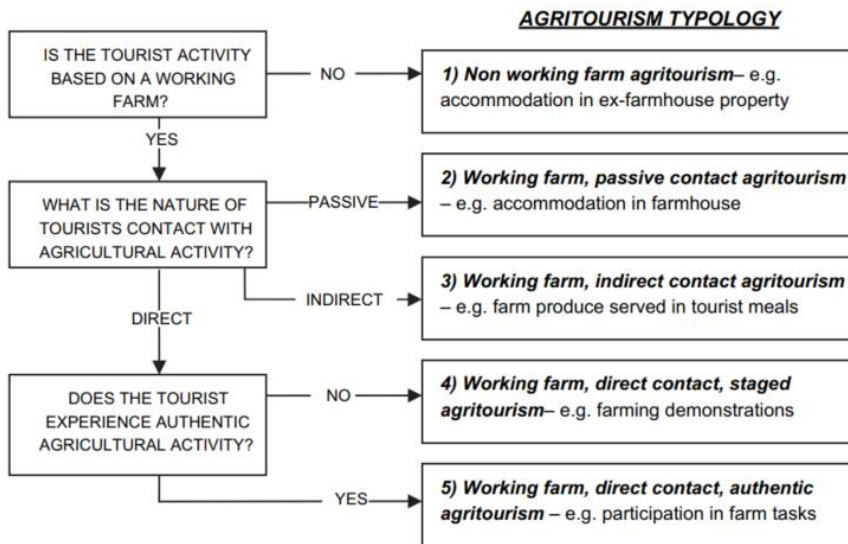
## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Social scientists and economists have studied agritourism and economic development for Phillip, et al. offer the following typology for agritourism based on a review of literature. They note that the activity taking place on a working farm is the most commonly cited criterion.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-structure-and-organization/farm-structure/>

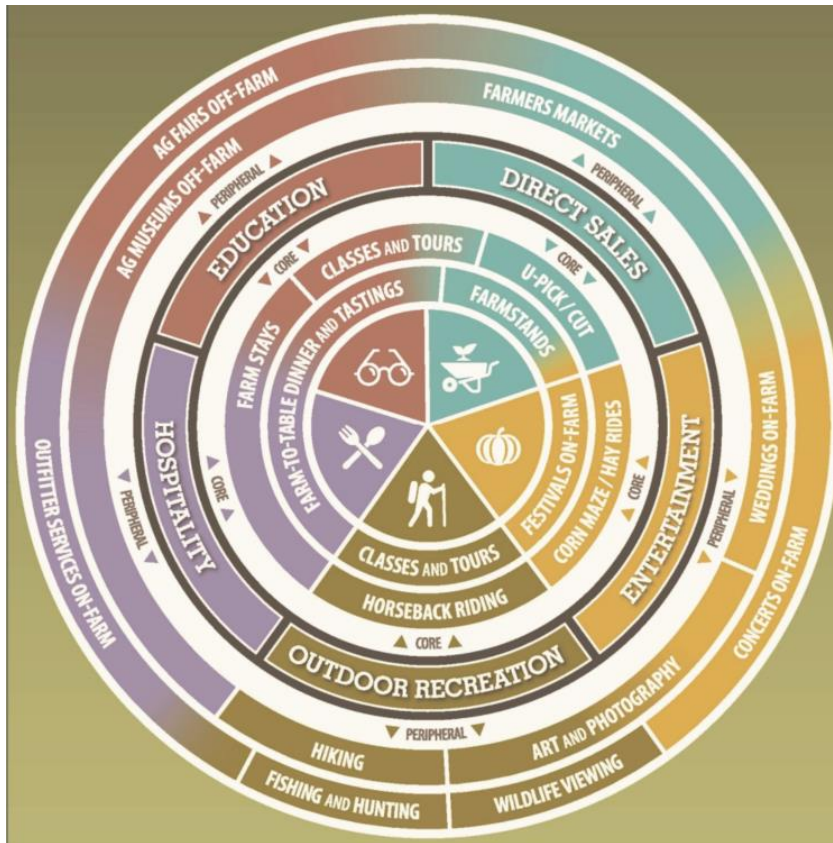
**Exhibit 4. Phillip et. al. Agritourism Typology (2010)**



Source: Phillip et. al., 2010.

More recent scholarship offers the following conceptual framework for understanding agritourism as a set of five types of activities: education, entertainment, direct sales, outdoor activity, and hospitality (Chase, Stewart, Schilling, Smith, & Walk, 2018). Within each type are core and peripheral activities according to depth of connection to agriculture. Core activities include those that take place on a working farm and have a direct link to the primary agricultural activity at that site. Peripheral activities include general outdoor experiences like hiking and community events that happen to take place on a farm, as well as off-working-farm activities with a general link to agriculture, such as an agricultural living history museum.

Exhibit 5. Chase et. al. Agritourism Conceptual Framework (2018)



## POLICY DEFINITIONS

Policy definitions of agritourism are also important for guiding land use and economic development. Over half of U.S. states have a state-level statute explicitly addressing agritourism<sup>3</sup>. Washington State is among these. Revised Code of Washington § [4.24.830](#), [4.24.832](#), and [4.24.835](#) define agritourism and create liability protections for “agritourism professionals” as well as signage requirements.

- (1) "Agritourism activity" means any activity carried out on a farm or ranch whose primary business activity is agriculture or ranching and that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities including, but not limited to: Farming; ranching; historic, cultural, and on-site educational programs; recreational farming programs that may include on-site hospitality services; guided and self-guided tours; petting zoos; farm festivals; corn mazes; harvest-your-own operations; hayrides; barn parties; horseback riding; fishing; and camping.
- (2) "Agritourism professional" means any person in the business of providing one or more agritourism activities, whether or not for compensation. (Revised Code of Washington § [4.24.830](#), 2018)

Reviewing this definition with the conceptual typologies above, we see that Washington State’s definition does establish a specific location of activity with the primary business of agriculture or ranching. However, in terms of connections to agriculture or ranching, this definition is relatively broad in the range of activities considered

<sup>3</sup> <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/state-compilations/agritourism/>

agritourism. For example, cultural and rural activities not related to the primary agricultural use, and on-site hospitality are covered in this definition.

Some state statutes (see for example Delaware, Maryland, Hawaii, and Vermont in Appendix A), specifically address zoning, use of land and structures, scale, and intensity of activity, and/or authority for development of agritourism policy.

The Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) protects agriculture of long-term significance for principally agricultural use and allows for some accessory uses that support the agricultural activity and do not convert more than one acre to nonagricultural uses. Agritourism could be an accessory use in a zone that focuses on agricultural land of long-term commercial significance. Agritourism could also occur in Rural lands adjacent to agricultural lands of long-term significance.

- RCW 36.70A.177 (1) A county or a city may use a variety of innovative zoning techniques in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance under RCW 36.70A.170. The innovative zoning techniques should be designed to conserve agricultural lands and encourage the agricultural economy. Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, a county or city should encourage nonagricultural uses to be limited to lands with poor soils or otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes.
- (2) Innovative zoning techniques a county or city may consider include, but are not limited to: (a) Agricultural zoning, which limits the density of development and restricts or prohibits nonfarm uses of agricultural land and may allow accessory uses, including nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, that support, promote, or sustain agricultural operations and production, as provided in subsection (3) of this section; \*\*\*
- (3) Accessory uses allowed under subsection (2)(a) of this section shall comply with the following: (a) Accessory uses shall be located, designed, and operated so as to not interfere with, and to support the continuation of, the overall agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties, and shall comply with the requirements of this chapter; (b) Accessory uses may include: (i) Agricultural accessory uses and activities, including but not limited to the storage, distribution, and marketing of regional agricultural products from one or more producers, agriculturally related experiences, or the production, marketing, and distribution of value-added agricultural products, including support services that facilitate these activities; and (ii) Nonagricultural accessory uses and activities as long as they are consistent with the size, scale, and intensity of the existing agricultural use of the property and the existing buildings on the site. Nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, including new buildings, parking, or supportive uses, shall not be located outside the general area already developed for buildings and residential uses and shall not otherwise convert more than one acre of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses; and (c) Counties and cities have the authority to limit or exclude accessory uses otherwise authorized in this subsection (3) in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

Local jurisdictions within Washington State have authority within the framework of GMA to address agricultural accessory uses like agritourism within development regulations. A summary of Skagit County policies and code is included in Appendix B. Deeper case study of counties and their policies begin on page 35 and several example definitions are included in Appendix C.

The lack of concurrence on the definition of agritourism naturally presents a challenge in assessing the community and economic impacts of agritourism. This situation assessment reviews a broad range of data to try and triangulate these impacts. To the extent possible, this situation assessment cites the definitions used in the relevant literature and data reviewed, but we acknowledge that often clear comparisons over time or across jurisdictions and activities are not possible.

## Economic Impacts of Agritourism

The market for agritourism is characterized by supply (how many farms are interested in offering agritourism activities) and demand (how many tourists are interested in engaging in agritourism activities). Research across the United States indicates that both supply and demand are increasing, and so would increase the economic impacts and other associated impacts. On the demand side, researchers point to the relative novelty of rural experiences as more people are in urban and suburban settings with non-farm occupations, rising discretionary income and increasing willingness to travel for outdoor recreation, as well as values based desire to support and connect local farms and food systems. On the supply side, farmers are interested in diversifying revenue streams, fully monetizing their assets, and smoothing income throughout the year. They may also cite non-economic values of community engagement, revitalization of rural economies, succession planning and engagement of next generation farmers, as well as education and gaining sociopolitical support for farming (Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Schilling, Sullivan, & Komar, 2012) (Vermont Tourism Research Center, 2021). A 2011 survey of agritourism operators in Washington identified “additional income” as the most important reason for starting or operating an agritourism business. The next two most important were “providing a service or an opportunity to the community,” and “helping to educate the public about farming and agriculture.” (Galinato, Galinato, Chouinard, Mykel, & Philip, 2011)

Depending on the data source and definition of agritourism, total revenue estimates range from about \$800 million to up to \$3 billion a year in the United States (Carpio, Wohlgenant, & Boonsaeng, 2008). USDA, which produces the most consistent national time-series data on agritourism, confirms that the market has more than tripled between 2002 and 2017 (Chase, Stewart, Schilling, Smith, & Walk, 2018; Whitt, Low, & Van Sandt, 2019).

Though the trend is increasing overall, there is also evidence of factors that distinguish regions and/or farm types as particularly conducive to agritourism. Geographic analysis showed that that distances to outdoor attractions and populations and travel infrastructure are predictive factors where whether a U.S. county will be a “hot spot” for agritourism (Van Sandt, Low, & Thilmany, 2018). Research also shows that remote rural farms, female operators, older operators, and “dude ranches” are most likely to have agritourism income. Though remote farms are more likely to participate in agritourism, those closer to urban areas tend to have higher agritourism revenues. The crops and livestock produced also matter: grapes, fruit and tree nuts, and specialty livestock farms report the highest agritourism revenues (Whitt, Low, & Van Sandt, 2019). Finally, national data shows that small farms account for only 14 percent of the value of farm products sold by U.S. farmers, but 54 percent of agritourism receipts and 57 percent of farm direct marketing revenue (Schilling, Sullivan, & Komar, 2012). A 2011 profile of agritourism in Washington State confirmed that 40% of agritourism farms were operating on 20 acres or less with an additional 38% operating on 21 to 100 acres, versus an average farm size (in 2007) of 381 acres (Galinato, Galinato, Chouinard, Mykel, & Philip, 2011).

Evidence is mixed on whether agritourism has substantial direct income impacts on individual farm operations. Studies have reported income increases from 5 to 50% for farms engaging in agritourism diversification (Tew & Barbieri, 2012; McGehee & Kim, 2004). On the whole, compared to revenues generated by farming itself, agritourism revenue appears negligible. USDA data shows an average of under \$20,000 a year per unit across the nation and a 2015 survey in California and Colorado showed roughly half of participating farms making less than \$25,000 annually in agritourism income (Gaede, Leff, Sullins, & Van Sandt, 2015). Research suggests small and very small farms tend to either be more reliant on direct agritourism income to survive or be “lifestyle” or “hobby” farmers offering agritourism for non-purely-economic reasons. Larger farms are more likely to engage in agritourism for indirect or non-economic benefits.

Not all agritourism activities generate direct farm income. Studies that surveyed agritourism operators showed that between 19% and 40% of operators do not directly charge to participate in agritourism activities. Up to a quarter of agritourism operators surveyed in California and Colorado reported operating at a loss or no profit. Of course, direct income figures depend on what activities are included in the definition for each study and some activities are more likely to generate direct income than others (Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Schilling, Sullivan, & Komar, 2012). Schilling et al.’s study of the economic benefits of agritourism in New Jersey showed that direct on-farm sales and fees for outdoor recreation such as hunting and birding together accounted for 86.5% of total direct agritourism revenue. Data from California and Colorado confirm the primacy of direct sales for agritourism income, comprising 61% of the activity among California farmers and 33% in Colorado. However, activities in Colorado were more diversified with 16% attributed to accommodations, 14% to entertainment and special events, and 14% to outdoor recreation (Gaede, Leff, Sullins, & Van Sandt, 2015). In Michigan, researchers also found that farm markets, orchards, and vineyard/wineries account for 64 percent of all agricultural-tourism annual sales in Michigan. (Veeck, Hallett IV, Che, & Veeck, 2016). Direct sales and outdoor recreation activities are not always included in definitions of agritourism. Entertainment and educational tourism, the hayrides, corn mazes, and farm tours, the activities perhaps most associated with the term agritourism only made up 12.7% of direct agritourism revenue (Schilling, Sullivan, & Komar, 2012)

The economic impacts of agritourism can extend well beyond the farm’s borders and/or the site of the agritourism activity, through employee spending and spurring additional local tourism spending. Direct spending on agritourism activities, indirect spending associated with the value chain for the activity and induced economic effects from both direct and indirect spending can be summed to the total economic impact of agritourism. WSU’s survey found that on average, Washington State agritourism operations hire 2–5 permanent employees and many more seasonal employees. For Skagit County, a 2010 study identified that while only 11

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### Economic Impacts Example

A festival, such as the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival, provides an example of how the total economic impact of an agritourism activity is considered.

- Direct spending includes the total amount of money spent in the County as a result of attendance of the event. This includes gas, food, event fees, and lodging purchased in-County by visitors near and far, as well as wages paid to Tulip Town workers, for example.
- Indirect spending accounts for the re-spend of those direct dollars in the next level of affected businesses. For example, spending on wages in the hospitality industry and businesses that supply the festival such as event and media production.
- Induced spending includes increased consumer spending in the County due to the new money in the local economy.

Because indirect spending and induced spending are calculated from regional economic multipliers (such as those available from the Washington Input-Output model, or IMPLAN), it is crucial to establish accurate and valid measures of direct spending (typically done through surveying).

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farms reported direct agritourism receipts totaling \$223,000 to the USDA Census of Agriculture, the total estimated economic value associated with agritourism and recreation<sup>4</sup> was greater than \$67.7 million.

Further, tax revenues are also often cited to quantify economic contributions of agritourism. A study of Virginia’s agritourism economic impact concluded that the total economic activity stimulated by the sector in 2015 was approximately \$2.2 billion (from \$1.2 billion of direct spending), and \$134.7 million in state and local tax revenue. In 2006 researchers in New Jersey found \$57.5 million in direct “farmgate” tax revenue generated by agritourism activities. (Veeck, Hallett IV, Che, & Veeck, 2016; Magnini, 2017; Schilling, Sullivan, & Komar, 2012).

A more recent national study with 1,834 producers across the country found similar results to the above studies – agritourism occurring on smaller farms, typically with female operators, often with limited profits.

- “Western region respondents farmed smaller properties (median 40 acres) closer to a city” and “welcomed more visitors than any other region (median of 500 visitors per year).”
- The median age is 59 and 62% of respondents were female. Most have a college degree or advanced degree.
- In the West, about 29% make no profit from agritourism or operate at a loss, about 45% make from \$1,000 to \$24,999, and 27% make over \$25,000 up to \$500,000 or more. (Vermont Tourism Research Center, 2021) See Exhibit 6.

**Exhibit 6. National Agritourism Study Profit Generated by Agritourism (2018)**

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
No profit or operated at a loss	23%	24%	27%	29%
Less than \$1,000	11%	11%	15%	11%
\$1,000 – 2,499	10%	11%	11%	8%
\$2,500 – 4,999	9%	8%	7%	7%
\$5,000 – 9,999	11%	11%	10%	7%
\$10,000 – 24,999	14%	15%	15%	12%
\$25,000 – 99,999	17%	14%	9%	16%
\$100,000 – 499,999	5%	6%	6%	9%
\$500,000 or more	1%	1%	1%	2%

Source: (Vermont Tourism Research Center, 2021)

## NON-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

There is far less research about the non-economic impacts of agritourism, positive or negative. However agricultural tourism conceptually has ecological, social, and cultural impacts. Similar to economic impacts, these can extend beyond the site of the original activity.

- **Land base and farm preservation:** Where agritourism is a supportive accessory use and maintains the majority of farmland in productive use, agritourism could help keep farmers in business and preserve the land. In Washington State, this could help agricultural activities continue as commercial lands of long-term significance or support a healthy rural economy.

<sup>4</sup> The authors’ calculation of economic value includes direct expenditures and consumer surplus associated with agricultural festivals and events, hunting, wildlife watching, and fishing.



- **Community Development:** Inviting the public to one’s land is personal. Agricultural tourists come from big cities, but also small towns, and even neighborhoods which builds community connections. Community networks become a necessity when developing value added products, local and regional food systems, or inviting guests to events. These contribute to a community’s quality of life.
- **Traffic:** Visitors may come during peak spring, summer, or fall seasons and on weekends, bringing traffic to rural roads not designed for heavy use. Traffic could interfere with regular agricultural operations. See below for Visitor Information.
- **Diversity:** Agritourism can help farmers start and maintain agricultural activities including small farmers, women, and persons of color.
- **Public support for agriculture:** Agritourism can provide opportunities for residents to learn about and buy local food. About 50% of all agritourism operators in the national study of over 1,800 operators indicated a motivation for agritourism was to build good will in the community. (Vermont Tourism Research Center, 2021)

### Visitors and Agritourism

Survey data of 288 agritourism operators in California and Colorado found that 40% of farms saw 201-1000 visitors a year, and another 20% saw 1001 to 5000 a year. Roughly one-quarter hosted 200 or fewer visitors a year. The states differ in which activities generated the most visits. California identified entertainment and accommodations as the top two while Colorado visits were driven by entertainment and outdoor recreation, and direct sales. While more impactful in terms of visits, their results also demonstrated that accommodations, entertainment, and outdoor recreation were the most likely to be profitable (Gaede, Leff, Sullins, & Van Sandt, 2015).

A recent national study reviewed agritourism activities across the United States including days open and frequency of visits. Most were open 100 days or less per year, but 25% were open to agritourism year round. See Exhibit 7. The study showed that in the West the median number of visits was 500. See Exhibit 8.

**Exhibit 7. Number of Days Open 2018-19 by Region**

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
10 or fewer	19%	13%	16%	16%
11 – 35	32%	25%	32%	21%
36 – 100	15%	19%	19%	22%
101 – 250	19%	21%	14%	17%
251 – 365	15%	23%	20%	25%

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Median	180	150	158	150

Source: (Vermont Tourism Research Center, 2021)

## Exhibit 8. Number of Visitors 2018-19 by Region

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
0 – 50	20%	27%	30%	21%
51 – 200	21%	16%	16%	19%
201 – 1000	26%	26%	24%	21%
1001 – 5,000	18%	18%	18%	22%
5,001 – 25,000	11%	8%	8%	11%
25,001 – 100,000	4%	4%	4%	3%
More than 100,000	1%	1%	1%	3%

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Median	380	300	300	500

Source: (Vermont Tourism Research Center, 2021)

# Skagit County Agriculture and Agritourism

## AGRICULTURAL TRENDS AND CURRENT SITUATION

Skagit County is a primarily rural county<sup>5</sup> located in northwest Washington State. The county contains a diverse range of land types, from the marine Salish Sea coast on its western edge to the peaks of the Cascade Mountains on its eastern edge. The Skagit River Valley extends between the western and eastern ends of the county and encompasses most of the county’s major population centers; including Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and Burlington; as well as the majority of its agricultural land.

