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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Actively Engaging in Local Food Systems By WSU Ferry County Extension

As we are forced to shelter in place, most of us are coming down with a bad case of cabin fever. How about instead of worrying about the future or that scratchy throat you woke up with this morning, why not try turning your attention to how you might be able to help yourself and your neighbors by contributing to our local food system.

Food systems planning is about improving a community's food system. A food system is generally understood to be the chain of activities that connect food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management. Along with air, water, and shelter; food is an absolute necessity; it is a basic essential for life. Yet, food systems have only been a focus of serious interest of professional planning in more recent years.

These activities around our food system take up a substantial amount of both urban and regional land. They also represent significant parts of both our local and regional economies. Food access — or the lack thereof — to affordable, healthy foods can have significant impacts on communities. Some of the most notable nationwide public health concerns include the rising rates of both hunger and obesity within our populations. Other factors to consider are the environmental impacts of industrial farming practices including the amount of food waste, energy consumption and other resource debilitation that is consumed by these unsustainable industrial agricultural practices including how we grow, harvest, process, and transport our food.

Dr. Trevor C Lane, WSU Ferry County Extension Director and Associate Professor said, "Here in northeast WA, and specifically in Ferry County, Sarah Reaveley has led our food systems work with oversight from two universities. Her research has been an essential part of our work with County Commissioners as we continue to collaborate to improve local community economics, resilience and our emergency management approach through a strategic lens, as evidenced in the County's formally adopted Community & Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). This work also includes our ongoing partnerships our tribal neighbors as well. So, while the future remains uncertain, one thing is clear, Ferry County is known for its resilience and its ability to pull together when it really matters."

Growing a garden demonstrates resilience. Consider this example from World War II; those on the home front were dealing with food shortages and rationing, as well as both fear and anxiety. As a result of this uncertainty, George Washington Carver then promoted the idea of what he called Victory Gardens, to encourage people to grow their own food. This not only allowed people to supplement their rations, but it boosted their morale as well. N. Astrid Hoffman of [The Living Seed Company](#), a family-owned organic and heirloom seed company, says we're in a difficult time, but "the act of planting a seed is an act of faith in tomorrow. During this time of limited movement, a garden is a place to find solace, joy and wonder, and hopefully some great things to eat."

Those of us who have had any kind of experience with gardening here in a cold and often inhospitable climate know the challenges of adequate food production in our short growing season. Hoophouses can be an inexpensive and viable option to help extend our growing season, produce better crop yields, and ultimately increase our local harvests to allow for year-round, sustainable food production.

Hoophouses are small, semi-portable structures that can be used as a small greenhouse for starting seedlings and for growing heat-loving vegetables. A hoophouse provides frost protection, limited insect

protection, and season extension. Hoophouses are easy to construct and will last many years. Hoophouse dimensions can also be adjusted to your personal needs, but a basic structure that is 4ft x 10 ft is often recommended. These dimensions allow for easy side access for weeding and allow adequate hoop arch strength that is relative to the structure's span. The costs of these structures are modest. A 4ft x 10ft hoophouse with soil fill can be constructed for approximately \$150-\$200. For more information regarding, and plans for hoophouses, large and small with a wide range of costs, along with extensive valuable resources for farmers and ranchers can be found on our newly established Food Systems page on the WSU Ferry County Extension website <https://extension.wsu.edu/ferry/food-systems/>.

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