

Section 4

Implementation, maintenance, and evaluation

Climate change presents multiple pressing challenges to agricultural producers and stakeholders across Washington state. Section 2 outlines these challenges and explains why a multi-pronged approach is necessary to build resilience. Section 3 outlines the principles, goals, strategies, and actions to guide internal efforts and identify opportunities for collaboration with external organizations and stakeholders. This section discusses WSDA's approach to implementing the Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture, including a proposed schedule for evaluation, maintenance, updates, and considerations for conducting future evaluations.



The Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture is just the first step towards safeguarding Washington's critical agricultural system and the many benefits it provides. Some actions described in Section 3 can be implemented using existing authority and resources. However, significant additional funding, staff, and coordinated efforts will be required at WSDA, and across the state, for this work to successfully enhance Washington's agricultural resilience.

WSDA approach to implementation

A key principle in WSDA's 2022–2025 Strategic Plan is “to expand future economic opportunities for Washington agriculture by building climate resilience.” WSDA staff are increasingly integrating climate resilience into their daily activities while collaborating with and supporting the efforts of other organizations, as reflected in the programs listed in Section 3.

To increase efficiency, WSDA created an internal Climate Working Group to coordinate WSDA climate-related activities. This group will be the driving force to implement the actions in the Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture, monitor progress, and coordinate reporting and evaluation of climate resilience actions. The Climate Working Group is supported by WSDA programs that have direct responsibility for implementation. Staff will work directly with external stakeholders and guide reporting, updates, and evaluations.

While WSDA has an important and central role in the viability of Washington's agricultural production in the face of climate change, the work cannot be done alone. Much of WSDA's work requires coordination with a wide variety of stakeholders and agricultural producers across the state. WSDA is committed to working collaboratively with key stakeholders to implement strategies and actions and to adaptively update the Resilience Plan based on changing conditions and stakeholder feedback. The agency is dedicated to learning from its partners, incorporating feedback, and collaboratively facilitating successful implementation and progress.

Successfully implementing the Resilience Plan requires resources including staff with subject matter expertise, research, infrastructure, on-farm investments, and relationships with diverse and varied stakeholders. Many actions described in the Resilience Plan will require new funding. However, WSDA remains committed to identifying opportunities to reduce harm from climate change regardless of future funding availability.

Proposed maintenance and evaluation schedule

The Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture is a significant step in an ongoing effort to make agriculture in Washington more resilient through climate change. Provided sufficient staffing, WSDA will create yearly work plans, track implementation, and evaluate the effectiveness of the Resilience Plan. The proposed maintenance schedule is:

- **Work plan — Every year:** WSDA's Climate Lead, in collaboration with the WSDA Climate Working Group, will develop an annual work plan to define responsibilities within the agency in coordination with other state agencies and external stakeholders. Yearly work plans will allow the agency to prioritize actions, adapt and respond to current funding availability, consider the latest research, and address pressing climate-related challenges and opportunities.
- **Action tracking — Every 2 years:** In the first year of implementation (2025), WSDA will work to establish a baseline analysis of resources and adaptation efforts at WSDA. Progress on baseline conditions, annual work plans, and Resilience Plan implementation will be collected every two years (2027, 2029, etc.). While the first report will likely focus on implementation metrics (described in Section 3), subsequent reports may include additional information on the impact of the actions

(effectiveness metrics, described in Section 3). This information will also contribute to WSDA reporting requirements for the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy (2024).

- **Resilience Plan update — Every 4 years:** Consistent with the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy (2024) timeline, every four years WSDA will evaluate whether the Resilience Plan requires updating to better align with statewide efforts, evolving conditions, and updated priorities for WSDA and the State of Washington. The WSDA Climate Working Group will determine which sections require revision, including the science and policy reviews and the goals, strategies, and actions; and whether additional outreach to the public and agricultural stakeholders is needed. Updates to the Resilience Plan may also include snapshots of past climate conditions (e.g., temperature, precipitation, and extreme event data from the previous 4 years) as well as related impacts on agricultural production.
- **Resilience Plan evaluation — Every 8 years:** To assess the effectiveness of the strategies and actions in achieving the Resilience Plan's goals, an in-depth evaluation will be conducted approximately eight years after adoption, or first in 2033. This timeframe allows for initial implementation of actions and for the effects of actions to have a measurable impact. To ensure a well-rounded and objective assessment of the Resilience Plan's effects, WSDA will consult an external research partner to carry out the evaluation.

Additional considerations

A key part of the implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of the Resilience Plan is tracking which communities benefit from climate resilience efforts and which face unintended costs. WSDA will make every effort to engage and measure impacts within small, under-resourced, and socially disadvantaged farmer and farmworker communities and to collaboratively incorporate feedback into updated versions of the Resilience Plan.

The Resilience Plan is designed to achieve the 6 goals described in Section 3. WSDA will evaluate the outcome of these goals to determine if the strategies and actions are effective and enhance Washington's agricultural resilience amidst climate change. While WSDA is committed to this formal evaluation, the agency also realizes that many impacts of climate change are still unknown. Furthermore, many confounding variables (e.g., natural climate variability, other geopolitical influences, and concurrent climate resilience efforts from other Washington and federal entities) will complicate the evaluation.

While this work is challenging, WSDA is committed to increasing agricultural resilience and to addressing the challenges presented by climate change. This Resilience Plan provides the roadmap for WSDA to leverage the strengths, experience, and expertise of agency staff, external collaborators, and agricultural stakeholders.

Acknowledgments

Over 100 individuals from nearly 70 organizations were invited to edit and provide feedback on a draft of this document. Thank you to staff from the following organizations who contributed their invaluable time and expertise during the revision process: Intertribal Agriculture Council, The Nature Conservancy, Semillero de Ideas, the State Conservation Commission, the Natural Resources and Conservation Service, and the Pacific Northwest Climate Hub of the United States Department of Agriculture, countless subject matter experts and reviewers from Washington State Commodity Commissions, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Commerce, Washington Department of Ecology, and Washington State University.

To cite sections 1-4, use:

B. Steckler ^a, T. Wirkkala ^a, P. Taraghi ^a, D.L. Gelardi ^b (2025). Sections 1-4. In: *Climate Resilience Plan for Washington Agriculture*. D.L. Gelardi ^b (Ed.). Washington State Department of Agriculture AGR2-2502-003, pp 1-63, agr.wa.gov/ClimateResilienceWaAg.

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