As of April 2020, the estimated population of Skagit County was 130,450.<sup>6</sup> In 2018, nonfarm employment averaged 51,300 jobs countywide.<sup>7</sup> In the same year, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting accounted for 5.4% of the county’s gross domestic product (GDP). The largest industry by percentage of GDP was manufacturing,<sup>8</sup> which accounted for 30.1% of the county’s economy in 2018.<sup>9</sup>

Skagit County has the second-largest agricultural land base among counties in Western Washington, and is nationally and internationally known for cabbage, table beet, and spinach seeds. There are six vegetable seed companies in the county, most of which market products worldwide. Skagit County leads counties in the United States in supplying tulip and daffodil bulbs. (Washington State University Extension, 2019)

Despite this strong agricultural base, farmland area and the number of farms have both been declining in recent years. In particular, the number of small and medium-sized farms has been declining, while very small (less than 10 acres) farms have proliferated.

<sup>5</sup> State law ([RCW 82.14.370](#)) defines a rural county as a county with a population density of less than 100 people per square mile. As of April 2020, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimated Skagit County’s population density at 75.35 people per square mile.

<sup>6</sup> OFM, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD), 2018.

<sup>8</sup> The manufacturing category includes food and beverage manufacturing processing, along with petroleum, textile, and paper processing and the manufacturing of durable goods.

<sup>9</sup> US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), 2018.

While income in the agricultural sector has increased over the last two decades, employment in the sector has declined. At the same time that very small farms have proliferated, income from agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales have increased, perhaps indicating a trend towards bifurcation in the farming industry, with fewer mid-sized farms. The long-term trend appears to be towards a small number of very large, profitable operations and a large number of very small operations that focus on agritourism and other supplemental activities for their income.

Lying in rich floodplains, Skagit farmlands provide habitat for thousands of swans, geese, mallard, and ducks, as well as raptors. (Washington State University Extension, 2019) Since much of the farmland is in the floodplain, farming can be impacted by flood events in wet seasons. As well, irrigation and precipitation can be lacking in drier summers. Lack of water supply and droughts, as well as protections in place for endangered species like salmon, have affected water available to farmers. (Washington Department of Ecology, 2015) (King 5, 2019) (Goskagit, 2019) It may be difficult to obtain permits for wells to provide potable water including for accessory activities such as agritourism.

### Land in Agricultural Production

According to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Skagit County had approximately 84,100<sup>10</sup> acres of cropland and pastureland in 2019, equal to about 8% of the county's total area. Skagit County has the second-highest acreage of agricultural land among Western Washington counties, second to Whatcom County, its northern neighbor.<sup>11</sup>

### Farm Operations

The US Census of Agriculture estimated that Skagit County was home to 1,041 farms operations and 97,700<sup>12</sup> acres of land in farm operations, including cropland, pastureland, and woodland, as of 2017. The number of agricultural operations and the total area of agricultural land has been declining slightly in Skagit County in recent years. Between 2007 and 2017, the total number of farm operators fell by 14% and the number of acres in farm operations declined by 10%. Over the same period, the average farm size increased by 5%, indicating a gradual trend towards fewer, but larger, farm operators (Exhibit 9).

The average farm acreage alone does not reflect the full picture of changing farm sizes in Skagit County. Exhibit 10 shows how the distribution of farms by size changed between 2007 and 2017. The data here indicates relative stability in the number of very large farms (there were 54 farms in this category in 2007 and 49 in 2017), but a declining number of small and medium-sized farms. The number of small farms (10 to 49 acres) declined by 31% and the number of medium-sized farms (50 to 499 acres) declined by 19% between 2007 and 2017. The only category where the number of farms has increased is very small farms (less than 10 acres) – the number of farms in this size category increased by 19% between 2007 and 2017.

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<sup>10</sup> WSDA's estimate of land in agricultural production includes cropland and pastureland.

<sup>11</sup> Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), 2019.

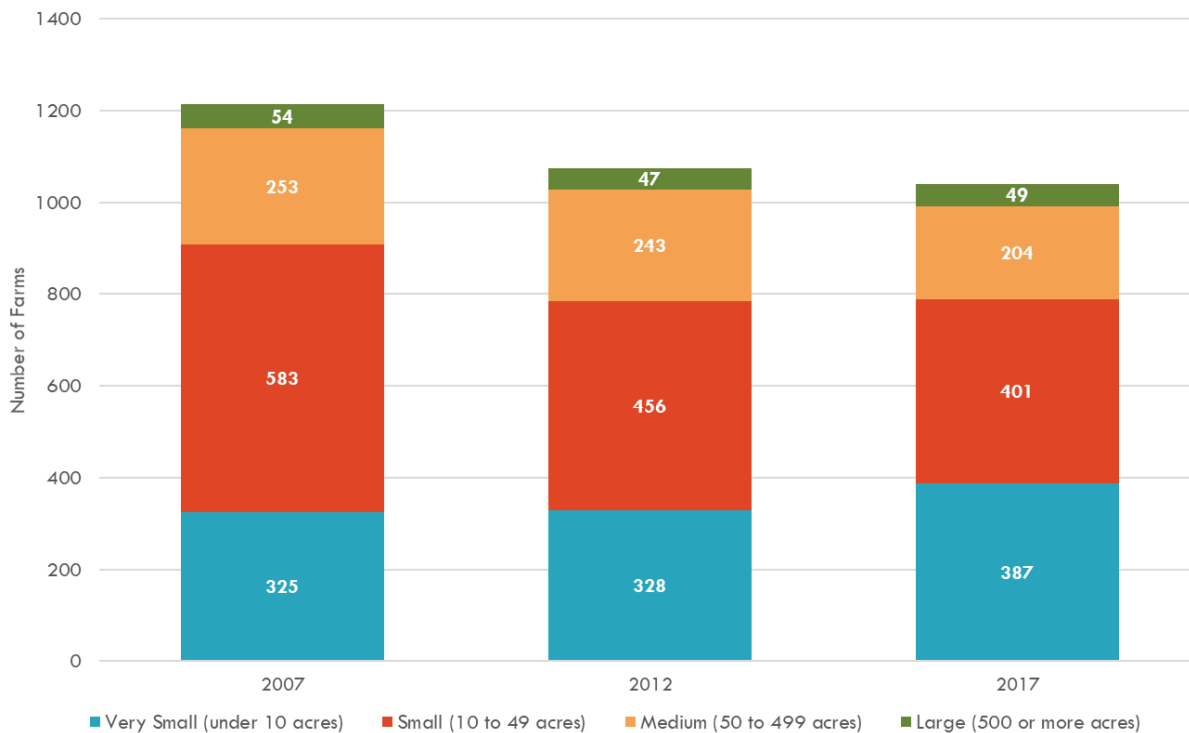
<sup>12</sup> The Census of Agriculture's estimate of land in farm operations includes cropland, pastureland, and woodland. Its estimate of cropland and pastureland *only* totals 85,300 acres, similar to WSDA's estimate of 84,100 total acres in crop and pastureland.

**Exhibit 9. Changes in Number of Farm Operations, Farm Acres, and Farm Size in Skagit County, 2007-2017**

Metric	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2007 to 2017
Number of farm operations	1,215	1,074	1,041	-14%
Total farm acres in operation	108,541	106,538	97,664	-10%
Average farm size (acres)	89.3	99.2	93.8	5%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

**Exhibit 10. Number of Farms by Size Category in Skagit County, 2007-2017**



Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

**Crops**

The top agricultural products by acreage are grass hay (17,000 acres), potatoes (9,500 acres), shellfish (9,500 acres), field corn (8,000 acres), and barley (5,000 acres). Additionally, there are approximately 11,500 acres in use as pastureland (Exhibit 11).

**Exhibit 11. Top Ten Agricultural Products/Uses by Acreage in Skagit County, 2019**

Product/Use	Acres
Grass hay	17,024
Pasture	11,523
Potato	9,674
Shellfish	9,504
Field Corn	8,065
Barley	4,896
Blueberry	2,212
Spinach seed	2,169
Green bean	1,868
Wheat	1,724

Sources: Washington State Department of Agriculture, 2019; BERK, 2020.

The top agricultural products by product value are potatoes (\$60.0 million in 2019), nursery/floriculture products (\$55.0 million), dairy (\$44.1 million), miscellaneous crops (\$35.0 million), and field crops (\$34.0 million) (Exhibit 12).

The total value of Skagit County agricultural products has remained relatively steady over the last 10 years, increasing slightly from \$321.0 million in 2010 to \$322.7 million in 2019 in inflation-adjusted 2020 dollars. However, the change in value was not even across product categories. The categories with the largest increases in product value were miscellaneous crops (+43%) and fruit and berries (+23%). The categories with the largest declines in product value were dairy (-12%) and vegetables and vegetable seed (-10%). Exhibit 13 shows the value of products by category between 2010 and 2019.

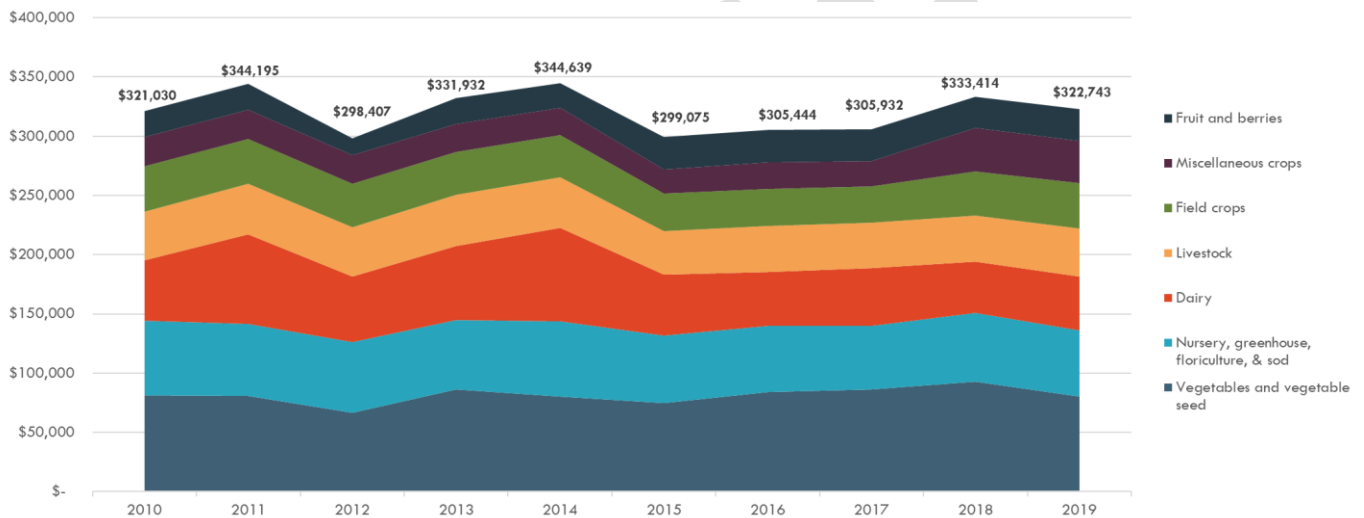
**Exhibit 12. Top Ten Agricultural Products by Value in Skagit County, 2019**

Product	Value
Potatoes	\$60.0 million
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, & sod	\$55.0 million
Dairy (milk)	\$44.1 million
Miscellaneous crops	\$35.0 million
Field crops	\$34.0 million
Eggs and fryers	\$27.5 million
Blueberries	\$21.5 million

Product	Value
Livestock	\$12.5 million
Vegetable seed	\$9.2 million
Brussels sprouts	\$8.5 million

Sources: WSU, 2019; BERK, 2020.

**Exhibit 13. Value of Agricultural Commodities by Category, 2010-2019 (2020 \$thousands)**



Note: Values in thousands of dollars (\$thousands). Values are inflation-adjusted using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics nationwide Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metropolitan area.

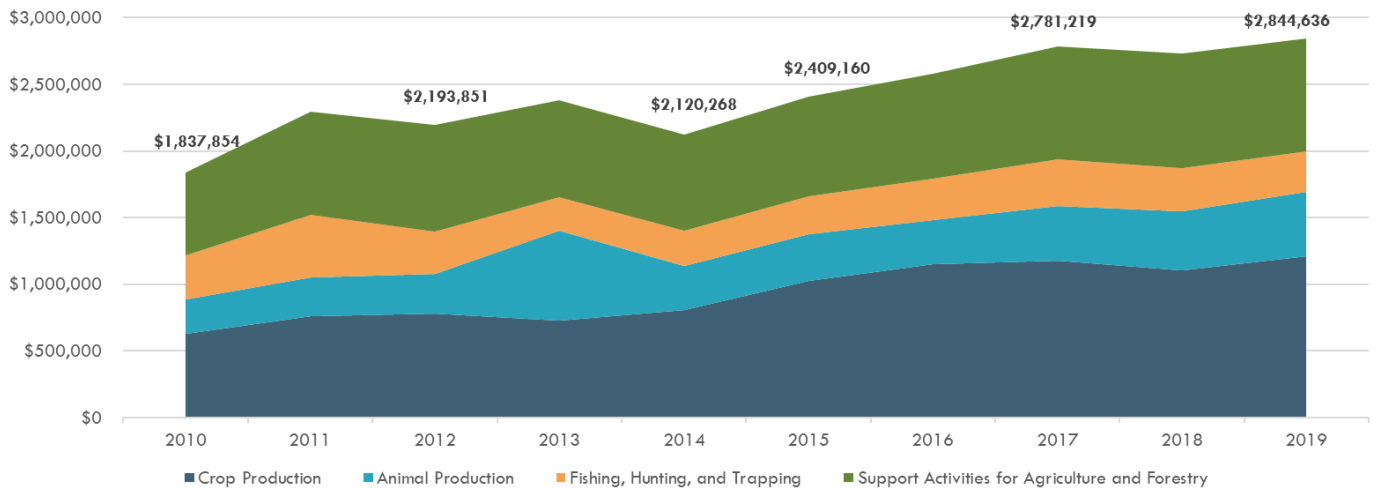
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; WSU, 2019; BERK, 2020.

## Agricultural Income

Exhibit 14 shows gross annual business income by agricultural industry in Skagit County, adjusted to 2020 dollars. In 2019, gross business income from agricultural activities (excluding forestry and logging) totaled more than \$2.8 billion.

With the exception of a few years where gross income declined slightly, agricultural gross income has been increasing steadily since 2010, when the countywide total gross agricultural income was \$1.8 billion (in 2020 dollars). The largest subcategory of agricultural gross income is in crop production, where gross income reached \$1.2 billion in 2019.

**Exhibit 14. Gross Business Income for Agricultural Industries in Skagit County, 2010-2019 (2020 \$thousands)**

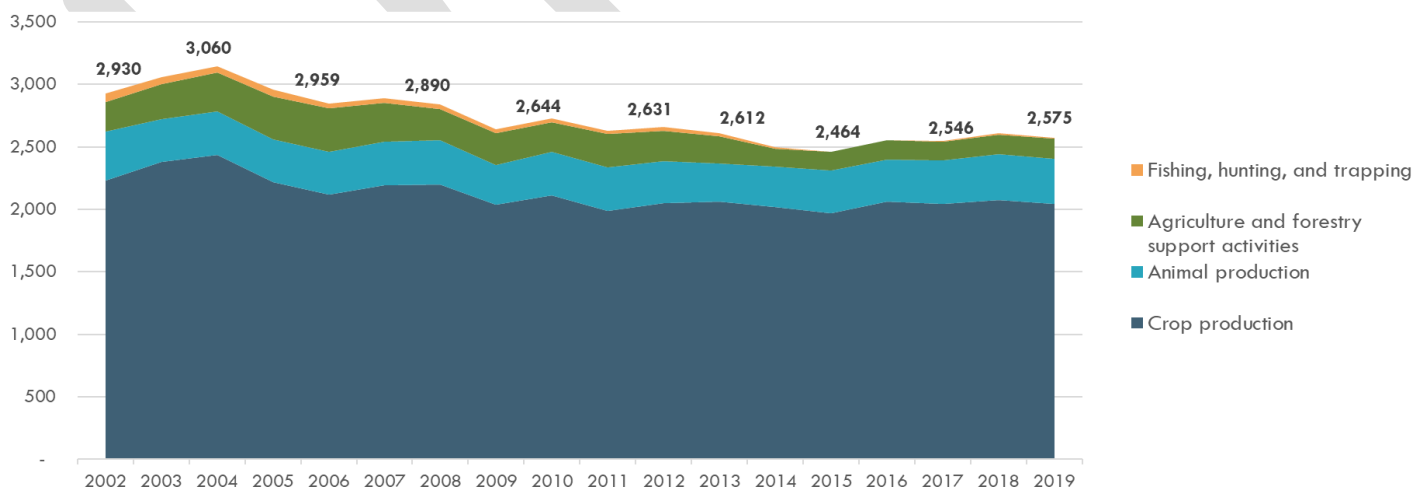


Note: Values in thousands of dollars (\$thousands). Values are inflation-adjusted using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics nationwide Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metropolitan area.  
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; Washington State Department of Revenue, 2019; BERK, 2020.

### Agricultural Employment

As of 2019, there were an estimated 2,575 covered<sup>13</sup> agriculture jobs in Skagit County, not including jobs in forestry and logging (Exhibit 15). This equals about 5% of total covered employment in the county. The largest subcategory of agricultural jobs is in crop production, which totaled 2,043 covered jobs in 2019. Overall, covered agricultural employment in Skagit County has been declining gradually since 2002. In 2019, agricultural employment was down 12% from 2002 levels. Agricultural employment as a share of total employment has also declined – it now represents less than 5% of total employment, as compared to 7% in 2002-2004.

**Exhibit 15. Covered Agricultural Employment by Industry in Skagit County, 2002-2019**

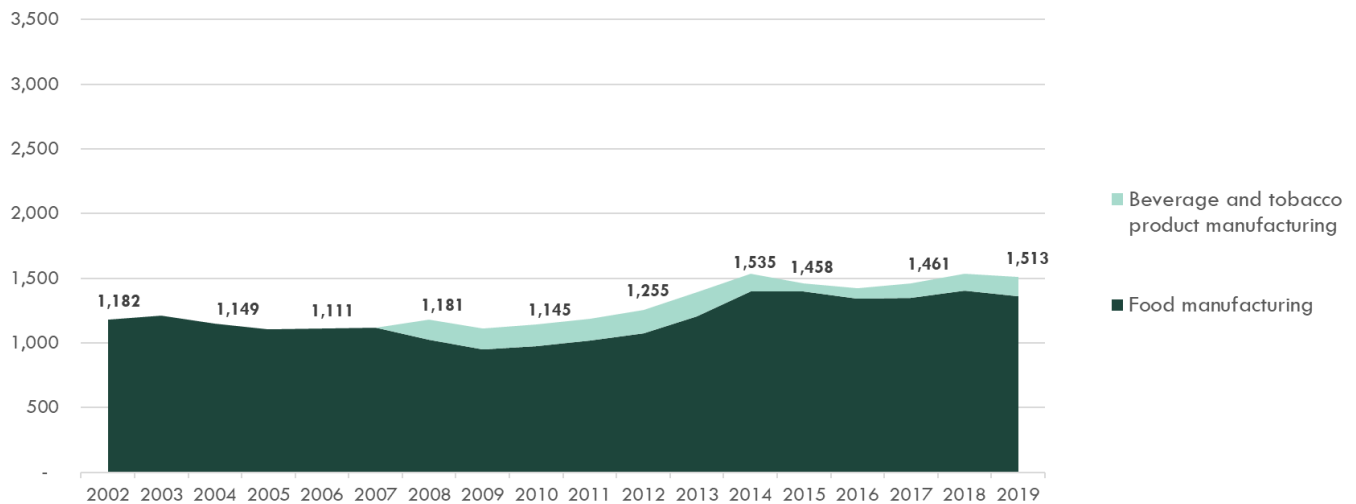


Sources: Washington State Employment Security Department, 2019; BERK, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> “Covered” refers to jobs in industries that are covered by unemployment insurance.

