

# Extension 'Cord

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## Connecting People, Resources, & Knowledge

*"Welcome to the Extension 'Cord, a monthly briefing paper from WSU Snohomish County Extension. Even though we have existed for over 100 years, we have realized that too many people are unaware of the diversity and impact of our programs. Each issue will highlight the purpose, activities and results of one particular program. The 'Cord will showcase the work of our 1,000 volunteers and 25 staff. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff for more information."*

*Curt Moulton, Extension Director*



Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Business Planning course graduates.

## Want to farm?

## Learn the business of agriculture first!

**W**ashington State University Snohomish County Extension Agriculture Program is helping cultivate a healthier, more sustainable food and farming system for Snohomish County by offering programs for improving farm profitability, expanding value-added food production, increasing processing and distribution capabilities, and encouraging local economic development.

Interest in small acreage farming, ranching, and market gardening has increased rapidly over the past decade. Since 2002, USDA counts almost 300,000 new farms nationwide. Uniquely different from producers of the last century, these 21st century farmers are younger and produce a wide variety of crops on fewer acres. With 91% of U.S. farms now considered small, most utilize direct-to-consumer sales.

Today's farmer has an advantage over their predecessors. They can take a practical approach to developing and evaluating a new or expanding farm enterprise, utilizing tools and resources available through Extension programs such as Cultivating Success™.

A partnership between Washington State University, Rural Roots, and the University of Idaho, Cultivating Success™ helps beginning and experienced farmers develop a thorough understanding of what it takes to grow a successful new farm venture or expand and diversify an existing one.

WSU Snohomish County Extension offers two Cultivating Success courses each year. The fall course, **Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching**, helps students take a realistic look at their goals and resources, explore production possibilities, and critically evaluate the type of enterprise that will best fit their needs.

According to 2011 Cultivating Success graduates Casey and Eric Reeter, they took the course to, "Check our 'hypothetical' plans against the experts and those who have practical experience...we [now have] the confidence and resources to take some risks and dive in to our new farm adventure."

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<http://snohomish.wsu.edu/calendar.htm>



Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching course graduates.

They executed their farm plan and are currently in production. Casey checks their field operations against the overall plan to ensure they stay on course with their goals. "The plan we created in class acts as a compass for us; we make adjustments along the way, but we always know our direction."

The winter course, ***Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Business Planning***, helps new and existing farmers develop skills in business, financial planning, and direct marketing. For graduate Larry Bailey, "The course... gave us quantitative and qualitative tools to develop our pastured livestock farming plan [and] a realistic view of smaller sustainable farm operations." Through the development of a farm business plan, students get the benefit of learning first hand from other producers and professionals while receiving practical feedback on the feasibility, strengths, and weaknesses of their plan.

Cultivating Success™ course instruction and content is developed by instructors and successful farmers along with input from agricultural industry and business professionals. Presentations, demonstration, farm field trips, and panel discussions give students insight into the success of small farms in our region.

Jay Cha recently explained, "I didn't know anything about farming and [Cultivating Success] was by far the best investment I have ever made. I implemented marketing and equipment farm loans the following season with great success. Cha's Farm has expanded with more crops, company vans, and more farmers markets from Snohomish through Maple Valley. Getting educated correctly in the agriculture industry is the most important gain from this course and attending ALL field trips is a huge bonus."

Cultivating Success offers those who dream of farming the opportunity to learn what it takes to make that dream a profitable reality.

For more information visit:

<http://www.cultivatingsuccess.org/>

**Holly Thompson and Andrew Corbin,**  
WSU Snohomish County Agriculture Program



Students learning about equipment at one of the local farm field trips.

#### **WSU Extension Mission Statement**

Washington State University Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance economic wellbeing and quality of life by connecting them to the knowledge base of the university and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

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