



Washington State Conservation Commission
Office of Farmland Preservation

Agricultural Viability
August 31, 2016

Agricultural viability means...?

Simply defined, agricultural viability means the ability of an agricultural operator to potentially meet their financial obligations.

Strategy around Agricultural Viability

- Foster and maintain agricultural viability;
- Address the key issues facing the agricultural sector in your communities

Goal

Viable agriculture enhances the quality of life through strengthening the economy, preserving cultural heritage, protecting natural resources, and increasing food security.

VSP RCW excerpts pertinent to agricultural viability

RCW 36.70A.700(2)

Promote plans to protect and enhance critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the **long-term viability of agriculture** in the state of Washington and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses;

RCW 36.70A.710

(3) In identifying watersheds to participate in the program, a county must consider: (a) The **role of farming within the watershed**, including the number and acreage of farms, the economic value of crops and livestock, and the risk of the conversion of farmland;

RCW 36.70A.720

A watershed group designated by a county under RCW 36.70A.715 must develop a work plan to protect critical areas while **maintaining the viability of agriculture** in the watershed.

RCW 36.70A.720(1)

(a) Review and incorporate applicable water quality, watershed management, farmland protection, and species recovery data and plans;

RCW 36.70A.725

(2) The technical panel shall review the work plan and report to the director within forty-five days after the director receives the work plan. The technical panel shall assess whether at the end of ten years after receipt of funding, the work plan, in conjunction with other existing plans and regulations, will protect critical areas while **maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture** in the watershed.

(3)(a) If the technical panel determines the proposed work plan will protect critical areas while **maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture** in the watershed:

- (i) It must recommend approval of the work plan; and
- (ii) The director must approve the work plan.

(b) If the technical panel determines the proposed work plan will not protect critical areas while **maintaining and enhancing the viability of agriculture in the watershed**:

- (i) It must identify the reasons for its determination; and
- (ii) The director must advise the watershed group of the reasons for disapproval.

Five potential topic areas:

- 1. A stable and secure agricultural land base**
- 2. Infrastructure and services**
- 3. Support for best farm management practices**
- 4. Education, training and succession planning**
- 5. A welcoming business environment**

Examples of actionable items

1. Facilitate and coordinate emerging efforts by agricultural producers, organizations, citizen groups, and governmental entities to increase agricultural profitability and viability.
2. Develop and initiate policies and projects to promote the economic and cultural importance of farmland protection.
3. Encourage the continued viability of agriculture as a primary land use in your area.
4. Develop or support estate planning for growers