In 2019, there were a further 1,513 jobs in food, beverage, and tobacco product manufacturing in Skagit County (Exhibit 16). Jobs in these categories have been steadily increasing since 2002 and currently represent about 3% of total covered employment in the county.

**Exhibit 16. Covered Employment in Food, Beverage, and Tobacco Manufacturing in Skagit County, 2002-2019**



Sources: Washington State Employment Security Department, 2019; BERK, 2020.

### Prior Studies of Agricultural Economic Strength and Trends

Similar to the analysis in this situation assessment, prior studies of Skagit County’s agricultural economy have found that agricultural production has been a key component of the county’s overall economy and agritourism has been growing for some time in response to consumer interest and farmers’ ongoing evolution and diversification. See Exhibit 17.

**Exhibit 17. Prior Agricultural Economy Studies for Skagit County Area**

Study Name, Purpose, and Key Findings	Agritourism Characterization
<p><b>Economic Impacts of Agriculture In Skagit County, WA, 2003, American Farmland Trust</b></p> <p><i>Key Question:</i> What is the economic impact of the Skagit County Agriculture Industry?</p> <p>Using traditional economic analysis, 2000 output and 1998 value-added impact come to over \$500 million in traditional economic impacts from local agriculture.</p> <p><i>(This would be approximately \$760 million as of 2020.)</i></p>	<p>There are also important non-traditional economic impacts of local agriculture – impacts such as agriculture’s incremental contributions to tourism, wildlife viewing, fisheries, hunting and recreation. Some of these non-traditional values have been credibly estimated and those estimates suggest additional economic impacts of another \$100 million annually. <i>(This would be approximately \$150 million as of 2020.)</i></p> <p>The increase in direct market agriculture – goods sold at roadside stands, farmers markets, or in ag tourism operations, is not captured well in traditional ag statistics. Yet, nationwide, this is the most rapidly growing segment of the agriculture industry. This is a direction increasingly taken by farmers in areas with rising urban pressure, and these sales are substantial contributors to the local economy...</p>
<p><b>Economic Indicators of Agriculture’s Future in Skagit County, 2010, ECONorthwest</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Skagit County commissioned this report to describe economic variables that indicate the strengths, weaknesses, and long-</p>	<p>... farmers will continue to respond to market forces and find opportunities for new crops and farming practices ... Additional opportunities likely will emerge in the future for some farmers to earn income from conservation activities.</p>



run viability of agriculture and related industries in Skagit County, Washington. It addresses widely expressed concerns about the importance of protecting land and water resources so they are available for use by farmers to produce crop and animal products. Findings: Agriculture is an important element of the County's economy, but is no longer the largest sector, and many farmers are able to sustain their farming activities because they earn income from other sources.

Further opportunities might ... include value-added processing, such as producing artisanal cheeses from milk or jams from berries, and farm-related tourism. The increasing demand for local and environmentally-sustainable agricultural products can offer opportunities for value-added and locally-new crops as well.

#### Activity/Annual Value/(Adj. 2010 Dollars)

##### Direct Expenditures

- Agricultural Festivals and Events \$19 Million
- Hunting \$1.5 Million
- Wildlife Watching \$26 Million
- Fishing Unknown

##### Consumer Surplus

- Agricultural Festivals and Events Unknown
- Hunting (Waterfowl) \$1.7 Million
- Wildlife Watching \$19.5 Million
- Fishing Unknown

#### Total Economic Value Greater than \$ 67.7 Million

*(This would be approximately \$80 million as of 2020.)*

As well as comprehensive studies there have been case studies illustrating diversification for smaller farmers is important for profitability. The [Northwest Direct](#) farm case studies were developed by Northwest Direct and University of Idaho in 2002 and 2003 to provide in-depth information about the direct and semi-direct marketing opportunities that exist for farmers within their regional food system and how these opportunities are captured by a diverse set of successful producers in Idaho, Oregon and Washington. A focus was on profitable small acreage farming. Of four farms interviewed in Washington, one was a farm outside of Mount Vernon, Hedlin Farms, which produced organic vegetables and berries, and was diversifying into greenhouse contracts, bee hives, field crop and seed sales, Christmas Tree/poinsettia sales, and direct/catalogue dahlia sales. Marketing strategies included Produce Stand, Farmers' Market, Restaurants, with produce stand revenue exceeding the others.

## Agritourism Policies and Code

As noted by Skagit County Planning and Development Services' policy review (Appendix B), Skagit County Code allows for a wide range of uses (permitted outright and available via special use permits) that are intended to help supplement farm income aside from growing crops and raising meat. The most common uses that are either permitted outright or require a special use permit include: agricultural accessory uses, bed and breakfasts, and seasonal roadside stands. Agricultural accessory uses include activities promoting farming like animal / crop viewing by public, corn maze, pumpkin pitching, u-pick fields, etc. Farm-based businesses are also allowed in the Ag-NRL zone and RRc-NRL zones.<sup>14</sup> Farm-based businesses allow for direct marketing of unprocessed and/or value-added and soil-dependent agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold on-site.

Allowed uses are classified as permitted uses, administrative special uses, and hearing examiner special uses.

<sup>14</sup> SCC 14.04.020 Definitions

### Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL Permanent Uses – Summary

- **Permitted:** Farm-based businesses with value add sales, agricultural accessory uses, including e.g. farm tours, u-pick, , seasonal roadside stands (less than 300 square feet).
- **Admin. Special Use:** Bed and Breakfasts, accessory.
- **Conditional Use Permit:** Outdoor outfitters enterprises (e.g. hunting, fishing, bird watching) incidental to agriculture, resulting in no conversion of agricultural land.

### Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL Temporary Uses – Summary

- **Admin. Special Use:** Temporary events provided the events are related to agricultural production, no agricultural land is converted, and no permanent structures are constructed. Maximum 24 per year.

Similar uses are allowed in other zones like Rural Reserve (RRv), Rural Resource-NRL (RRc-NRL), Rural Intermediate (RI) and others. See Exhibit 25 later in this document.

In the last few years, there have been docket requests to amend policies or codes to allow a wider range of agritourism activities, e.g. wedding facilities, on-farm restaurants, etc. The County intends through this study and a stakeholder engagement process to consider what agritourism means to the County's agricultural community, rural residents, and others. Future agritourism policies will fit the Comprehensive Plan vision and the Growth Management Act resource land protections.

## CHARACTERIZING SKAGIT COUNTY'S AGRITOURISM SECTOR

### Agritourism Activities in Skagit County

Washington State University's 2011 profile of agritourism in Washington State identified roadside stands, Christmas trees, u-pick berries, and wine tasting as the most common primary agritourism activity in Skagit County (Exhibit 18).

**Exhibit 18. Agritourism Activities by Region and County in Washington (2010)**

Northwest	Southeast	Northeast	South Puget Sound	Pacific Cascade	Olympic Region
<b>Whatcom</b>	<b>Whitman</b>	<b>Stevens</b>	<b>Pierce</b>	<b>Wahkiakum</b>	<b>Clallam</b>
Ranch or farm tours	Ranch or farm tours	Dairy, milking, cheese-making	U-pick berries	Bed and breakfast	U-pick flowers
<b>Snohomish</b>	<b>Yakima</b>		<b>Mason</b>	Guest house, cabin rental	Wine tours, tasting
Roadside stand/store	Wine tours, tasting	Wine tours, tasting	U-pick vegetables		
Christmas trees	<b>Walla Walla</b>	<b>Spokane</b>	Bed and breakfast	<b>Thurston</b>	
Pumpkin patch	Wine tours, tasting	Roadside stand/store	<b>King</b>	Pumpkin patch	
<b>Skagit</b>	<b>Klickitat</b>	U-pick fruits	Pumpkin patch	<b>Skamania</b>	
Roadside stand/store	Wine tours, tasting	<b>Pend Oreille</b>	U-pick berries	Weddings and special events	
Christmas trees	<b>Grant</b>	Ranch or farm tours	Ranch or farm tours		
U-pick berries	Wine tours, tasting	<b>Okanogan</b>	Special dining events	<b>Clark</b>	
Wine tours, tasting	<b>Douglas</b>	Roadside stand/store		Christmas trees	
<b>San Juan</b>	Cider press			Dairy, milking, cheese-making	
Roadside stand/store	<b>Chelan</b>				
U-pick flowers	Roadside stand/store				
Ranch or farm tours	Wine tours, tasting				
Wine tours, tasting	<b>Benton</b>				
Bed and breakfast	Wine tours, tasting				
<b>Island</b>					
Roadside stand/store					

Source: Galinato et. al., 2011.

According to the US Census of Agriculture, the number of farm operators in Skagit County drawing agritourism and recreational services income has varied over the years, though it appears that the income from agritourism activities has generally increased since 2002 (Exhibit 19). The county hit a high of \$294,000 in total agritourism/farm recreation receipts in 2007 (in 2020 dollars), from 11 operators, though 12 operators reported a combined total of \$227,000 (in 2020 dollars) in the most recent Census (2017).

**Exhibit 19. Number of Operators Reporting Agritourism Income and Total Agritourism Receipts, 2002-2017 (\$2020)**

Year	No. of Operators	Receipts
2002	8	\$88,601
2007	11	\$293,954
2012	21	Data suppressed
2017	12	\$227,273

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Note: The census form asks for gross dollar amounts before taxes and expenses for "Agri-tourism and recreational services, such as farm tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc."

However, it should be noted that Census of Agriculture data does not represent income from all activities that may be considered agritourism. For example, it does not include income from the sale of non-food products,

such as Christmas trees or nursery crops.<sup>15</sup> The Census of Agriculture is also completed on a voluntary basis and as a mail-in form, so its estimates, particularly around small populations, may have large margins of error due to missing data and/or small sample sizes.

To attempt to address this shortcoming, we also considered the direct sales income reported by farm operators, which is much higher (Exhibit 20). This includes income from selling commodities directly to consumers, including through farm stands and stores, farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions, and online shops. Direct commodity sales have increased dramatically in Skagit County – the total value of such sales (in 2020 dollars) increased by 37% between 2002 and 2017. However, direct-to-consumer sales appear to still represent a small portion of total business for Skagit County farms, as the total value of agricultural products produced in 2017 was more than \$300 million and total gross business income in the agricultural sector was nearly \$2.8 billion.

**Exhibit 20. Number of Operators Reporting Direct Sales Income and Total Direct Sales Receipts, 2007-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Total value of direct commodity sales	\$5,548,816	\$3,747,588	\$3,054,003	\$7,616,906	+37%
No. of operators with direct sales	165	241	244	191	+16%
Average per operator	\$33,629	\$15,550	\$12,516	\$39,879	+19%

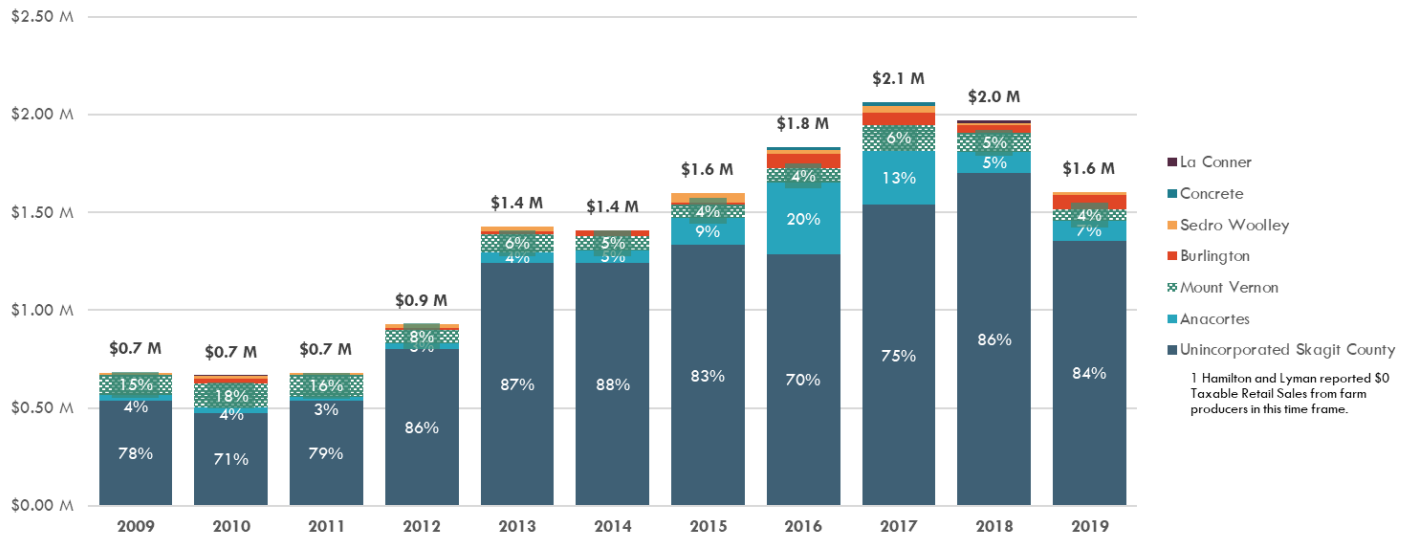
Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Taxable retail sales data are another way of triangulating the economic activity associated with agritourism in Skagit County. Farmers are not subject to retail sales tax on agricultural products that they grow, raise, or produce, so farm-only operations would not appear in Department of Revenue taxable retail sales figures. However, sales tax does apply to non-exempt products such as plant starts, flowers, and value-added products such as candles, soap, Christmas trees, and decorative items. Thus, farms reporting taxable retail sales may be a rough proxy for participation in agritourism activities.

In 2019, 82 primarily crop and animal farming units in Skagit County reported taxable retail sales totaling \$1.9 million to the Department of Revenue. The total taxable revenue reported by this group is \$1.6 million. The tax is applied at the point of sale so a farm-made soap sold at a city farmer’s market would appear in the city’s figures. As shown in Exhibit 21. Taxable Retail Sales reported by Skagit County Crop and Animal Producers, 2009-2019, most of these sales occur in unincorporated Skagit County. Sales in Anacortes account for another 7% and Mount Vernon, 4%. Since 2009, these types of sales have grown at a rate equivalent to 9% a year.

<sup>15</sup> Oregon State University Extension Service, 2018.

### Exhibit 21. Taxable Retail Sales reported by Skagit County Crop and Animal Producers, 2009-2019



Sources: Department of Revenue, 2020; BERK, 2021.

While none of these estimates captures a full and reliable picture of agritourism activity in Skagit County, the comparison table in Exhibit 22 highlights the size of the sector as compared to agriculture. If counting direct produce sales in the definition, up to one-quarter of Skagit County farms could be considered to participate in agritourism. The most limited definition (hayrides, etc.) places the number of operators at more like 1% of Skagit County farms and a minute fraction of sales.

### Exhibit 22. Comparison of Estimates of Agritourism Participation and Income in Skagit County (2020\$)

	2019 Gross Business Income from Agriculture (USDA)	2017 Direct Sales Income (USDA)	2019 Taxable Retail Sales (DOR)	2017 Direct Income from Agritourism (USDA)
Income	\$2.8 billion	\$7.0 million	\$1.6 million	\$210,000
Operators	1,041	191	82	12

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2017; Department of Revenue, 2020; BERK, 2021.

As described in the preceding sections, the economic impact from regional festivals, tourism promotion, and induced spending can dwarf direct farm sales and fees for agritourism activity. We highlight here some of the events in Skagit County that rely on the presence of agriculture, outdoor recreation, and rural appeal to draw tourists.

### Exhibit 23. Agritourism Events in Skagit County

Event	Annual Visitors	Year Founded	Location
Anacortes Spring Wine Festival		2009	Anacortes
Berry Dairy Days		1937	Burlington
Bier on the Pier Brew & Cider Festival		2010	Anacortes
Brew on the Slough – La Conner Beer Festival		2015	La Conner
Burlington Harvest Festival & Pumpkin Pitch		2004	Burlington
La Conner Daffodil Festival		2015	La Conner
Skagit Beer Week		2018	Multiple
Skagit Bird Festival – Birds of Winter		2018	Multiple
Skagit County Fair		1898	Mount Vernon
Skagit Eagle Festival		1987	Multiple
Skagit River Salmon Festival		2012	Mount Vernon
Skagit Valley Harvest Loop			Multiple
Skagit Valley Festival of Family Farms	20,000	1999	Multiple
Skagit Wine & Beer Festival		2014	Mount Vernon
Tulip Festival	300,000	1984	Multiple

Sources: WSU, 2019; BERK, 2020.

Among these, the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival is the most well attended event held annually over the month of April since the 1984. Estimates of the economic impact of the festival vary by source, method, and year. Estimates of attendance produced between 2000 and 2019 ranged from 288,400 to 500,000. Direct spending estimates associated with the festival similarly range in orders of magnitude from \$3.5 million to \$59.7 million (Thomas/Lane & Associates; Bill Mundy and Associates, Inc., 2014). The Washington State University 2019 Agricultural Profile included in the Appendix reports revenue of \$65 million and 300,000 visitors associated with the festival.

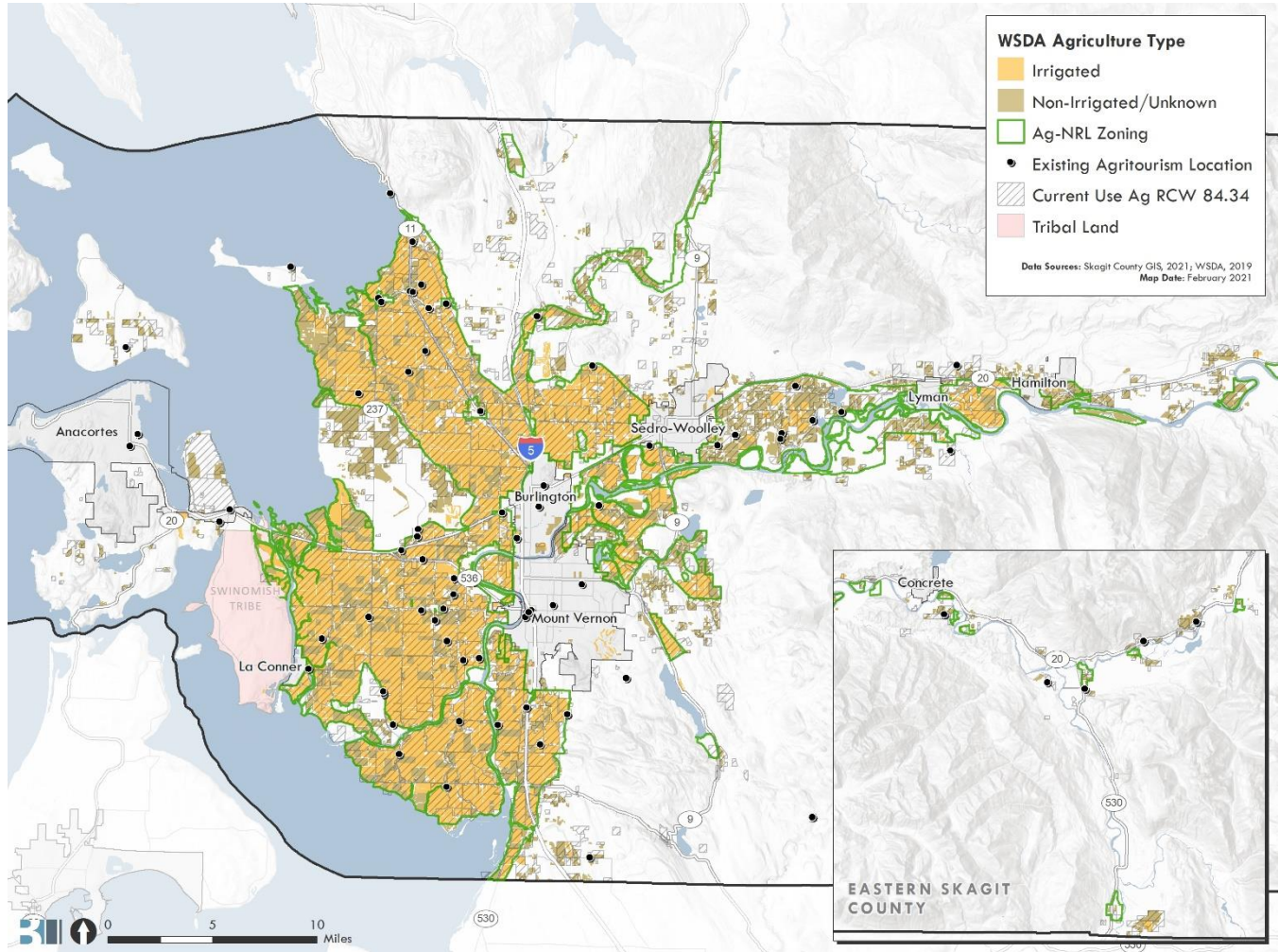
A preliminary list of agritourism producers is included in Appendix D. Once a definition of agritourism is fleshed out in the policy/code review process, the list can be refined. As well, engagement activities are likely to surface additional potential agritourism activities. There are more than 60 agricultural producers in Skagit County participating in some form of agritourism. The most common form of agritourism is farm stands – there are more than 50 operations that offer some form of stand. However, the activities offered across these farms are

wide-ranging, including u-pick operations, plant nurseries, farm tours, gift shops, cafés, events, rentals, weddings, lodging, farm stays, classes, workshops, tasting rooms, restaurants, corn mazes, and hayrides.

