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The Industry-based Unified Agriculture Initiative

Growing Washington: **Industry groups endorse Unified Agriculture Initiative**

Just days after the proposal was submitted to the governor, endorsements are already pouring in for the \$10.8 million state operating budget request to fill critical gaps in university research and extension programs.

The package responds to Gov. Christine Gregoire's call for programs that demonstrate a clear path to results, make Washington globally competitive, leverage education for economic development, and apply research to develop new state products for the marketplace. The governor's fiscal and policy staffs are reviewing the proposal. The governor will make a recommendation later this year to the Legislature which convenes in January.

The proposal is unlike any request ever submitted by the university. The "Industry-based Unified Agriculture Initiative" was actually prepared with direction from leaders representing a diverse state food and agriculture industry. The proposal will build the economic viability and sustainability of Washington's \$29 billion food and agriculture industry, which employs 170,000 people and is the second most diverse in the nation. Agriculture is the state's largest industry.

The latest formal endorsements to the budget request submitted by Washington State University include the Washington Wheat Commission, the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission, the Washington Dairy Federation, the Washington Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the Washington Farm Bureau, the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, and the Washington Red Raspberry Commission.

Many more producer associations, commodity commissions, and other food and agriculture stakeholder groups indicate they are poised to endorse the proposal as well.

The process leading to the request began late last year when key agricultural and food industry leaders began an unprecedented review of the WSU agriculture budget and programs that spanned more than 50 meetings.

This \$10.8 million state general fund operating request is only one component of a package to help grow the Washington agriculture and food economy. It is coupled with internal reallocations, federal contracts, and private funding. WSU has already reallocated 23 faculty positions as a result of industry discussions.

The request was packaged to deliver three distinct outcomes for the state:

- Development of high-value uses for Washington-grown agricultural products, leading to new products that generate income and jobs.
- Improved product quality and reduced costs that will lead to global competitiveness.
- Mitigation of the impacts of agricultural production on land, water, and air quality.

Highlights of the Request

- **Generating \$250 million of economic benefits over the next several years.** The proposal will create significantly more income in the longer run as research investments generate new technologies that are adopted by industry participants.
- **Filling research gaps in the development of value-added agricultural products and economically and environmentally sustainable food production.** More than half of the 24 new faculty and 36 support staff positions will be located off the Pullman campus at locations around the state.
- **Plugging critical research gaps for Washington's Wine Industry.** The request includes an enologist and a statewide Viticulture and Enology Program leader to enhance service to the state's rapidly expanding wine industry.
- **Reinvigorating WSU's cherry breeding program.** The request enhances the program that produced the Rainier sweet cherry with a stone fruit breeder co-located in Prosser and Wenatchee.
- **Developing new products** from Washington-produced wheat and other grains with a new food technologist position.
- **Developing new tree fruit varieties** with characteristics demanded by domestic and international consumers through a new researcher in Wenatchee.
- **Restoring WSU research and extension centers** located throughout the state with \$1.3 million in long-needed core funding.
- **Quickly addressing emerging state issues** with an industry-advised \$1 million annual competitive grant funding process for WSU research and extension faculty.
- **Enhancing research in organic and sustainable production systems** with \$400,000 annually in competitive grants for Biological Intensive and Organic Agriculture.
- **Fostering entrepreneurship** with Puyallup and Wenatchee-based value-added business development extension specialists.
- **Increasing faculty support of dairy, beef, sheep, and other livestock producers.** The positions include two livestock nutrition and management positions, a large animal veterinary clinician, a veterinary outreach specialist, a livestock reproduction specialist. Two livestock nutrition and management positions, one located in northwestern Washington and one in eastern Washington.
- **Establishing one-on-one assistance in the identification of home and commercial pests** with a new plant and insect diagnostic lab dedicated to serve central and eastern Washington.

- **Spurring the development of new technologies aimed at reducing farm labor requirements and enhancing farm worker safety** with two new positions – one in Prosser, one in Pullman.
- **Improving water quality and salmon habitat and increasing the profitability of western Washington farms** with a water resource specialist in Mount Vernon.
- **Growing in-state talent** with environmental horticulture continuing education courses and a four-year degree in western Washington through WSU Puyallup.

For a complete text of the Industry-based Unified Agriculture Request, as it was submitted to the governor, [click here](#).

Olympia Update is produced for persons interested in state government developments affecting Washington State University. For more information call: Larry Ganders, Assistant to the President, 360-956-2165. From WSU campuses, dial 8-2165. If you wish to subscribe to Olympia Update directly by email, send a blank message from your e-mail account (no footers please) to: subscribe-olympia_update@listserv.energy.wsu.edu

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