

### 3.2.1.C Agriculture Policies for Rural Lands

Agricultural land is defined by the GMA as “land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticulture, viticulture, floriculture, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees, or livestock, and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production”. Long-term commercial significance “includes the growing capacity, productivity and soil composition of the land for long term commercial production, in consideration with the land’s proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.” Kitsap County does not have any designated agricultural land nor are any lands within Kitsap County zoned “Agriculture”. However, because agriculture is considered a resource use by the GMA, a discussion of the agriculture that is occurring in Kitsap County is described below.

Agriculture is a growing business in Kitsap County with 15,294 acres of prime farmland soils designated by the USDA, with up to that many acres again suitable for either dry-soil crops or with irrigation. The 2007 Agricultural Census identified 664 farm operations in Kitsap, representing an increase of 14% over 2002. The Kitsap Conservation District documented 1000 more farms as part of their ongoing County Watershed Inventory. Kitsap County maintains a Current Use Assessment program for agricultural lands, with 214 enrolled parcels totaling 2,169 acres. The USDA Agricultural Census estimates food processing and farming accounts for 113 full-time employees in Kitsap County with a total agricultural value of \$59 million<sup>1</sup>. The USDA Agricultural Census also estimates Kitsap County farmers’ markets bring in over \$1,000,000 annually.

The agricultural base of Kitsap is diverse. Farmers grow a cornucopia of crops (horticulture, fruits, berries and vegetables; forage and grains; viticulture, vermiculture, organic & non-organic forestry, aquaculture) and animal husbandry. In 2007, over half of Kitsap County’s agriculture sales (valued at \$7 million) were horticultural products (nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod). Besides horticulture, Kitsap County growers are among the state’s leading producers of Christmas trees and sheep, goats, and their products. Additionally, Kitsap County has eight community-based farmers markets, reflecting the expanding national trend of smaller farms catering to local markets. Because of our growing urban population, and expanding local food outlets, fostering local food production is an important part of public and economic development policy.

#### **Goal 7. Promote a diversity of agricultural activities.**

Policy RL-36 Recognize that small farms in Kitsap County are increasing in number and in production, reflecting a trend seen across the country, and these farms represent a significant contribution to Kitsap County’s economic, environmental and community sustainability.

Policy RL-37 Recognize that small farms in Kitsap, both historically and currently, may represent a sole source of income for rural households, a partial or second income, or a household supplement of food or fiber, and the value of the agricultural activity remains significant and important.

Policy RL-38 Recognize the health, environmental, and economic benefits of local food production by encouraging and allowing farming and agricultural activities in the designated rural areas of the County and considering them an important rural activity.

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<sup>1</sup> USDA Agricultural Census  
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## **Goal 8. Retain and preserve land suitable for agricultural production and encourage the continued practice of farming within the County through regulatory and non-regulatory means.**

Policy RL-39 Adopt a Right to Farm Ordinance.

Policy RL-40 Allow the use of normal agricultural activities, as those define in RCW 7.48.310, and such as cropping, cultivation, rotational grazing livestock, spraying, manure application and composting within the designated Rural use areas, provided all applicable environmental laws and regulations are followed. Livestock and poultry producers shall be allowed accepted management practices, such as; animal husbandry practices, feeding, breeding, birthing & farrowing, neutering & gelding, and slaughtering within designated rural areas provided all applicable environmental laws and regulations are followed. Agricultural practices shall not be unduly limited by parcel size or acreage.

Policy RL-41 Adopt temporary worker housing standards and policies to allow for construction of farm worker housing and infrastructure.

Policy RL-42 Develop and adopt a county strategic plan for agriculture addressing farmland preservation, agricultural infrastructure and marketing strategies to support local food and fiber production .

Policy RL-43 Notify neighboring landowners about approved agricultural uses in designated areas.

Policy RL-44 Coordinate with the federal, state and local governments, community groups, and private landowners to promote long-term preservation of farmlands.

Policy RL-45 Develop and promote incentives for continued resource uses, including but not limited to the following:

- Implement Transfer of Development Rights.
- Develop permit review processes and policies to assist agricultural related activities that involve infrastructure building, stewardship, habitat restoration, and/or nutrient management plans.
- Allow development of agricultural infrastructure essential to farm support in rural zones, including but not limited to:

- equipment repair,
- value-added food processing,
- feed and hay sales,
- fencing companies and supplies,
- farm stands,
- commercial kitchens,
- nursery supplies,
- abattoirs, including butcher shops, mobile slaughter sites, and farm scale processing of livestock and poultry as permitted by Washington State Department of Agriculture,
- co-processing, co-ops and cooperation among farmers,
- large animal veterinarians,
- apiaries,
- dairies,
- aquaponics

or any combinations of the above.

- Provide incentives for aggregation of non-conforming and non-buildable lots, and flexibility in lot line adjustments for agricultural purposes.
- Allow on-site educational activities (agritourism) and other accessory uses as long as they remain in addition to agricultural activities.
- Allow the management of farmstead woodlots, with surplus firewood as an agricultural product.
- Recognize recreational equine activities and animal grazing uses as essential to and part of the County agricultural infrastructure because of their economic contribution to the County agricultural infrastructure and their role as place holders in preserving large parcels of land for other agricultural uses.

**Policy RL-46** Water is an agricultural necessity. Develop policies with appropriate local, county and state agencies to promote viable coordinated water resources for greater accessibility to water rights for agriculture usage.