### Agritourism Activity Mapping

Agritourism activities inventoried in Appendix Dare illustrated on Exhibit 24 relative to agricultural activity. Agritourism activities are found in every region of the County but typically west of I-5.

**Exhibit 24. Agriculture, AG-NRL Zoning, and Current Use Agriculture and Agritourism Locations**



Sources: WSDA 2019, Skagit County Assessor 2021, BERK 2021.

Skagit County governs land uses in unincorporated Skagit County, but also administers the Current Use taxation countywide. Inventoried agricultural activities and current use parcels are found throughout the county (see Exhibit 25) including in unincorporated urban growth areas and rural zones, but particularly in the following:

- Ag-NRL (Agricultural – Natural Resource Land)
- RRv (Rural Reserve)
- RRc-NRL (Rural Reserve – Natural Resource Land)

These zones and others noted on the table below allow a range of agritourism related activities including: Farm-based businesses (value added production), roadside stands, agricultural accessory uses (animal viewing by public, U-pick, accessory tourism/promotion of local agriculture), bed and breakfasts, and temporary events with no structures. In some zones, there are fewer agritourism use allowances and others more.

**Exhibit 25. Agriculture Activities by Zone (Acres)**

Zone	Agritourism Allowances	WSDA 2019 Acres	Current Use taxation 2021 Acres
[Ag-NRL]	X	57,329	68,352
[RRv] Rural Reserve	X	4,186	10,597
[RRc-NRL] Rural Resource - NRL	X	1,646	3,887
[A-UD] Anacortes UGA Development District		242	1,666
[SF-NRL] Secondary Forest - NRL	X	168	735
[IF-NRL] Industrial Forest - NRL		211	711
Incorporated Area	City Determined	437	689
Other Zones	Varies	122	616
[URR] Urban Reserve Residential	X	212	413
[BR-HI] Bayview Ridge Light Industrial	X	196	245
[RI] Rural Intermediate	X	95	215

Sources: WSDA 2019, Skagit County Assessor 2021, BERK 2021.

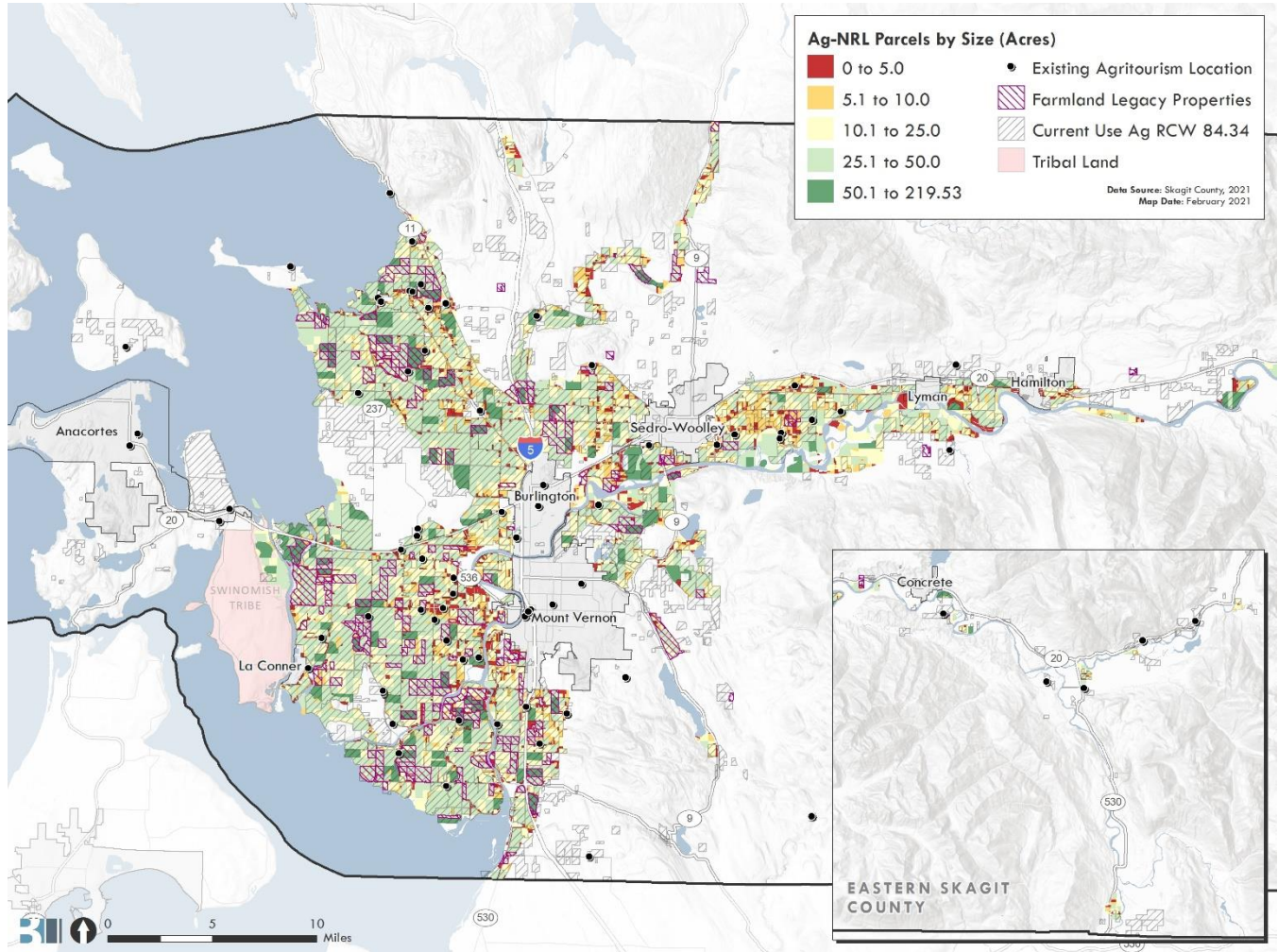
National and state research has shown that agritourism tends to occur with smaller farms. In Skagit County:

- Most Ag-NRL and Current Use parcels are 10-50 acres in size (74%). About 15% are below 10 acres, and 11% above 50 acres.
- Agritourism appears scattered in different regions, often associated with smaller parcels.

See Exhibit 26 for a map, and Exhibit 27 and Exhibit 28 for tables of parcel sizes.



**Exhibit 26. Agricultural NRL Land, Current Use Taxation Parcels, and Parcel Size**



Sources: Skagit County Assessor 2021, Skagit County GIS 2021, BERK 2021.

**Exhibit 27. Ag-NRL Parcels – Size Range**

Parcel Size (acres)	Number of Parcels	Acres	
		#	%
0-5.0	3,271	4,973.4	5.9%
5.1-10.0	975	7,341.5	8.6%
10.1-25.0	1,433	24,291.0	28.6%
25.1-50.0	1,073	38,918.7	45.8%
>50	125	9,393.0	11.1%
	<b>6,877</b>	<b>84,917.7</b>	

Sources: Skagit County Assessor 2021, Skagit County GIS 2021, BERK 2021.

**Exhibit 28. Current Use Taxation Parcels – Size Range**

Parcel Size (acres)	Number of Parcels	Acres	
		#	%
0-5.0	1,020	2,345.8	2.7%
5.1-10.0	919	7,153.7	8.1%
10.1-25.0	1,545	26,170.1	29.7%
25.1-50.0	1,154	42,049.7	47.7%
>50	122	10,406.5	11.8%
	<b>4,760</b>	<b>88,125.8</b>	

Sources: Skagit County Assessor 2021, Skagit County GIS 2021, BERK 2021.

**Marketing and Promotion**

Agritourism can benefit from marketing and connecting producers to persons interested in local farms and experiences. In 2013, the Washington State Department of Commerce designated Skagit Valley as an Innovation Partnership Zone (IPZ). The IPZ is focused on value-added agriculture. The purpose is “to facilitate partnerships to enhance the local agricultural industry, promoting innovative approaches that combine research and technology resulting in new jobs and a robust economy centered on the valley’s rich agricultural resources and heritage.”

The partners in the program include researchers at Washington State University, Port of Skagit, Skagit County, City of Mount Vernon, Skagit Valley College, The Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC), Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County, Northwest Innovation Resource Center, farmers, and entrepreneurs as well as many other organizations.

A marketing effort to help fulfil IPZ goals includes Genuine Skagit Valley:



Source: <https://genuineskagitvalley.com/>

Producers, retailers, and others are adding the mark on their labels. Example producers using this mark include but are not limited to:

- Bread Farm
- Cairnspring Mills

- Garden Path
- Sauk Farm
- Terramar Brewing
- Tulip Town
- Washington Lettuce and Vegetable Company, Hughes Farms

A “Farmstand Fresh” campaign associated with Genuine Skagit Valley showed increased traffic to 12 Skagit farm stands. Based on added media, there was a 500% increase in web traffic to 22 program partners. Digital marketed reached 150,000 accounts, and media reached 146,00 readers. (WSU Extension Conference, Blake Banfield, Genuine Skagit Valley, January 29, 2021)

As of 2020, the County and cities have formed a [Tourism Promotion Area](#) Advisory Board per state law. The TPA Advisory Board makes recommendations to Skagit County regarding how revenue derived from lodging charges is to be used to promote tourism countywide such as businesses and industries that are connected to the Lodging Business industry and important to the health of the local economy. This could include agriculture and agritourism and associated festivals and activities that draw visitors.

## Case Studies

The study team selected three case studies – Marion County, Oregon and Snohomish and Thurston Counties in Washington State – based on their: (1) proximity to major population centers, (2) range of agricultural products, and (3) trends in growing agritourism. The case studies differ in their range of regulatory approaches to agritourism – more restrictive zoning (Marion County), evolving agritourism zoning (Snohomish County), and a flexible overlay zone (Thurston County). Key questions addressed for each example include:

- What is the definition of agritourism?
- What were the policies enacted?
- What is the status of agriculture in terms of economic impact and participation by producers?
- What is the condition of agritourism, e.g. trends, permitting, and effects on rural character?

The team also developed high-level research of eight other counties across the country in Appendix C.

### MARION COUNTY, OREGON

Marion County is a county located in Western Oregon. It includes areas of both urban and rural land – while the county is home to Salem, the state’s second-largest city, it also had nearly 300,000 acres of land in farms in 2017 and was the top agricultural producing county in the state by value of agricultural products sold.<sup>16</sup> Located in the Mid-Willamette Valley, about 20 miles south of Portland at its closest point, Marion County has an estimated population of 339,641 and encompasses 1,180 total square miles.<sup>17</sup> Dominant crops in the county include grass

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2017. *Census of Agriculture 2017 Volume 1, Chapter 2: County Level Data: Oregon*. [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1\\_Chapter\\_2\\_County\\_Level/Oregon/](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Full_Report/Volume_1_Chapter_2_County_Level/Oregon/)

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. *Profile: Marion County, Oregon*. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0500000US41047>

seed, Christmas trees, hazelnuts, berries, nursery crops, wine grapes, hops, garlic, cauliflower, and broccoli.<sup>18</sup> Exhibit 29 shows the top ten categories of agricultural products by value in Marion County as of 2017.

**Exhibit 29. Top Ten Agricultural Products by Value in Marion County, 2017**

Product	Value
Horticulture	\$277.7 million
Field crops, including hay	\$138.2 million
Vegetables, including seeds & transplants	\$69.5 million
Berries	\$55.8 million
Milk	\$48.4 million
Fruit & tree nuts, excluding berries	\$36.3 million
Poultry, including eggs	\$29.7 million
Cut Christmas trees & short-term woody crops	\$19.7 million
Cattle, including calves	\$9.7 million
Specialty animals	\$7.8 million

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2017; BERK, 2020.

### Agritourism Definition

The Marion County Code defines agritourism as:

*“a common, farm-dependent activity that promotes agriculture, any income from which is incidental and subordinate to the income of a working farm operation.”<sup>19</sup>*

The Code specifically identifies hayrides, corn mazes, product tastings, farm-to-plate meals, small farm-themed parties, participation in animal or crop care, and learning about farm operations as agritourism operations. “Regularly occurring” large events, such as weddings and large parties are specifically excluded from the definition of agritourism events.

### Zoning Regulations

Oregon, like Washington, has growth management laws, though it is more state directed rather than guiding. Oregon has pursued a land use program at the state level that is explicitly designed to conserve farmland and

<sup>18</sup> National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. 2014. “Oregon: OR counties rank high in US agriculture.” <https://www.nasda.org/news/oregon-or-counties-rank-high-in-us-agriculture#:~:text=Marion%20County%20is%20the%20national,nation%20in%20grass%20seed%20production.>

<sup>19</sup> [Marion County Code 17.120.090.](#)

protect these lands from conversion to urban and non-farm rural uses.<sup>20</sup> The State has pursued this goal through the maintenance of exclusive farm use (EFU) zones. State law allows counties to permit farm stands, wineries, cider businesses, farm breweries, and agritourism events in EFU zones, with some conditions that limit events per year or duration.<sup>21</sup>

Marion County, for example, allows the following in their EFU and Small Agriculture (SA) zone:

- Farm stands, with limitations on 25% share of annual sales for incidental items and fees for promotional activities.
- Wineries, subject to standards addressing acreage and amount of production.
- Cider businesses, with standards related to acreage and amount of production.
- Facilities for processing farm crops.
- Temporary uses – single agritourism or other commercial activities or events limited in duration, size, and number per year.

In all cases, no new permanent structures may be built for agritourism events and the agritourism activities must be “incidental and subordinate to existing farm use” on the property.

## Status of Agriculture

Agriculture is a growing industry in Marion County in terms of value, but the agricultural land base is declining. Since 2002, the annual market value (in 2020 dollars) of agricultural products sold from Marion County has increased by 20% and farm-related income from sources other than product sales has increased by 64% (Exhibit 30). In recent years, agricultural employment in Marion County has also increased slightly, rising from 9,000 average annual jobs in 2016 to 9,184 in 2019 (a 2% increase).<sup>22</sup>

However, the number of farms in the County has fallen – from 3,203 in 2002 to 2,761 in 2017, a 14% decline (Exhibit 31). Within this total, there has actually been an increase in the number of very small farms (farms less than 10 acres in size). The number of very small farms has increased by 11% since 2002, while the number of medium (10 to 49 acres) and large (50 to 499 acres) farms has fallen by 28%. More than 40% of all farms in Marion County are now smaller than 10 acres (Exhibit 32).

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<sup>20</sup> Chun, Nicholas. 2017. *Identifying Clusters of Non-Farm Activity within Exclusive Farm Use Zones in the Northern Willamette Valley*. Portland State University.

[https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4901&context=open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4901&context=open_access_etds)

<sup>21</sup> [Oregon Revised Statutes 215.213](#).

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2019. *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages: Private Employment; Marion County, Oregon; Annual Averages, All Establishment Sizes; NAICS codes 111, 112, 114, 114, and 115*.

[https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/data\\_views/data\\_views.htm#tab=Tables](https://data.bls.gov/cew/apps/data_views/data_views.htm#tab=Tables)

**Exhibit 30. Changes in Market Value of Agricultural Products and Farm Income in Marion County, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Market value of products sold	\$619.6 million	\$732.4 million	\$668.3 million	\$740.8 million	+20%
Farm-related income	\$18.4 million	\$17.7 million	\$21.9 million	\$30.2 million	+64%

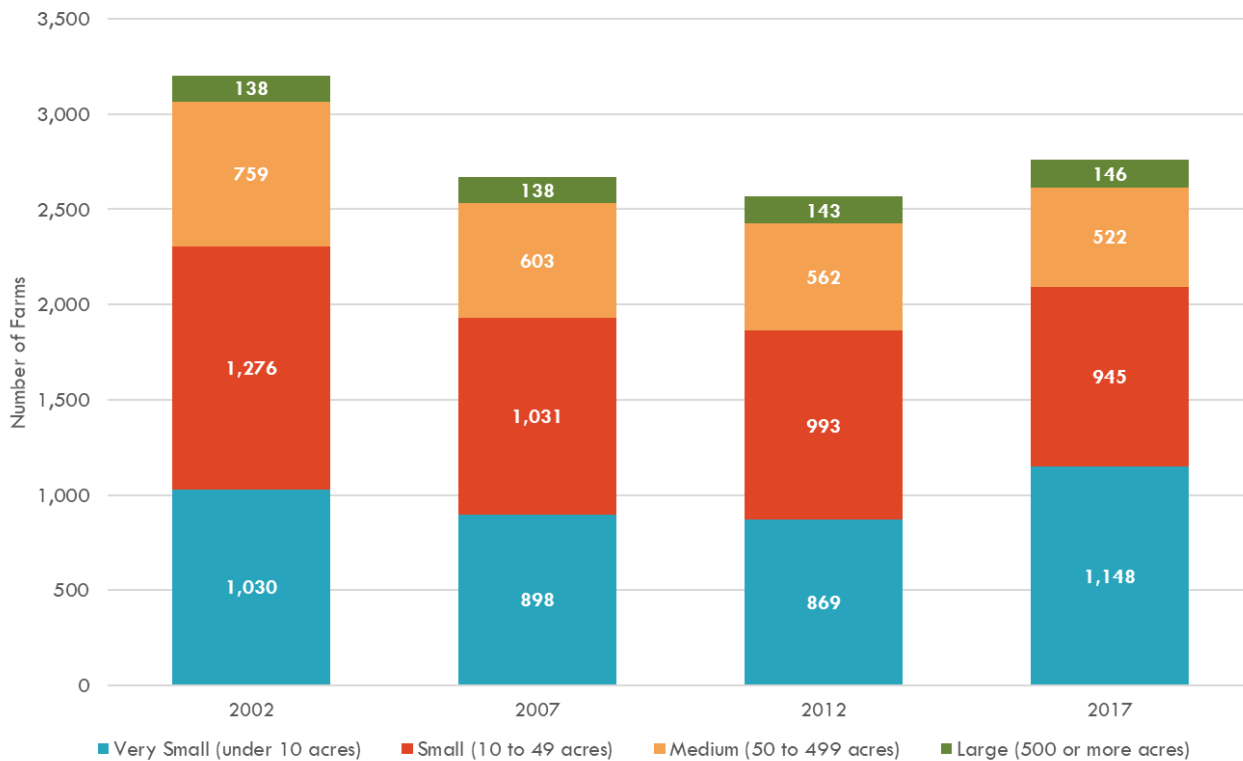
Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

**Exhibit 31. Changes in Number of Farm Operations, Farm Acres, and Farm Size in Marion County, 2002-2017**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Number of farm operations	3,203	2,670	2,567	2,761	-14%
Total farm acres in operation	341,051	307,647	286,194	288,671	-15%
Average farm size (acres)	106.0	115.2	111.5	104.6	-1%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

**Exhibit 32. Number of Farms by Size Category in Marion County, 2002-2017**



Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

### Agritourism

As with Skagit County, estimating the size and economic impact of the agritourism sector in Marion County is difficult, due to a lack of data. According to the US Census of Agriculture, the number of farm operators in Marion County drawing agritourism and recreational services income has increased since 2002 (Exhibit 33). However, the reported income from those producers has bounced around, totaling a high of \$778,000 in 2012 (in 2020 dollars) before falling to a low of \$383,000 in the most recent year available (2017).

