REGIONAL SMALL FARMS: KITSAP COUNTY REPORT

2020

BY THE NUMBERS

- 8 stand-alone class offerings in 2020 available for Kitsap Farmers to participate in.
- 9-week Whole Farm Planning course delivered with 24 Kitsap Farms attending.
- 8 local food system organizations working together monthly to support and expand programming in our area.
- Over 40 farms provided N95 masks through partnership with Kitsap Department of Emergency Management.
- 5 farms taking part in the Kitsap Farm Mentor Programming.

ISSUE

In the 2002 Census of Agriculture there were 587 farms reported in Kitsap County, with the average farm size being approximately 27 acres. Fast forward fifteen years later to 2017, there was an increase to 698 farms with the average size of farm being 13 acres. This trend tells a story that while we are seeing an increase in the number of farms in our county, the size of farms are decreasing, creating an increased need for small farm educational opportunities and resources. The WSU Regional Small Farms Program covers Clallam, Jefferson and Kitsap Counties and strives to support a thriving food and farming sector in the region. In Kitsap County alone, there has been a dramatic increase in new and beginning farmers contacting the Extension office in search of resources and technical assistance. It is expected that the 2022 Census of Agriculture will continue showing this upwards trend in Kitsap County.

The WSU Regional Small Farm program is a partnership between Jefferson, Clallam and Kitsap Extension offices.

RESPONSE

WSU Regional Small Farms has actively been responding to and supporting new and beginning farmers needs, as well as creatively strategizing how to continue providing exceptional programming and services to our area farmers. For Kitsap, a dedicated a half time staff was added to the program in 2020 to help assist with administrative and educational offerings.

kitsap.wsu.edu

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IMPACTS

- Created a new farmer network opportunity in 2020 called Dirt Talk. These are quarterly event meetups (solely offered online during COVID) that provide space for our area farmers to come together and discuss topics of interest. Events are led by expert farmers willing to share their skills with their peers. Three events were offered in 2020, "Small Ruminants & Agritourism", "COVID-19 Resources for Farmers", and "Biochar Production & Uses".

- Regional Small Farms partnered with WSU Food Systems Program to offer a statewide online curriculum of the Whole Farm Planning course. This 9-week course helps new farmers learn what it takes to create, sustain and grow a viable small farm. The 2020 course included 34 farms from our regional area with 24 of them coming from Kitsap County.

- Hosted the annual 2020 Women in Agriculture Conference in January 2020 at the Norm Dicks Government Center in Bremerton. 48 participants took part from across Clallam, Jefferson & Kitsap Counties.

- Provided additional educational opportunities for farmers including a Bridging the GAP class providing content on the Food Safety Modernization Act and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification, and a Fruit Tree Health series in conjunction with Kitsap Harvest.

- Launched a new WSU Regional Small Farms website housing educational content and resources for our area farmers, found at https://extension.wsu.edu/regionalsmallfarms/.

- Assisted with the creation of the Food Systems Round Table. The group meets monthly bringing together food systems partners for networking, resource sharing and project development. WSU Kitsap provides facilitation and administrative support. Partners for 2020 include: WSU Extension, Kitsap Conservation District, Kitsap Fresh, Kitsap Harvest, Kitsap Community & Agricultural Alliance, Kitsap Community Food Co-op, Friends of the Farm, and area food banks.

- Partnered with the Kitsap Department of Emergency Management to help distribute N95 masks to Kitsap Farmers during the 2020 fire season. From this relationship, Kitsap Extension is now the Food Security lead for the county’s Emergency Operations Center.

- Administration of the Kitsap Farm Mentor Program. WSU Kitsap Extension provides support to approved farm mentors in their collective instruction and hands on learning to farm interns.