As noted previously, the Census of Agriculture data does not represent income from all activities that may be considered agritourism. It does not include income from the sale of non-food products, such as Christmas trees or nursery crops. The Census of Agriculture is also completed on a voluntary basis and as a mail-in form, so its estimates, particularly around small populations, may have large margins of error due to missing data and/or small sample sizes.

**Exhibit 33. Operators Reporting Agritourism Income and Total Agritourism Receipts, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Year	No. of Operators	Receipts
2002	12	\$656,019
2007	10	\$461,846
2012	25	\$777,806
2017	25	\$383,275

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Note: The census form asks for gross dollar amounts before taxes and expenses for "Agri-tourism and recreational services, such as farm tours, hayrides, hunting, fishing, etc."

To attempt to address the shortcomings with the Census of Agriculture data, we also considered the direct sales income reported by farm operators, which is much higher (Exhibit 34). This includes income from selling commodities directly to consumers, including through farm stands and stores, farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions, and online shops. Direct commodity sales have increased dramatically in Marion County – the total value of such sales more than doubled between 2002 and 2017. However, direct-to-consumer sales appear to still represent a small portion of total business for county farms, as the total value of agricultural products produced in 2017 was more than \$700 million.

As compared to Skagit County, Marion County is starting from a position of a significantly larger agricultural land base (roughly 289,000 acres in production, versus 98,000 in Skagit County) and larger agricultural sector (more than \$700 million in product value, versus about \$320 million in Skagit County). In terms of employment and producer income, Marion County’s agricultural sector is growing steadily, while Skagit County’s is stagnant or growing at a slower pace.

However, both counties are experiencing similar declines in land in agricultural production and number of farm operations. In both cases, this loss in farms is concentrated among medium- and large-sized (10 to 499 acres) farms. Simultaneously, the number of very small (less than 10 acres) farms has increased significantly in both counties, while the number of very large farms (500+ acres) remains stable. This seems to indicate that very large operations are unaffected by current land use and economic trends, while small and medium farms are facing more difficult conditions. Very small farms, which may be more likely to use agritourism activities as a way to supplement their farm income, have proliferated as small and medium farms have declined.

**Exhibit 34. Number of Operators Reporting Direct Sales Income and Total Direct Sales Receipts, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Total value of direct commodity sales	\$2,864,329	\$6,057,672	\$7,144,543	\$5,953,962	+108%
No. of operators with direct sales	548	461	535	429	-22%
Average per operator	\$5,227	\$13,140	\$13,354	\$13,879	+166%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

## Agritourism Conditions

BERK contacted the following persons to get a sense of agritourism in Marion County:

- Brian Moreland, Economic Development Specialist, Marion County
- Audrey Comerford, Agritourism Coordinator, OSU Extension Service – Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties



Highlights of the interviews or written communication include:

- **Type:** Operations with agritourism activities range in size ranging from one acre to 1,000 acres. Activities offered include farm stands, farm stores, tastings, tours, classes, markets, outdoor recreation, u-pick, and more.
  - Per the 2019 study, [“On-farm Agritourism Activities in Marion County, Oregon from 2017 to 2018,”](#) OSU Extension categorized farm-direct sales (farm stands, u-pick, and farmers markets), education (tours, classes, and tastings), hospitality (farm stays and farm-to-table dinners), outdoor recreation (fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, hunting, and horseback riding), and entertainment (on-farm festivals, corn mazes, hayrides, and animal displays). The study tracked 75 agritourism operations. The average acreage for the farms was 68.7, with a median of 31 acres. They found: 59% conducted seasonal activities (offered for between one to three seasons) and 36% offered year-round activities. About 75% conducted one or two direct sales activities; 32% offered on-farm hospitality and food service activities including on-farm festivals, tastings, and weddings; and 25% provided educational activities.
- **Economic:** Agritourism and farm-direct sales are growing in popularity with the public and producers. Economic development staff at the County would like to see more flexibility in the range of uses allowed to allow more agritourism bolstering producer incomes in the community that was also hit hard by last season’s fires.
- **Permitting:** The County faces challenges with permitting for agritourism events and activities, primarily due to the lack of unified rules between counties. While the State sets land use rules, each county is then allowed to interpret the rules up to the level of the State standard. The lack of unified rules gives counties like Marion flexibility to grow agritourism but can also lead to conflicts. A few communities in Marion County have expressed unhappiness with the amount of extra traffic on rural roads due to certain agritourism activities.

## SNOHOMISH COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Snohomish County is a county in Western Washington State, located to the immediate south of Skagit County and immediate north of King County and the Seattle metro area. The federal Office of Management and Budget classifies Snohomish County as part of the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metropolitan Statistical Area, due to its proximity to King County and the high level of labor market overlap between King and Snohomish counties. Still, Snohomish County contains a mixture of urban and rural areas. The county’s major population centers, including Everett, Marysville, and Edmonds, are concentrated in the western and southern portions of the county, while the northern and eastern portions are more rural in character.

As of April 2020, the estimated population of Snohomish County was 830,500. In 2019, covered employment averaged 291,836 jobs countywide. In the same year, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting accounted for an annual average of 1,432 jobs, about 0.5% of the total. The largest industry by employment was manufacturing (of which transportation and aerospace manufacturing is the largest component), which accounted for 20.8% of the county’s total covered jobs in 2019.

## Agritourism Definition

The Snohomish County Code does not explicitly define agritourism, though it does detail agriculture-related activities that are allowed in the agricultural zone, many of which fit other definitions of agritourism (see the section Zoning Regulations).

The Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan identifies agritourism as a mechanism through which the County will enhance and support the agricultural industry. The Plan acknowledges that the nature of agriculture has changed significantly in Snohomish County since the mid-1990s, from “dairy farms that have traditionally been a cornerstone of agriculture in Snohomish County to smaller diversified crop farms; agri-tourism and pumpkin patches,”<sup>23</sup> and identifies promoting the expansion of agritourism as a policy in service of the County’s objective of enhancing the agricultural industry.

## Zoning Regulations

Agriculture is allowed in rural zones and the A-10 zone. In addition to traditional farming, food processing, and food packaging activities, the Snohomish County Code ([30.91F.120](#)) defines the following as “farm” and is considered part of the definition of agriculture ([30.91A.110](#)):

- U-pick operations
- Farm stands
- Farmer’s markets
- Pumpkin patches
- Corn and other mazes
- Farm animal displays
- Holiday tree sales
- Farm bakeries<sup>24</sup> and kitchens
- Cider press operations

In addition, the following are allowed:

- “Related on-farm activities and events supporting agriculture.”
- “Seasonal, incidental or subordinate uses to the principal farm use; such as craft, antique or holiday bazaars.”

Farm stands and farmer’s markets are allowed, subject to conditions for hours of operation, parking requirements, maximum structure sizes (5,000 square feet), and limitations on the amount of farmland soil removed during construction of a structure. Additionally, at least 50% of the products sold must be grown, raised, or harvested in Snohomish County and at least 75% must be grown, raised, or harvested in Washington State ([30.28.039](#); [30.28.036](#)).

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<sup>23</sup> Snohomish County, 2016. *Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan*. Land Use Chapter, LU-44.

<sup>24</sup> The County Code defines “farm bakeries” as “a building or portion of a building on a farm site used to prepare baked goods for consumption or sale on or off the farm site, provided that at least one ingredient is grown in Snohomish County or the Puget Sound Fresh region” ([30.91B.015](#)).

The County Code also permits “farmland enterprises” in the agricultural zone, which are small businesses that are “clearly incidental and subordinate to agricultural uses [and have] no necessary and direct relationship to agricultural use, but that [do] not adversely impact farming activities” ([30.91F.145](#)).

“Public Events/ Assemblies on Farmland, Wedding Facility” are allowed in the A-10 zone.

## Status of Agriculture

Snohomish County’s agriculture industry has traditionally been dominated by dairy farming. As of 2017, milk remains the largest agricultural product by value (Exhibit 35). Other predominant products include nursery and greenhouse plants, poultry and eggs, vegetables, fruits, and berries.

**Exhibit 35. Top Ten Agricultural Products by Value in Snohomish County, 2017**

Product	Value
Milk	\$50.2 million
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, & sod	\$49.8 million
Poultry, incl. eggs	\$17.0 million
Vegetables	\$11.5 million
Fruits, incl. berries & tree nuts	\$8.3 million
Cattle, incl. calves	\$6.6 million
Aquaculture	\$4.9 million
Other field crops, incl. hay	\$3.1 million
Horses	\$0.9 million
Short rotation woody crops, incl. Christmas trees	\$0.7 million

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2017; BERK, 2020.

Medium- and large-scale agriculture in Snohomish has been declining in recent decades at the same time that agritourism operations and small farms of less than 10 acres have proliferated. As Exhibit 36 shows, the total acres of land in agricultural production in Snohomish County declined by 17% between 2007 and 2017 and the total number of operations fell by 7%.

**Exhibit 36. Changes in Number of Farm Operations, Farm Acres, and Farm Size in Snohomish County, 2007-2017**

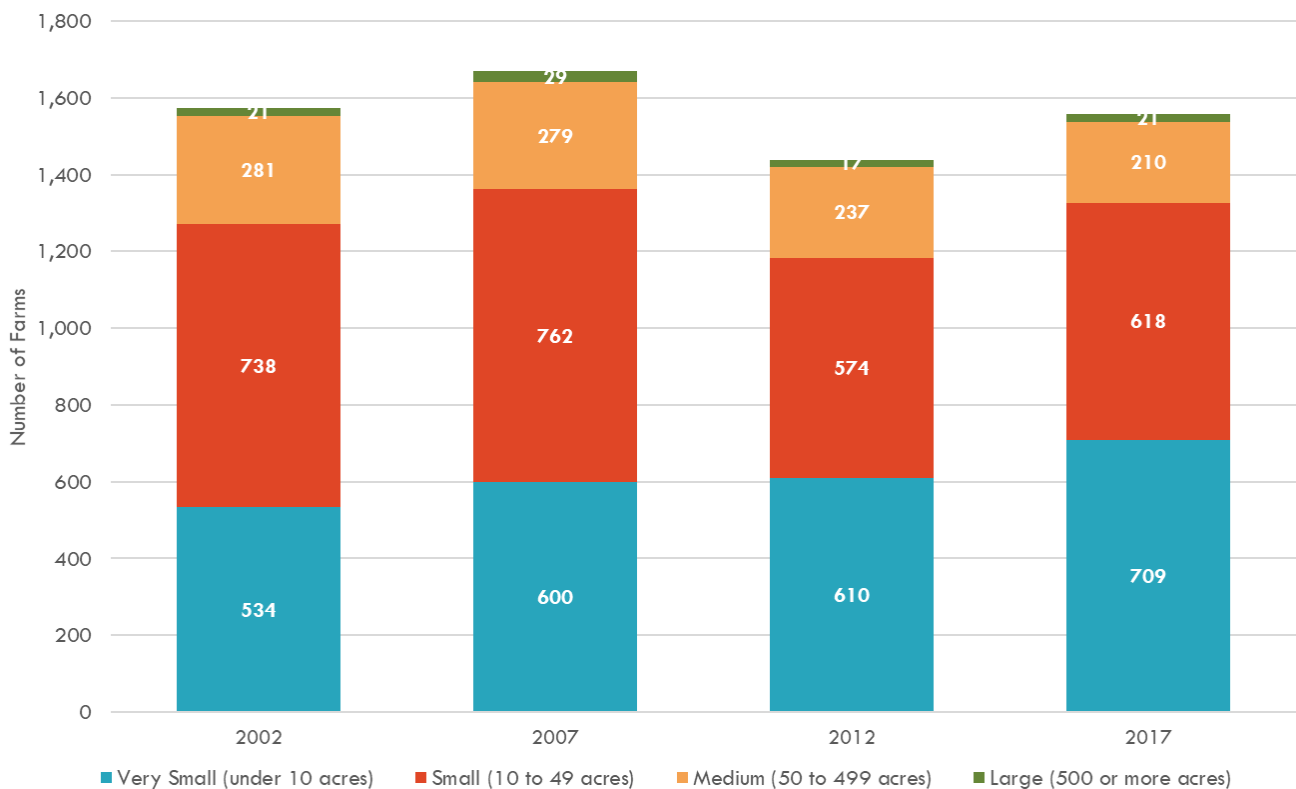
Metric	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2007 to 2017
Number of farm operations	1,670	1,438	1,558	-7%

Metric	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2007 to 2017
Total farm acres in operation	76,837	70,863	63,671	-17%
Average farm size (acres)	46.0	49.0	41.0	-11%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Census of Agriculture data also indicate that Snohomish County is trending towards smaller farms. The average farm size fell from 46 to 41 acres between 2007 and 2017 and the number of very small farms (under 10 acres) increased by 33% between 2002 and 2017. At the same time, the number of small and medium-sized farms (10 to 499 acres) declined by 19%. The number of very large (500+ acres) farms, which is small, has remained stable (Exhibit 37).

**Exhibit 37. Number of Farms by Size Category in Snohomish County, 2002-2017**



Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Tied to the loss in agricultural land base in recent years, the total market value of agricultural products sold from Snohomish County has fallen – from \$191 million in 2002 to \$171 million in 2017 (in 2020 dollars) (Exhibit 38). At the same time, income from other farm-related sources (which includes government payments, insurance payments, agritourism and recreation income, and income from providing labor and services) has increased. This seems to indicate a trend away from traditional food production activities and towards supplemental activities, which appear to be more profitable for farmers under current conditions. Farm-related income and the overall market value of products produced have increased in Snohomish County (Exhibit 38).

**Exhibit 38. Changes in Market Value of Agricultural Products and Farm Income in Snohomish County, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Market value of products sold	\$190.6 million	\$165.6 million	\$166.1 million	\$170.5 million	-11%
Farm-related income	\$8.3 million	\$8.6 million	\$8.4 million	\$14.3 million	+73%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

**Agritourism**

As discussed previously, limitations with the US Census of Agriculture’s agritourism data<sup>25</sup> make it difficult to know the exact size of the agritourism sector in a given area. However, the data that are available do indicate that agritourism is a quickly growing industry in Snohomish County. The number of farm operators in Snohomish County reporting agritourism income has more than quintupled since 2002 and revenue from agritourism activities has increased dramatically from roughly \$190,000 total to \$4.9 million total annually (in 2020 dollars) (Exhibit 39). In 2017, Snohomish County had the highest total income from agritourism activities of any county in Washington State, according to the US Census of Agriculture.

**Exhibit 39. Number of Operators in Snohomish County Reporting Agritourism Income and Total Agritourism Receipts, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Year	No. of Operators	Receipts
2002	13	\$189,215
2007	14	\$1,127,045
2012	27	\$1,267,340
2017	67	\$4,893,954

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Note: The census form asks for gross dollar amounts before taxes and expenses for “Agri-tourism and recreational services, such as farm tours, hayrides, hunting, fishing, etc.”

To attempt to address the shortcomings with the Census of Agriculture data, we also considered the direct sales income reported by farm operators (Exhibit 34). This includes income from selling commodities directly to consumers, including through farm stands and stores, farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions, and online shops. Direct commodity sales have increased in Snohomish County – the total value of such sales nearly doubled between 2002 and 2017.

<sup>25</sup> These limitations include the fact that the Census of Agriculture agritourism income data do not include income from the sale of non-food products, such as Christmas trees or nursery crops. The Census of Agriculture is also completed on a voluntary basis and as a mail-in form, so its estimates, particularly around small populations, may have large margins of error due to missing data and/or small sample sizes.

**Exhibit 40. Number of Operators Reporting Direct Sales Income and Total Direct Sales Receipts in Snohomish County, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Total value of direct commodity sales	\$2,854,750	\$2,548,043	\$2,353,631	\$5,292,224	+85%
No. of operators with direct sales	284	311	267	280	-1%
Average per operator	\$10,052	\$8,193	\$8,815	\$18,901	+88%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

As compared to Skagit and Marion counties, agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales make up a larger piece of the agricultural economy in Snohomish County. In Snohomish County, direct-to-consumer product sales are equal to 3.1% of the total value of commodities produced, as compared to 2.5% in Skagit County and just 0.8% in Marion County (as of 2017). In Skagit and Marion counties, Census of Agriculture-reported revenue from agritourism is greatly exceeded by direct-to-consumer sales (at ratios of 15:1 or higher), but in Snohomish County, agritourism revenue almost equals direct sales income (\$4.9 million, versus \$5.3 million).

As compared to Skagit County, Snohomish County’s agricultural land base appears to be diminishing more quickly, which is reducing the quantity and value of agricultural production in the region. While Skagit County’s annual product value has increased over the last 20 years, Snohomish County’s has fallen by 10% over the same period. Concurrently, a greater number of operations are pursuing agritourism operations as a means to bring in income and are seeing success – agritourism income has increased from negligible levels to an industry of at least \$5 million a year, even without including direct-to-consumer sales.

To support small farms and their ability to effectively distribute their products and make value-add products for consumers, [Snohomish County is seeking to funds for the Food and Farming Center](#). The County plans to repurpose existing buildings at McCollum Park into a processing and distribution center and a commercial kitchen for farmers to use. There are also plans for a year-round indoor farmers market. Producers will likely pay a fee to use the center but remain independent operators. The processing and distribution center will provide a space for farmers to wash, freeze and slice produce. Smaller farmers could combine their products to fill bigger orders. The kitchen could be used to produce value-added products like jam, tarts, and pies.

**Agritourism Conditions**

To date, BERK contacted several persons involved in agritourism:

- Rebecca Samy, Senior Planner, Snohomish County
- Steve Skorney, Senior Planner, Snohomish County
- Kate Ryan, Agriculture Program Coordinator, WSU Snohomish County Extension
- Bobbi Lindemulder, Snohomish Conservation District

Conversations are pending with Linda Neunzig, Agriculture Coordinator, Snohomish County Executive’s Office.

Findings to date include:

- **Type:** Several are allowed including bed and breakfasts, farmers markets, museums, wedding facilities, and limited seasonal special events for activities such as pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and outdoor movie nights. U-pick operations are allowed as part of regular harvesting. There are no regulatory controls on hunting on agricultural lands other than there are some designated “no shooting zones” on farmland that is adjacent to residential areas.
- **Economic:** Snohomish County is second in the state in number of new farms and has the highest agritourism income reported in Census of Agriculture 2017 in Washington State. The County Executive is developing an overall county tourism and outdoor recreation strategy and agricultural tourism opportunities will be a part of that effort. Interviewees reported that some producers have significantly increased their incomes by offering agritourism activities and other recreational activities on their land. Much of the growth in new farms is driven by inexperienced farmers purchasing 5-10 acre plots of land and wishing to work the land and share farming with others. Agritourism is bringing local economic value to other small businesses beyond farms (gas, restaurants).
- **Permitting:** County regulations promote consolidation of supporting activities like agritourism structures in one footprint to keep most land in cropping. County regulations allow for wedding facilities in existing structures (e.g pre-existing barns) so that there is less turnover of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. The Agricultural Advisory Board wants code amendments in 2021 addressing processing, more flexibility for wedding facilities and special events, and new accessory use category for farm stays/lodging and farm camps. There are restrictions on the siting on non-ag related accessory uses in order to be compliant with RCW 36.70A.177. There is frustration at times with environmental requirements of federal and state agencies that are referenced by County staff in the permitting process.
- **Land Base Impacts:** Anecdotally, interviewees reported that land that is converted from crop/livestock production to agritourism uses (such as corn mazes, hayrides, pumpkin patches, etc.) is rarely converted back because the changes that are made to allow for agritourism (such as installing parking) make the land no longer suitable for crop production. When the parcel is sold, its price is significantly higher than it would be as traditional agricultural land because of the additions and the land’s new income-generating value, all of which further perpetuates the cycle of land conversion. Other input indicated that agritourism can keep agriculture “on the map” supporting the producer and creating long-lasting generational relationships with customers. It is an opportunity to diversify in “off seasons.”
- **Community Impacts:** Traffic associated with large agritourism operations has resulted in some neighbor conflicts and resentment. Some producers hire sheriff’s deputies to direct traffic during peak periods. Some neighboring producers try agritourism to capture some of the pass-by traffic generated by neighboring properties. The level of traffic depends on the operations and most of the time is limited in duration (e.g. weddings in two summer months, or pumpkin patches in fall).

## THURSTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

### Agritourism Definition

Thurston County has an encompassing definition of agritourism though it is intended to be accessory to the primary use of the land for production:

*"Agritourism" means an enterprise generally located at a working farm, ranch, or other agricultural operation or facility, which is conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors, guests or clients, and that generates income for the owner/operator. Agritourism is also the act of visiting a working farm/ranch or any agricultural or horticultural operation for the purposes of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm/ranch or agricultural operation that also adds to the economic viability of the agricultural operation. Agriculture or agricultural production must be the primary use of the land except as otherwise provided, pursuant to the standards and criteria established by [Chapter 20.08G](#), Agritourism Overlay District (AOD). Uses permitted by that chapter are generally defined as agritourism uses within the AOD.*

### Zoning Regulations

Thurston has an Agritourism Overlay and base zones allowing agriculture including Rural & Long-Term Agriculture

- Exempt Activities: U-pick, hayrides, farm stands 700 SF max, cottage food operations, direct sale agricultural products, farm tours, farmers markets or agritourism with no permanent structures (e.g. corn maze)
- Permitted Activities: Accessory commercial or retail use produced onsite, corporate or group events, group camping, accessory retail (standards based on size), small wineries, microbreweries, cider mills, craft distilleries, and similar small scale, home stays and inns, nature tourism, geo-tourism, culinary tourism, art tourism or eco-tourism.

### Status of Agriculture

Livestock products predominate in Thurston County's agricultural industry, including poultry and eggs, aquaculture, and milk. Nursery and greenhouse plants, flowers, and sod are also a predominant crop (Exhibit 41).

**Exhibit 41. Top Ten Agricultural Products by Value in Thurston County, 2017**

Product	Value
Poultry, incl. eggs	\$49.8 million
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, & sod	\$47.1 million
Aquaculture	\$39.6 million
Milk	\$20.8 million



Product	Value
Cattle, incl. calves	\$7.8 million
Vegetables	\$4.0 million
Fruit, incl. berries & tree nuts	\$2.6 million
Other field crops, incl. hay	\$1.9 million
Short rotation woody crops, incl. Christmas trees	\$0.7 million
Specialty animals	\$0.6 million

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2017; BERK, 2020.

Similar to the other counties profiled, very small farms of less than 10 acres have proliferated in recent years in Thurston County, at the same time that the number of medium and large-sized farms *and* the overall agricultural land base has declined. As Exhibit 42Exhibit 36 shows, the total acres of land in agricultural production in Thurston County declined by 16% between 2002 and 2017 and the average farm size fell by 20% to just under 52 acres.

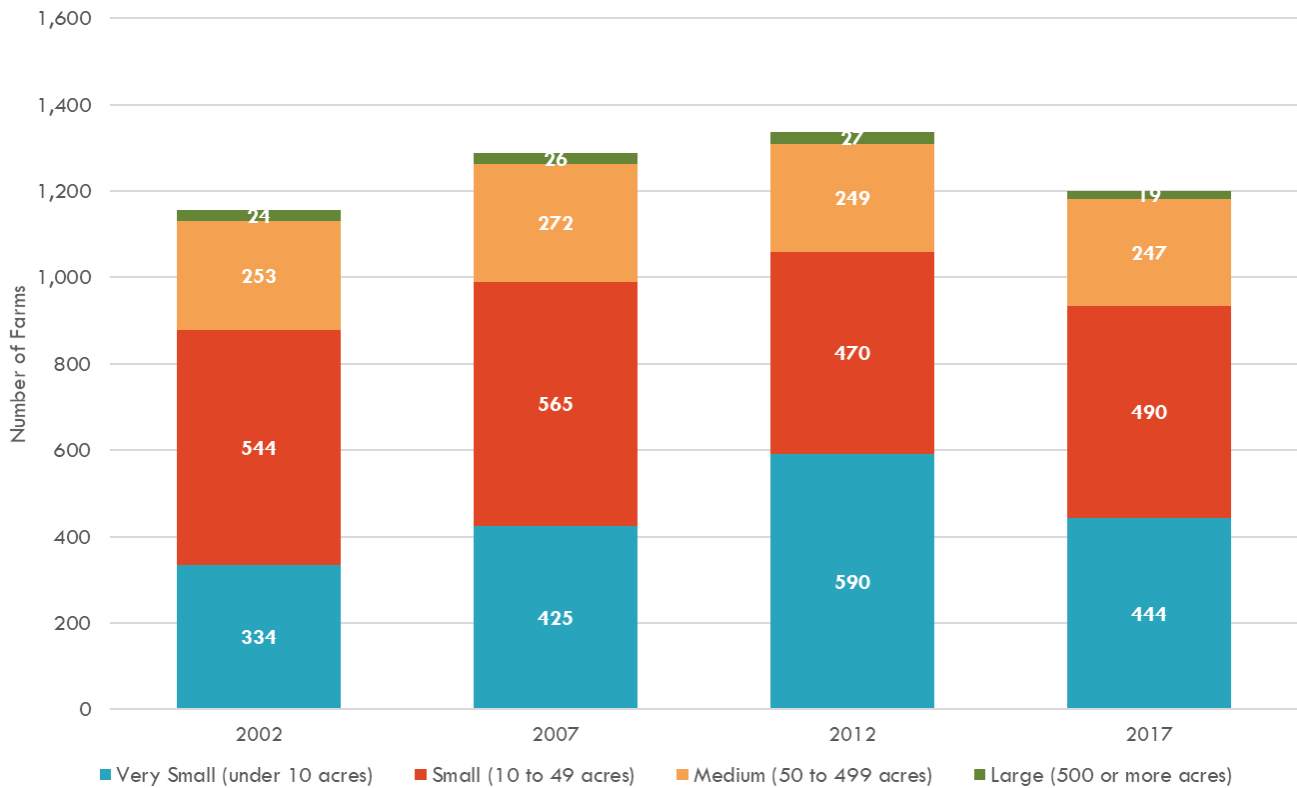
**Exhibit 42. Changes in Number of Farm Operations, Farm Acres, and Farm Size in Thurston County, 2007-2017**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2007 to 2017
Number of farm operations	1,155	1,288	1,336	1,200	4%
Total farm acres in operation	74,442	80,617	76,638	62,250	-16%
Average farm size (acres)	64.5	62.6	57.4	51.9	-20%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

The number of very small farms (under 10 acres) increased by 33% between 2002 and 2017. At the same time, the number of small and medium-sized farms (10 to 499 acres) declined by 19%. The number of very large (500+ acres) farms, which is small, has remained relatively stable (Exhibit 43).

**Exhibit 43. Number of Farms by Size Category in Thurston County, 2002-2017**



Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

Despite the loss in agricultural land, the size of the agricultural industry in Thurston County appears to be increasing – the value of products sold has increased by 11% since 2002 and farm-related income (which includes income from sources other than crop sales) has more than doubled (Exhibit 44). Agricultural employment has remained relatively steady in recent years at around 1,600 jobs.<sup>26</sup>

**Exhibit 44. Market Value of Agricultural Products and Farm Income in Thurston County, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Market value of products sold	\$172.2 million	\$155.4 million	\$145.8 million	\$190.6 million	+11%
Farm-related income	\$23.8 million	\$30.4 million	\$18.5 million	\$30.5 million	+111%

Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019. *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*. Annual Averages, Thurston County, NAICS codes 111 (crop production), 112 (animal production and aquaculture), 114 (fishing, hunting, and trapping), and 115 (agriculture and forestry support activities).

## Agritourism

As discussed previously, limitations with the US Census of Agriculture’s agritourism data<sup>27</sup> make it difficult to know the exact size of the agritourism sector in a given. However, the available indicate that agritourism is a small but growing industry in Thurston County. The number of farm operators in Thurston County reporting agritourism income increased from just three in 2002 and to 30 in 2018. Revenue from agritourism activities has increased from roughly \$10,500 total to \$1.0 million total annually (in 2020 dollars) (Exhibit 45).

**Exhibit 45. Number of Operators in Thurston County Reporting Agritourism Income and Total Agritourism Receipts, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Year	No. of Operators	Receipts
2002	3	\$10,512
2007	14	\$129,182
2012	36	\$524,088
2017	30	\$1,025,977

*Note: The census form asks for gross dollar amounts before taxes and expenses for “Agri-tourism and recreational services, such as farm tours, hayrides, hunting, fishing, etc.”*

*Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.*

To attempt to address the shortcomings with the Census of Agriculture data, we also considered the direct sales income reported by farm operators (Exhibit 46). This includes income from selling commodities directly to consumers, including through farm stands and stores, farmer’s markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions, and online shops. In contrast to the other counties profiled, which have all seen large increases in direct-to-consumer sales, the total value of these sales has actually declined in Thurston County in recent years and the number of operators participating has remained relatively flat.

**Exhibit 46. Number of Operators Reporting Direct Sales Income and Total Direct Sales Receipts in Thurston County, 2002-2017 (2020\$)**

Metric	2002	2007	2012	2017	% change – 2002 to 2017
Total value of direct commodity sales	\$4,849,020	\$2,160,498	\$4,149,823	\$4,050,878	-16%
No. of operators with direct sales	191	217	238	197	+3%
Average per operator	\$25,388	\$9,956	\$17,436	\$20,563	-19%

*Sources: US Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007, 2012, & 2017; BERK, 2020.*

<sup>27</sup> These limitations include the fact that the Census of Agriculture agritourism income data do not include income from the sale of non-food products, such as Christmas trees or nursery crops. The Census of Agriculture is also completed on a voluntary basis and as a mail-in form, so its estimates, particularly around small populations, may have large margins of error due to missing data and/or small sample sizes.

Similar to the other counties profiled, Thurston County is experiencing a decline in its agricultural land base and a shift to smaller farms. However, the value of products sold, farm incomes, and agricultural employment have remained stable or increased modestly, so operators appear to be efficient with the land resources they have. Agritourism has expanded in recent years and there is a modest amount of direct-to-consumer sales. However, agritourism is not expanding as rapidly in Thurston County as in some other Washington counties (e.g., Snohomish County).

## Agritourism Conditions

To date, BERK has contacted:

- Jeff Bowe at Experience Olympia & Beyond

Discussions with planners/permit staff are pending.

Findings include:

- **Type:** There is a wide cross section of agricultural operations in Thurston County, ranging from cattle farms (which are not accessible to the public) to smaller working farms for tourists (e.g., pumpkin patches, Christmas tree farms, corn mazes, etc.) Some operations sell goods directly or at farmer's markets (e.g., lavender, soap, etc.).
- **Economic:** The growth associated with agritourism is primarily in the public's awareness as to what farms there are and cross-promotion, rather than creation of new farms or businesses. In marketing materials, Experience Olympia & Beyond also lists restaurants, breweries, wineries, museums etc. that get visitors out to rural areas. Experience Olympia & Beyond is working to align with Washington Tourism Alliance.
- **Permitting:** Challenges have primarily been related to events. Venues and farms that want to host events, either public or private, have had issues obtaining permits because of perceived traffic and utilities overloads. Many of the county's venues are only allowed to host a few events a year and there is usually a curfew.

## Public and Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

### CURRENT EFFORTS

This situation assessment is one part of the Skagit Agritourism exploration and analysis effort. In fall 2020, a [Public Outreach and Engagement Plan](#) was reviewed and revised following Skagit County [Planning Commission](#) and [Ag Advisory Board](#) meetings (November 23 and December 9, 2020), and as well as strengthened with early stakeholder interviews.

Early outreach engagement activities in Winter 2021 have included developing a project website ([www.skagitcounty.net/SkagitAGT](http://www.skagitcounty.net/SkagitAGT)), posting a survey (available at project website), and presenting the study efforts and early results at the [Skagit Ag Summit](#). Early study results were also shared with the [Board of County Commissioners](#) and [Planning Commission](#) on February 23, 2021.

Following the situation assessment publication some discussion groups and interviews are proposed. Once the engagement efforts have progress in winter/spring 2021 findings will be added to this situation assessment.

## OTHER RECENT ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

This outreach and engagement effort will build on other efforts. For example, in 2020, [Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland](#) held two forums in Summer 2020. A July 2020 forum posed definitions of agritourism and discussed several questions focusing on Ag-NRL lands and how agritourism activities could be allowed. An August 2020 forum focused on accessory tourism activities in Ag-NRL zoned lands and opportunities and challenges of agritourism uses.

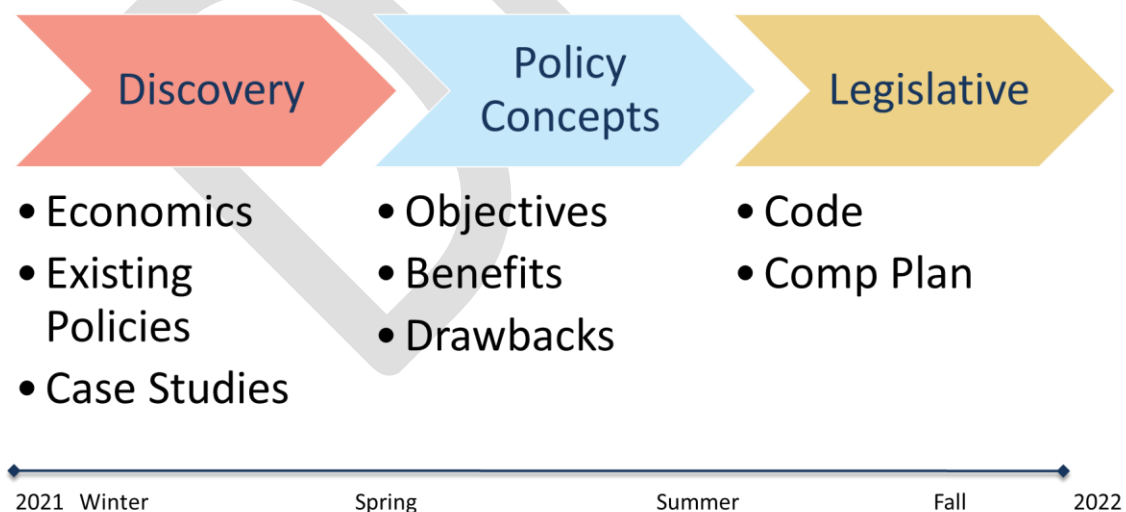
## Next Steps

This Situation Assessment is part of a discovery phase to document current agricultural trends and conditions in Skagit County. It also shares current policies and regulations and contrasts that with case studies and other examples.

This Situation Assessment will be shared with stakeholders. Based on surveys, discussion groups, and meetings, the input and stories from producers, businesses, residents, and elected and appointed officials would be integrated into the study over Winter 2021.

Subsequently, policy options and evaluations would be developed in Spring and Summer 2021 and shared with stakeholders. Eventually by fall 2021 legislative proposals would be shared.

### Exhibit 47. Agritourism Exploration and Analysis Process



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waves/2019/november/agritourism-allows-farms-to-diversify-and-has-potential-benefits-for-rural-communities/

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# Appendix A: Example State Statutes

## **States' Agritourism Statutes: A National AgLaw Center Research Publication**

See examples as follows:

- Delaware: <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/agritourism/delaware.pdf>
- Hawaii: <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/agritourism/hawaii.pdf>
- Maryland: <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/agritourism/maryland.pdf>
- Vermont: <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/agritourism/washington.pdf>

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# Appendix B: Current Agritourism Policy Review in Skagit County

Skagit County Code allows for a wide range of uses (permitted outright and available via special use permits) that are intended to help supplement farm income aside from growing crops and raising meat.

For example, farm based businesses are permitted outright in the Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL) zone. A farm based business is defined as an on-farm commercial enterprise devoted to the direct marketing of unprocessed and/or value-added and soil-dependent agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold on-site. Farm-based businesses are intended to supplement farm income, improve the efficiency of farming, and provide employment to farm family members. Farm-based businesses are separate and distinct from agriculture support services.<sup>28</sup>

The farm based business use allows for many agritourism activities including: farm tours, selling of Skagit County agricultural (value added) items, and other activities available for the promotion of farming in the County (corn maze, pumpkin pitching, u-pick fields, etc.). For a full list of uses, see Skagit County Code ([SCC 14.16.400 Ag-NRL](#)). Allowed uses are classified as permitted uses, administrative special uses, and hearing examiner special uses.

Temporary events are defined as commercial use of a property for any musical, cultural, or social event held either indoors or out of doors.<sup>29</sup> Temporary events in the Ag-NRL zone are an allowed use with an administrative special use permit provided the events are related to agricultural production, no agricultural land is converted, and no permanent structures are constructed. Whether these are “farm to table” dinners (not defined) or picnic tables at a dairy so visitors can enjoy cheese, wine and smoked salmon, these types of activities can currently be accommodated by obtaining an Administrative Special Use permit for Temporary Events. The limiting factor with temporary events is however, that there can be no more than 24 per year.

## WHAT ARE FARM OWNERS ASKING FOR?

There are some farm owners with a farm based business retail space or seasonal roadside stand who would like to serve food to seated visitors on a year round basis. Staff interprets the addition of seating to a farm based business or seasonal roadside stand as being analogous to a restaurant. Restaurants are not an allowed use in the Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL) zone.

Wedding venues are another highly desired use, however, there is no way to demonstrate that a wedding venue is related to agricultural production and thus no way to permit these venues as temporary events. Wedding venues are therefore not an allowed use in the Ag-NRL zone.

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<sup>28</sup> SCC 14.04.020 Definitions

<sup>29</sup> SCC 14.04.020 Definitions

## WHERE IS AGRITOURISM GENERALLY ALLOWED, INCLUDING RESTAURANTS AND WEDDING VENUES?

There are rural and resource zones that allow activities that may be associated with agritourism in addition to farm based businesses and temporary events discussed above. The most common uses that are either permitted outright or require a special use permit include: agricultural accessory uses, bed and breakfasts, and seasonal roadside stands.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES RELATED TO AGRITOURISM

### Resource Lands Element

The conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resource lands and associated long term commercial resource use are the primary purpose of the resource land goals and policies in the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan. Natural resource lands include those zoned Agricultural, Secondary Forest, Industrial Forest, and Rural Resource.

Businesses and support services are generally allowed provided they are compatible with long term commercial resource use and promote the development and diversification of agricultural products. Other secondary uses, such as residential and recreational uses if allowed, shall not be incompatible with long term commercial resource use.<sup>30</sup>

Guiding Principles: Agricultural Resource Lands Protect the agricultural land resource and farming in Skagit County; endeavor to minimize the loss of the resource; mitigate unavoidable losses; and replace lost resources whenever possible. These principles shall guide Skagit County's actions to:

- Preserve agricultural land for agricultural uses;
- Limit new non-agricultural uses and activities on agricultural resource lands;

### Consistent Goals & Policies of the Agricultural Resource Element

The Natural Resource Lands element includes the following goals and policies that may be consistent with Agritourism:

**Goal 4A-3 Preserve Agricultural Land Base and Use:** Promote preservation of agricultural land for agricultural uses, minimize non-farming uses on agricultural lands; and develop incentive programs to promote farming.

**Goal 4A-4 Allowable Land Uses:** Land uses allowed on designated agricultural land shall promote agriculture, agricultural support services, and promote diverse agricultural industries.

**Policy 4A-4.2. Agricultural Support Services:** Facilitate agricultural production by allowing agricultural processing facilities, direct farm sales, and agricultural support services that support long term agricultural use.

**Policy 4A-4.3. Farm-Based Business:** Farm-based businesses shall be allowed as an accessory use in Agricultural Resource Land. Farm-based businesses are an accessory use, secondary to the primary

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<sup>30</sup> 2016 Skagit County Comprehensive Plan pg. 105

agricultural use of a farm property, and shall not interfere with adjacent farming operations, cause nuisances for nearby residences or generate large amounts of traffic.

**Policy 4A-4.5 Special Events and Activities:** Special events and activities on agricultural lands shall be conducted in ways that reduce potential impacts resulting from the activity. Those impacts include but are not limited to traffic, litter, trespass, and sanitation.

## Potentially Inconsistent Goals & Policies of the Agricultural Resource Element

**Goal 4A-5 Minimize Land Use Conflicts:** Minimize land use conflicts and promote mitigation of conflicts on the lands adjacent to agricultural resource lands.

**Policy 4A-5.1 Right to Manage Agricultural Resource Lands:** Goal E, Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands, applies to all lands designated Agricultural Resource Lands to protect agricultural landowner rights to manage their lands for agricultural uses.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The Economic Development element includes the following goals and policies that may be consistent with Agritourism:

### Consistent Goals & Policies of the Economic Development Element

**Industry Goal 11A-1** Encourage resource-based industries as a major part of Skagit County's economy

**Commercial and Industrial Development Goal 11B Economic Viability:** Promote the continued economic viability of Skagit County's natural resources and encourage related value-added production of agricultural, fishery, and forestry resources.

**Diversity Goal 11B-1** Complement Skagit County's natural resource industries by encouraging a diversified base of non-resource businesses and industries.

**Retention Goal 11B-6** Promote the retention and expansion of existing local businesses as a first priority while also promoting the start-up of new businesses particularly those providing living wage jobs.

#### Upper Skagit Valley

**Goal 11B-8** Strive to stimulate the economy of the upper Skagit Valley through protection of resource-based industry, compatible tourism, and community development strategies.

#### Visitor Services

**Destination Goal 11C** Support Skagit County as a visitor destination by preserving and enhancing the unique qualities of both rural areas and urban communities.

**Visitor Opportunities Goal 11C-1** Promote visitor opportunities that do not negatively impact the rural lifestyles of Skagit County residents, critical areas, or long-term commercial significance of natural resources.

#### Conservation and Economic Development

**Quality of Life Goal 11E** Encourage economic development that supports sustainable natural resource industry, protects valued open space and environmental quality and enhances Skagit County's overall quality of life.

## Potentially Inconsistent Goals & Policies of the Economic Development Element

### Visitor Services

**Visitor Opportunities Goal 11C-1** Promote visitor opportunities that do not negatively impact the rural lifestyles of Skagit County residents, critical areas, or long-term commercial significance of natural resources.

## COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPS)

### Consistent Goals & Policies

CPP 2.5 Rural commercial and industrial development shall be of a scale and nature consistent and compatible with rural character and rural services, or as otherwise allowed under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), and may include commercial services to serve the rural population, natural resource-related industries, small scale businesses and cottage industries that provide job opportunities for rural residents, and recreation, tourism and resort development that relies on the natural environment unique to the rural area.

CPP 5. Economic Development Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

CPP 5.4 Commercial and industrial activities directly related to local natural resource production may be allowed in designated natural resource areas provided they can demonstrate their location and existence as natural resource area dependent businesses.

CPP 5.5 A diversified economic base shall be encouraged to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy to economic fluctuations.

CPP 5.7 Tourism, recreation and land preservation shall be promoted provided they do not conflict with the long-term commercial significance of natural resources and critical areas or rural life styles.

CPP 5.12 Value added natural resource industries shall be encouraged.

### Potentially Inconsistent Goals & Policies

CPP 5.10 Lands within designated agricultural resource areas should remain in large parcels and ownership patterns conducive to commercial agricultural operations and production.

CPP 5.11 Skagit County shall conserve agriculture, aquaculture, forest and mineral resources for productive use by designating natural resource lands and aquatic resource areas, where the principal and preferred land uses will be long term commercial resource management.

CPP 8.2 Land uses adjacent to agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands and designated aquatic resource areas shall not interfere with the continued use of these designated lands for the production of food, agricultural and aquatic based products, or timber, or for the extraction of minerals.

CPP 8.5 Long term commercially significant natural resource lands and designated aquatic resource areas shall be protected and conserved. Skagit County shall adopt policies and regulations that encourage and facilitate the retention and enhancement of natural resource areas in perpetuity.

CPP 8.9 Skagit County shall conserve agricultural, aquatic based, forest and mineral resources for productive use by designating natural resource lands and aquatic resource areas where the principal and preferred land uses will be long term commercial resource management.

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# Appendix C: Example Zoning, Definitions, and Case Law

## Example Counties and Agritourism Allowances

Agritourism generally refers to a commercial enterprise at a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the producer. This section summarizes the zoning allowances in example counties. Example counties under review tend to have strong agricultural bases though in proximity to population centers has seen conversion. In terms of agricultural land protection, states with stronger programs include Oregon, Washington, and California on the west coast, and Vermont, Maryland, and New Jersey on the east coast. Great lakes states, mid-Atlantic states and others have moderately high protective policies. See American Farmland Trust: <https://csp-fut.appspot.com/>. Counties from a number of these states are addressed in the following table to share a variety of approaches.

More discussion about the Washington State land use policy and legal landscape follows later in this document. Example definitions from other states are also provided.

### Agritourism: Example Counties across the United States

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Skagit County, WA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: Berries, flowers, potatoes, and vegetable seed.</li> <li>Example festivals: Tulip Festival, Festival of Farms</li> </ul>	129,205	Mount Vernon-Anacortes <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a>	97,664	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P: farm based businesses (value add sales) and agricultural accessory uses (e.g. farm tours, U-pick,); see <a href="#">(SCC) 14.16.400 Ag-NRL</a>.</li> <li>Admin. Special Use: Bed and Breakfasts, accessory.</li> <li>CUP: Outdoor outfitters enterprises (e.g. hunting, fishing, bird watching) incidental to agriculture, result in no conversion of agricultural land; temporary lodging is prohibited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admin. Special Use: Temporary events in the Ag-NRL zone provided the events are related to agricultural production, no agricultural land is converted, and no permanent structures are constructed. Maximum 24 per year.</li> </ul>

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Whatcom County, WA<sup>31</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: dairies, berries.</li> <li>Example festival: Northwest Raspberry Festival.</li> <li>Abutting county.</li> </ul>	229,247	Vancouver BC Bellingham <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a>	102,584	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P: Retail &lt;1K SF</li> <li>ACUP: Retail 1-4.5K SF</li> <li>CUP: Restaurant, subordinate to onsite agriculture processing; B&amp;B</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Department Temporary Food Establishment Operation (not required for private event like wedding)</li> </ul>

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<sup>31</sup> Advertising: <http://choosewhatcom.com/>, <https://sustainableconnections.org/>

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Snohomish County, WA</b> <sup>32</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: Forage, beef and poultry, dairy, fruit, vegetables, agritourism.</li> <li>Second in Washington State for the number of new farms and farmers</li> <li>Top county: Ag Tourism Income – Census of Ag 2017.</li> <li>Abutting county.</li> </ul>	822,083	Seattle-Tacoma <a href="#">Combined Statistical Area</a> Seattle-Bellevue-Everett <a href="#">Metropolitan Division</a>	63,671	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P: Agriculture including Farm activities,<sup>33</sup> Farm Bakery, Farm Processing &lt;5K SF, Farmers Market, Public Events/ Assemblies on Farmland, Wedding Facility<sup>34</sup></li> <li>ACUP: B&amp;B 3 or less rooms, Farm Processing 5K SF+, Farm Support Business, Farmland Enterprise, Farm Kitchen</li> <li>CUP: B&amp;B 4+ rooms, Recreational Facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holding a public or private special event with 50 or more participants, Fire Marshall Special Event Permit</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> Awareness and advertising: Focus on Farming: <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/1399/Focus-on-Farming>.

<sup>33</sup> See definition of farm, SCC 30.91F.120 Farm. "Farm" means the land and agricultural buildings and structures used for or capable of being used for raising, harvesting or distribution of agricultural products, including the promotion, sale, packaging and distribution of agricultural products wholly or partly from the farm site, or within Snohomish County or the Puget Sound Fresh region. Examples of such uses include: agricultural product packaging; u-pick operations; farm stands; farmer's markets; farm product processing; pumpkin patches; corn and other mazes; farm animal displays; holiday tree sales; a farm bakery or kitchen; cider press operations; related on-farm activities and events directly supporting agriculture; and seasonal, incidental or subordinate uses to the principal farm use, such as craft, antique or holiday bazaars. \*\*\*

<sup>34</sup> Pending Snohomish County Code change October 2020: . Revise Reference Note SCC 30.22.130(87) to allow the use of a permanent structure for a wedding facility provided that the structure legally existed no less than eight years prior to the date of submittal of a permit application for a wedding facility. The proposal will also revise the formatting of the wedding facility compliance criteria in the reference note. The criteria address the accessory nature of the uses, support for ongoing agricultural use and limitations on the percent of site converted (e.g. if less than 10 acres no more than 10% converted, and if greater than 10 acres, conversion of no more than 1 acre).



County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Thurston County, WA<sup>35</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Berry farming, egg farms, organic produce, and tree farming.</li> <li>▪ Agritourism income is steadily rising per Census of Ag 2012-2017.</li> <li>▪ Agritourism regulatory approach through overlay.</li> </ul>	290,536	Olympia-Tumwater <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a>	62,250	Agritourism Overlay: Rural & Long-Term Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exempt: U-pick, hay rides, farm stands 700 SF max, cottage food operations, direct sale agricultural products, farm tours, farmers markets or agritourism with no permanent structures (e.g. corn maze)</li> <li>▪ Permitted: Accessory commercial or retail use produced onsite, corporate or group events, group camping, accessory retail (standards based on size), small wineries, microbreweries, cider mills, craft distilleries, and similar small scale, home stays and inns, nature tourism, geo-tourism, culinary tourism, art tourism or eco-tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Temporary Food Establishment Permit Application</li> </ul>

<sup>35</sup> Awareness and advertising: <https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/agriculture/> and <https://ssfoodsystemnetwork.org/>.

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Clallam County, WA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: Lavender farms.</li> <li>Top county for Agritourism income in 2012 per Census of Ag, no data 2017.</li> <li>Example: Sequim Lavender Festival.</li> </ul>	77,331	Port Angeles <a href="#">Micropolitan Statistical Area</a>	17,197	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P: Agricultural activities including farm stands<sup>36</sup></li> <li>CUP: B&amp;B, Outdoor-oriented recreation facilities designed to be compatible with the agricultural use of the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temporary Food Service Permits: Any public advertisement or public invitation will mean a permit is required.</li> </ul>
<b>Chelan County, WA<sup>37</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for orchards, vineyards.</li> <li>Growing agritourism 2007 – 2017.</li> <li>Example: Apple Blossom Festival.</li> </ul>	77,200	Wenatchee <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a> (Chelan-Douglas)	59,767	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P: Agricultural Processing Facility; Agriculturally Related Industry<sup>38</sup>; Value Added Agricultural Operations<sup>39</sup>; Farm Visit, U-Pick and Rent-A-Tree Operation; Winery, Roadside Stands, Nursery, Equal to or Less Than 1,500 sq. ft. Retail</li> <li>CUP: Winery, Roadside Stands, Nursery, Greater Than 1,500 sq. ft.; Accessory Uses Supporting or Sustaining Ag Operations; Agricultural Support Services<sup>40</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temporary Food Establishment Permit (Chelan Douglas Health District)</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> Clallam County: “Agriculture” means improvements and activities associated with the raising and harvesting of crops and livestock. “Agriculture” includes ancillary activities, including equipment storage and repair, seasonal employee housing, and temporary on-site retail stands for the sale of agricultural goods.

<sup>37</sup> Awareness and Advertising: <http://www.wenatcheevalley.org/> and <https://www.lakechelan.com/area/economy-business/>.

<sup>38</sup> Chelan County: Canning, butchering, bottling, refining, cold storage/controlled atmosphere, food processing facilities.

<sup>39</sup> Chelan County May include bagging, packaging, bundling, pre-cutting, food and beverage service, etc.

<sup>40</sup> Chelan County: Ag equipment repair, trucking operations, equipment rental and agricultural research facilities.

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Walla Walla County, WA<sup>41</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: Wine, wheat, and onions.</li> <li>Example: Walla Walla Sweet Onion Festival.</li> </ul>	60,760	Walla Walla <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a> (Walla Walla – Columbia)	702,537	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessory: Wedding and Event Center, Type I<sup>42</sup></li> <li>P: Produce Stand, Agritourism Enterprise</li> <li>CUP: Produce Market, Wedding and Event, Type II Center<sup>43</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Wedding and Event at left; development standards apply to facilities.</li> <li>Temporary Food Establishments: Temporary food establishments must operate at a fixed location less than 21 days or at recurring event like farmer’s market.</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> Awareness and Advertising: <https://www.wallawalla.org/>, <https://www.wallawallawine.com/events/>, <https://www.sweetonions.org/>.

<sup>42</sup> Walla Walla County: Wedding and Event Center, Type I = no more than twenty-four events per year per facility and not more than one hundred guests/attendees per event; limited to the hours 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. This does not include retail sales, concerts and amphitheaters, rodeos, circuses or other similar public events. Typically allowed as non-ag accessory use on parcels less than 5 acres and with poor soils not suited for ag. If not meeting the standards other critical may apply to demonstrate no adverse effect on ag, and accessory in nature.

<sup>43</sup> Walla Walla County: Wedding and Event Center, Type II = more than twenty-four events per year and/or more than one hundred guests/attendees per event, and/or have expanded hours different than between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. This does not include retail sales, concerts and amphitheaters, rodeos, circuses or other similar public events. Typically allowed as non-ag accessory use on parcels less than 5 acres and with poor soils not suited for ag. If not meeting the standards other critical may apply to demonstrate no adverse effect on ag, and accessory in nature.

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Marion County, OR</b> Known for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Berries, dairies, poultry, and eggs.<sup>44</sup></li> <li>▪ Leading county with farm revenue in Oregon.<sup>45</sup></li> <li>▪ Agritourism is advanced in education<sup>46</sup> and marketing.<sup>47</sup></li> <li>▪ Stricter state oversight, and county rules.</li> </ul>	347,818	Portland-Vancouver-Salem <a href="#">Combined Statistical Area</a>	288,671	Consistent with state law, permanent and temporary uses are limited. Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) and Special Agriculture (Small Farm) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Farm stands, with limitations on 25% share of annual sales for incidental items and fees for promotional activities.</li> <li>▪ Winery subject to standards addressing acreage and amount of production.</li> <li>▪ Cider Business: With standards related to acreage and amount of production. Allow agritourism activities (see Definitions below Table)</li> <li>▪ Facilities for Processing Farm Crops.</li> <li>▪ Single agri-tourism or other commercial activity or event.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Temporary: Single agri-tourism or other commercial activity or event. Site must be 10 acres, and event limited to 100 attendees or 50 vehicles. Activity 6 am-10 pm and sound amplification 8 am to 8 pm.</li> </ul>

<sup>44</sup> See: <https://www.nasda.org/news/oregon-or-counties-rank-high-in-us-agriculture#:~:text=A%20variety%20of%20berry%20crops,blueberries%2C%20and%20seventh%20in%20strawberries> and [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Oregon/cp41047.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Oregon/cp41047.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> See: <https://www.co.marion.or.us/pw/planning/zoning/documents/comprehensiveplan/aglands.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> See: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/marion/agritourism-tourism-marion-county>.

<sup>47</sup> See: <https://marionfarmloop.com/>.

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Yolo County, CA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Known for: almonds, wine grapes, tomato processing, rice, organic production.<sup>48</sup></li> <li>▪ Relatively higher rate of agritourism in state per study in 2015.<sup>49</sup></li> <li>▪ Agritourism marketing.<sup>50</sup></li> </ul>	220,500	Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a>	459,662	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accessory: processing; wine and olive oil production (small no tastings); seasonal roadside/produce stands; Special event facilities, over 40 acres, 8 events per year, less than 150 attendees; Farm stays, farm dinners; Cottage food operation</li> <li>▪ Rural restaurants must be appurtenant to the primary agricultural use of the area. Rural restaurants are allowed only in the Agricultural Commercial (A-C) zone (1 of 5 AG zones)</li> <li>▪ Site Plan Review: Christmas trees/pumpkin patches, over 100 daily customers, Corn mazes, Permanent roadside/produce stands, farmers markets, U-pick farms, etc.; “Yolo Stores,” less than 100 daily customers; Wineries, breweries, olive mills, small; Special event facilities, small; Bed and breakfasts, small.</li> <li>▪ Use Permit: “Yolo Stores,” over 100 daily customers; Wineries, breweries, olive mills, large; Special event facilities, large; Bed and breakfasts, large; Other agri-tourism uses; Sport shooting, hunting, gun, and fishing clubs (more than 50 people per day)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For agri-tourism projects that hold more than twelve special events per year, or events of more than 150 attendees; and/or events which generate more than 100 vehicle trips on any given day of operations (such as a wedding), a Minor Use Permit shall be required.</li> </ul>

<sup>48</sup> See: <https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/agriculture-cooperative-extension/agriculture-and-weights-measures/crop-statistics>.

<sup>49</sup> See: <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/2015maps/>.

<sup>50</sup> See: [https://visityolo.com/listing\\_cat/agritourism/](https://visityolo.com/listing_cat/agritourism/).

County, State	County Population (2019 ACS)	Adjacent Metro Areas	Census of Ag – Acres in Farming 2017	Agritourism in Ag Zones	Special Events
<b>Carroll County, MD</b> <sup>51</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: livestock and dairies, grains, eggs, fruits, vegetables.</li> <li>Rural county near metro area of similar size as Puget Sound.</li> <li>Advertise farm products and agritourism activities.<sup>52</sup></li> </ul>	168,447	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a>	146,778	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessory: Antique and arts and crafts shops, in conjunction with a residence or farming operation; roadside stands.</li> <li>CUP: Bed-and-breakfast and Country Inn; Farm Alcohol Producer (winery, brewery, distillery) including tours and tasting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temporary zoning certificate for events associated with Farm Alcohol Producer. May include facilities and catering for private events, such as banquets, weddings, receptions, and reunions.</li> </ul>
<b>Dane County, WI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Known for: corn, soybeans, dairies, livestock.</li> <li>Agritourism is increasing.<sup>5354</sup></li> </ul>	546,695	Madison <a href="#">Metropolitan Statistical Area</a>	506,688	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessory: Sales of agricultural products produced on the farm; Farm related exhibitions, sales, or events fewer than 10 days per year. Sales of agricultural products produced on the farm.</li> <li>CUP: Agricultural entertainment activities or special events 10 days or more. Limited farm business. Sale of agricultural and dairy products not produced on the premises and incidental sale of non-alcoholic beverages and snacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural entertainment, special events, tourism, or assembly: Require event plans at least 30 days prior to the start of any activities in each calendar year. Reviewed by planning, fire, and sheriff departments.</li> </ul>

<sup>51</sup> See: <https://www.mdfarmbureau.com/carroll/>, <https://extension.umd.edu/carroll-county/agriculture>, and <https://carrollgrown.org/>.

<sup>52</sup> See: <https://carrollgrown.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CC-Tourism-Farm-Guide.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> See: [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/city-life/agritourism-trend-continues-uptick-in-wisconsin/article\\_7d870716-1e2c-5fb1-a721-5039652c5dd1.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/city-life/agritourism-trend-continues-uptick-in-wisconsin/article_7d870716-1e2c-5fb1-a721-5039652c5dd1.html). Also: <http://www.visitdairyland.com/>.

<sup>54</sup> See: <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/madison.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/7/a5/7a558440-ea64-51a1-9e14-8721d729db3b/57e41e8608729.pdf.pdf>

## Other States Agritourism Definitions and Policies

### Vermont

Municipalities with zoning regulations cannot prohibit accessory businesses in the same location as a "farm". Accessory businesses include storage, preparation, processing, and sale of products if at least 50% of total annual sales are from products principally produced on the farm. Accessory uses also include: "Educational, recreational, or social events that feature agricultural practices or qualifying products, or both. Such events may include tours of the farm, farm stays, tastings and meals featuring qualifying products, and classes or exhibits in the preparation, processing, or harvesting of qualifying products." Farm stays are "a paid, overnight guest accommodation on a farm for the purpose of participating in educational, recreational, or social activities on the farm that feature agricultural practices or qualifying products, or both. A farm stay includes the option for guests to participate in such activities."<sup>55</sup>

### Oregon

Oregon, like Washington, has growth management laws, though it is more state directed rather than guiding. Oregon has pursued a land use program at the state level that is explicitly designed to conserve farmland and protect these lands from conversion to urban and non-farm rural uses.<sup>56</sup> The State has pursued this goal through the maintenance of exclusive farm use (EFU) zones. State law allows counties to permit farm stands, wineries, cider business, farm breweries, and agritourism events in EFU zones, with some conditions that limit events per year or duration.<sup>57</sup>

### Example Definitions from Other States

**Oregon (for purposes of limited liability):** "Agri-tourism activity" means an activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching and historical, cultural, or harvest-your-own activities or natural activities and attractions. An activity is an agri-tourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.

**Oregon, Marion County:** Relevant to Cider Business – "Agri-tourism or other commercial events" includes outdoor concerts for which admission is charged, educational, cultural, health or lifestyle events, facility rentals, celebratory gatherings, and other events at which the promotion of cider produced in conjunction with the cider business is a secondary purpose of the event.

**California, University of California-Davis, UC Small Farm Program:** Agricultural tourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the owner or operator. Agritourism can include farm stands or shops, U-pick, farm stays, tours, on-farm classes, fairs, festivals, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, Christmas tree farms, winery weddings, orchard dinners, youth camps, barn dances, hunting or fishing, guest ranches, and more.

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<sup>55</sup> See: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/businessdevelopment/agritourism>.

<sup>56</sup> Chun, Nicholas. 2017. *Identifying Clusters of Non-Farm Activity within Exclusive Farm Use Zones in the Northern Willamette Valley*. Portland State University.  
[https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4901&context=open\\_access\\_etds](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4901&context=open_access_etds)

<sup>57</sup> [Oregon Revised Statutes 215.213](#).

**Wisconsin (for purposes of limited liability):** “Agricultural tourism activity” means an educational or recreational activity that takes place on a farm, ranch, grove, or other place where agricultural, horticultural, or silvicultural crops are grown or farm animals or farmed fish are raised, and that allows members of the general public, whether or not for a fee, to tour, explore, observe, learn about, participate in, or be entertained by an aspect of agricultural production, harvesting, or husbandry that occurs on the farm, ranch, grove, or other place.

## Washington Growth Management Act and Agritourism

The Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) protects agriculture of long-term significance for principally agricultural use, and allows for some accessory uses that support the agricultural activity and do not convert more than one acres to nonagricultural uses. Agritourism could be an accessory use in a zone that focuses on agricultural land of long-term commercial significance. Agritourism could also occur in Rural lands adjacent to agricultural lands of long-term significance.

- RCW 36.70A.177 (1) A county or a city may use a variety of innovative zoning techniques in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance under RCW 36.70A.170. The innovative zoning techniques should be designed to conserve agricultural lands and encourage the agricultural economy. Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, a county or city should encourage nonagricultural uses to be limited to lands with poor soils or otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes.
- (2) Innovative zoning techniques a county or city may consider include, but are not limited to: (a) Agricultural zoning, which limits the density of development and restricts or prohibits nonfarm uses of agricultural land and may allow accessory uses, including nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, that support, promote, or sustain agricultural operations and production, as provided in subsection (3) of this section; \*\*\*
- (3) Accessory uses allowed under subsection (2)(a) of this section shall comply with the following: (a) Accessory uses shall be located, designed, and operated so as to not interfere with, and to support the continuation of, the overall agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties, and shall comply with the requirements of this chapter; (b) Accessory uses may include: (i) Agricultural accessory uses and activities, including but not limited to the storage, distribution, and marketing of regional agricultural products from one or more producers, agriculturally related experiences, or the production, marketing, and distribution of value-added agricultural products, including support services that facilitate these activities; and (ii) Nonagricultural accessory uses and activities as long as they are consistent with the size, scale, and intensity of the existing agricultural use of the property and the existing buildings on the site. Nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, including new buildings, parking, or supportive uses, shall not be located outside the general area already developed for buildings and residential uses and shall not otherwise convert more than one acre of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses; and (c) Counties and cities have the authority to limit or exclude accessory uses otherwise authorized in this subsection (3) in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

Local jurisdictions within Washington State have authority within the framework of GMA to address agricultural accessory uses like agritourism within development regulations.



For purposes of addressing limited liability for agritourism operations, Washington State adopted the following definition of agritourism in 2017 (RCW 4.24.830):

- (1) “Agritourism activity” means any activity carried out on a farm or ranch whose primary business activity is agriculture or ranching and that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities including, but not limited to: Farming; ranching; historic, cultural, and on-site educational programs; recreational farming programs that may include on-site hospitality services; guided and self-guided tours; petting zoos; farm festivals; corn mazes; harvest-your-own operations; hayrides; barn parties; horseback riding; fishing; and camping.

## Definitions of Agritourism in Washington Counties

**Chelan County:** “Agricultural tourism” refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. All marijuana or cannabis in all forms, and the growing, production, processing, selling, or transporting thereof, is excluded from the definition of agriculture, agriculture related, and agricultural use.

**Thurston County:** "Agritourism" means an enterprise generally located at a working farm, ranch, or other agricultural operation or facility, which is conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors, guests, or clients, and that generates income for the owner/operator. Agritourism is also the act of visiting a working farm/ranch or any agricultural or horticultural operation for the purposes of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm/ranch or agricultural operation that also adds to the economic viability of the agricultural operation. Agriculture or agricultural production must be the primary use of the land except as otherwise provided, pursuant to the standards and criteria established by [Chapter 20.08G](#), Agritourism Overlay District (AOD). Uses permitted by that chapter are generally defined as agritourism uses within the AOD.

**Clallam County Comprehensive Plan: Agritourism.** Clallam County’s lavender industry is another example of the market niches farmers can identify and develop to make their farms profitable and sustainable. Our lavender farmers produce a wide array of value-added lavender products and have developed an agritourism industry to complement the sales of lavender products by selling the experience of visiting lavender farms and the region through festivals, farm tours, and other events. Other types of farming can also benefit by cultivating tourists on the farm such as U-pick berry farms and corn mazes that are popular with locals as well as tourists, farm stays in which visitors pay to work on farms, and farm educational events. Agritourism also benefits other local businesses such as lodging and food service, thus multiplying its economic impact.

**Walla Walla County:** 17.08.020 - Agritourism enterprise. "Agritourism enterprise" refers to agriculturally related experiences provided on a working farm or ranch for the enjoyment, entertainment, or education of the public or invited groups. The agritourism enterprise shall support, promote, or sustain agricultural operations and production. The following activities marketed to the general public or invited groups constitute agritourism enterprises: farm or ranch tours, hayrides, u-pick operations, classes, on-site retail sales, or picnic facilities. An agritourism enterprise does not include produce stands or produce markets as defined in Chapter 17.08. The enterprise shall meet the following conditions:

- A. An agritourism enterprise shall not provide any lodging for guests or employees, or include a restaurant or event facilities, unless otherwise allowed in the code.

B. The agritourism enterprise may conduct on-site retail sales of products grown by the farm or ranch in a market area that is not larger than 400 square feet.

C. Ancillary retail sales of products not grown or produced by the farm or ranch must be confined to 15 percent of the total gross floor space of the retail market area (maximum of 60 square feet), and must be clearly accessory to retail sales and marketing of the farm or ranch.

D. A permit is required for all agritourism enterprises except as listed under (E). Permit review shall be limited to determining that the proposed enterprise meets the conditions listed above, provides adequate parking, and is compliant with other applicable development regulations. A permit may be revisited by the Walla Walla County Community Development Department if any of the activities are determined to be outside of the scope, purpose, and/or use of the agritourism enterprise.

E. The following activities are exempt from the agritourism enterprise permit because they are considered to be part of the regular operation of a farm or ranch, provided that adequate off-street parking is available and specific ingresses and egresses are designated and permitted. 1. Farm or ranch tours offered no more than four times per year. 2. Stand-alone u-pick operations not conducted on the same farm or ranch that offers other agritourism experiences.

## Growth Management Hearings Board Case Law

### *Whitten et al. versus Spokane County Case No. 14-1-0006c*

- Description: Petitioners challenge Spokane County's Resolution No. 14-0401, which amended Spokane County's zoning code to allow wedding and social events in the Small Tract Agricultural zone in Spokane County. The County proposed to allow such uses in existing structures according to a temporary use permit. While the proposed ordinance was meant to address the Green Bluff area which is a fruit tree area but the rest of the Small Tract zoning is primarily devoted to wheat and hay production. Petitioners were concerned with chemical drift, dust, noise, traffic congestion and trespass and conflicts of wedding event venues with agriculture.
- Findings: The Board finds that under some circumstances, weddings and social events in the Small Tract Agriculture area could harm agriculture by allowing nonagricultural businesses that drive up the cost of the agricultural land. The Board further finds that another consideration regarding the size, scale, and intensity of the nonagricultural accessory use is the number of people allowed to attend such events. Allowing for 200 attendees for each of 25 events permits up to 5,000 people to attend weddings or social events for each of the permitted venues. If the maximum number of events were approved, this would appear to be out of size, scale, and intensity of character with this small tract agriculture area which is only served with limited governmental services. Even though the uses allowed by the County's revised zoning changes might negatively impact agriculture under some circumstances, as cited above, the Board notes that the County did revise its regulations in an attempt to conform with recent legislative amendments to RCW 36.70A.177. The Board finds that the County did include the key protective criteria and provisions of RCW 36.70A.177 and WAC 365-196-815 in its new zoning code regulations. The allowed action is temporary, may only continue for a period of up to six months, may not involve the erection of a substantial structure, and is revocable. Even though the Board is concerned that some newly allowed uses may jeopardize agricultural

lands, that is related to the effectiveness of County implementation of those regulations, which now comply with the GMA. ... Board notes that it will be up to the neighbors of the lands near to event venues to assure that the County's agricultural protective regulations are properly implemented and enforced.

- Temporary use performance standards noted by the Board:
  - a. The property shall retain its agricultural identity and its capacity as agricultural land . . .
  - c. The temporary use must be an accessory use to the parcel or lot and cannot be the primary use on the parcel or lot . . .
  - e. The temporary use shall support, promote, or sustain agricultural operations and production as provided in RCW 36.70A.177(3) . . .
  - f. The temporary use shall be located, designed and operated so as to not interfere with, and to support the continuation of the overall agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties . . .
  - i. The temporary use shall be consistent with the size, scale and intensity of the existing agricultural use of the property and existing buildings on the site. The area devoted to the temporary use shall not be located outside the general area already developed for buildings and residential uses, and shall not otherwise convert more than one acre of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses.

#### *Friends of Sammamish Valley et al. versus King County 20-3-0003, 20-3-0004c*

- Description: In 2018, the County was aware of 54 wineries, breweries, and distilleries in unincorporated King County, of which apparently only 4 were legally permitted. The County funded a study of the Sammamish Valley Wine and Beverage Industry Study. The challenged action is Ordinance 19030 amending the County's development regulations concerning wineries, breweries, distilleries (WBD) and similar adult beverage uses, establishing demonstration project locations and criteria, establishing business licensing regulations, and modifying citation penalties for wineries, breweries, distilleries, and remote tasting rooms. Petitioners allege that the County failed to timely conduct SEPA review of the challenged ordinance.
- Findings: The Board determined that King County failed to comply with SEPA RCW 43.21C.030(c) and remanded this matter to the County to achieve compliance. The Board is not addressing any other substantive issues that are not yet ripe for review.

## Appendix D: Preliminary Agritourism List

Exhibit 48 presents an initial inventory of farm operators offering agritourism events (using a broad definition). Exhibit 48 details farm operators offering one or more agritourism activity, including farm stands, in Skagit County.

### Exhibit 48. Agritourism Operators in Skagit County

Operator	Agricultural Product(s)	Activities	Nearest Town
Akyla Farms	Chicken, pork, beef, goat	Farm stand, events	Sedro-Woolley
Alpacas of South Form Farm	Alpaca products	Farm tours, farm stand	Mount Vernon
A Man and His Hoe	Eggs, chickens	Farm stand	Bow
Anthea Farm		Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Azusa Farm & Gardens	Plant nursery	Nursery	Mount Vernon
Black Rock Seafood	Crab, fish, oysters, clams, mussels, prawns	Farm stand	Anacortes
Blau Oyster Co.	Oysters, clams, mussels, crab, shrimp, prawns, scallops, herring	Farm stand	Bow
Blanchard Mountain Farm	Vegetables	Farm stand, lodging	Bow
Blue Heron Farm & Nursery	Berries, vegetables, potatoes, squash, plant nursery, bamboo	Farm stand, nursery	Rockport
Bow Hill Blueberries	Blueberries	U-pick, café, farm stand	Bow
BZ Farm	Pumpkin	U-pick	Sedro-Woolley
Carpenter Creek Farm	Blueberries	U-pick, farm stand	Mount Vernon
Cascadian Farm	Blueberries, raspberries, sweet corn, pumpkins	U-pick, café, farm stand	Rockport
Cedardale Orchards	Apples, squash, cider	Farm stand	Conway
Christianson's Nursery	Plant nursery, llamas, goats, chickens	Nursery, gift shop, classes	Mount Vernon
Double N Potatoes	Potatoes	Farm stand ("Potato Shed")	Burlington
Dunbar Gardens	Willow, willow baskets	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Eagle Haven Winery /	Wine, apples	Tasting room, events, farm stand	Sedro-Woolley

Operator	Agricultural Product(s)	Activities	Nearest Town
Perkins Apple Orchard			
Floret Flowers	Flower bulbs, flower seeds	Workshops	Mount Vernon
Frazier/Entrikin Farms	Pumpkins, corn	U-pick, maze	Burlington
Gaia Rising Farm	Vegetables	Farm stay	Anacortes (Guemes Island)
Glacier Peak Winery	Wine	Tasting room	Rockport
Golden Glen Creamery	Dairy (milk)	Farm stand	Bow
Gonzalez Farms	Berries, beans, vegetables	Farm stand	Hamilton
Gooserosa	Chickens, goats	Farm stay	Mount Vernon
Gordon Skagit Farms	Pumpkins, squash, gourds, corn, apples, honey, cider	U-pick, farm stand	Mount Vernon
Harmony Fields	Sheep (cheese), herbs	Farm stay	Bow
Hayton Farms Berries	Berries, beef, pork, chicken, eggs	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Hedlin's Family Farm	Vegetables, berries	Farm stand	Mount Vernon/ La Conner
Hidden Meadow Ranch	Dairy, eggs, yarn, fiber	Farm stand, events, tours	Mount Vernon
Highwater Farm	Vegetables	U-pick, lodging	Mount Vernon
Hoehn Bend Farm	Beef	Farm stand	Sedro-Woolley
Jonasson Farm	Lamb, flowers	Farm stand	Burlington
Knutzen Farms	Potatoes	Farm stand	Burlington
Lake Cavanaugh Farms	Berries, vegetables	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Lazy Squirrel Nut Farm	Chestnuts	U-pick	Mount Vernon
Les Gourmands Farm	Vegetables	Farm stand	Burlington
Lopez Brothers Farm	Berries	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Jones Creek Farms	Apples, peaches, pears, plums, garlic, figs	U-pick, farm stand	Sedro-Woolley
Mike and Jean's Berry Farm	Berries	Farm stand	Mount Vernon

Operator	Agricultural Product(s)	Activities	Nearest Town
Morgan Family Farm	Beets, potatoes, onions	Farm stand	Bow
Mossy Gate Flower Farm	Tulips, daffodils, dahlias, sunflowers, zinnia	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Northwest Homegrown Ranch Meat	Beef, pork, lamb	Farm stand	Bow
Ovenell's Heritage Inn / Double O Ranch	Cattle	Lodging, events, weddings	Concrete
Papa's U Cut Christmas Trees	Christmas trees	U-pick	Mount Vernon
Pleasant Ridge Farm	Apples, pumpkin, vegetables, squash, pears, beans, lentils	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Prairie Springs Ranch	Beef	Farm stand	Bow
Rabbit Fields Farm	Vegetables, berries	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Red Shed Farm	Vegetables	Events, weddings	Mount Vernon
Reine Acres	Beef, pork, poultry, eggs	Farm stand, lodging	Sedro-Woolley
RoosenGarde	Tulips, daffodils, lilies	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Samish Bay Cheese	Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt, kefir), beef, pork	Farm stand, café, tours	Bow
Schuh Farms	Berries, vegetables, apples, pumpkins, gourds, squash, Christmas trees	U-pick, farm stand, café, corn maze, hayrides	Mount Vernon
Skagit River Ranch	Beef, chicken, eggs, pork	Farm stand	Sedro-Woolley
Skagit Sun Farms	Strawberries	Farm stand	Anacortes
Skagit's Own Fish Market and Berries by the Barn	Fish, crab, oysters, clams, mussels, scallops, shrimp, prawns, smoked/pickled fish	Farm stand, restaurant	Burlington
Skiyou Ranch	Beef	Farm stand	Sedro-Woolley
Snow Goose Produce	Vegetables	Farm stand, café, events	Mount Vernon
Southern Exposure Family Farm	Vegetables, nursery plants	Farm tours	Sedro-Woolley
SUOT Farm and Flowers	Flowers	Farm stand, workshops	Burlington

Operator	Agricultural Product(s)	Activities	Nearest Town
Swanson's Farm	Berries, apples	U-pick, farm stand	La Conner
Tangled Thicket Farm	Dairy, vegetables, berries	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
Taylor Shellfish Farms	Oysters, clams, mussels, crab, scallops; frozen and smoked seafood	Farm stand, restaurant	Bow
Tenneson Family Farm	Beef, milk, chicken, eggs, pork, honey	Farm stand	Sedro-Woolley
Tulip Town	Tulips	Farm stand, display garden	Mount Vernon
Viva Farms	Berries, vegetables, squash, herbs	Farm stand, events, farming classes	Burlington/ Mount Vernon
Waxwing Farm	Vegetables	Farm stand	Mount Vernon
When Pigs Fly Farm	Dairy, vegetables, berries, alpacas, cattle	Lodging	Mount Vernon
Willowbrook Manor	Chamomile	Food, events, bicycle tours, lodging	Sedro-Woolley

*Note: "Farm stand" includes both indoor retail shops and outdoor farm stands. "Café" includes establishments that sell beverages (coffee, juice, etc.), ice cream, baked goods, and similar items, but do not offer sit-down meal service.*

*Sources: Skagit County Farm Map, 2019; Visit Skagit Valley, 2020; individual farms' websites, 2020; BERK, 2020.*