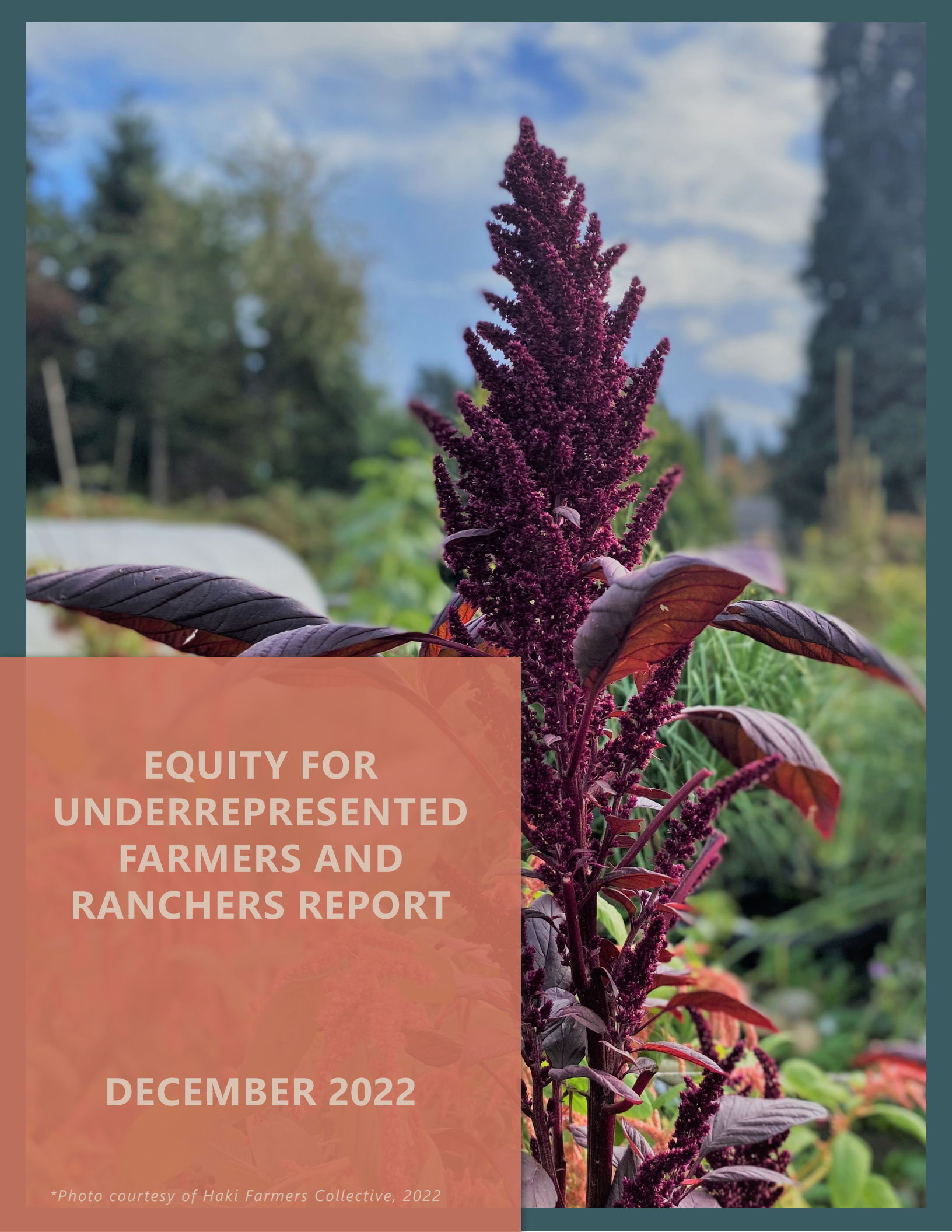




EQUITY FOR UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS REPORT

DECEMBER 2022

**Photo courtesy of Haki Farmers Collective, 2022*

Equity for Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers

Report to the Legislature -
December 2022



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State Department of
Agriculture

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*This document fulfills the legislative 2021-2023 budgetary proviso in accordance
with RCW 43.01.036.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Of all the important issues underrepresented farmers and ranchers elevated for this report, there is a single common theme connecting them; that community and community networks are essential foundations to the success of farmers and ranchers. This also means, that community connection, inclusion, safety, and belonging are key components necessary to improve equity for underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington.

This report is one small step toward shaping a more equitable future where farmers and ranchers from every race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, social status, and creed can access the resources they need to thrive within Washington's agriculture sector. In this envisioned future, farmers and ranchers who have experienced marginalization are included at the decision-making table, feel understood by policymakers, and are able to access holistic, equitable, and effective support that aligns with the languages they speak, the cultures they come from, and the identities they hold.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) would like to thank the following people and organizations for their help with the Equity for Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers project (listed alphabetically):

Black Food Sovereignty Coalition
Friendly Hmong Farms Coalition
Haki Farmers Collective
Northwest Agriculture Business Center

Special thanks to all of the underrepresented farmers, ranchers, and farm cooperatives that shared their lived experiences and knowledge to inform this important report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WSDA was tasked through legislative proviso to explore the barriers and challenges underrepresented farmers and ranchers face, with the goal of identifying opportunities to support more diverse representation within the agriculture community in Washington state.

Washington stands apart from many other agricultural states in our nation thanks to the enormous diversity of crops and the variety of farm sizes with a vast range in the types of markets and business models that farms operate within to achieve success and to produce the food we depend upon. Our state is home to over 64,204 farmers and ranchers who produce over 300 different commodities on more than 35,000 farm operations, with a combined production value of around \$10 billion each year¹. This variety of products, markets, and farm types and scales provides a measure of resilience, adaptability, and strength; yet, despite all this diversity in crops and farm sizes, over 98 percent of Washington farmers identify as white.

A closer look at demographic diversity among farmers and ranchers themselves points to a broader concern about how inclusive, culturally informed², and accessible opportunities in our agriculture sector are - and how Washington can support new generations of historically underrepresented farmers who are seeking opportunity and success in the industry, as they connect with their agriculture roots, build community networks, and participate in this essential part of our economy. The budget proviso supporting this report hints at the broad and complex factors that contribute to an underrepresentation of some groups in our farming and ranching population such as representation within positions of leadership, access to financial resources, and exploring how WSDA has previously served underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

WSDA partnered with community organizations and conducted 106 interviews with agriculture system partners, nonprofit organizations, partners named in the proviso, and underrepresented farmers and ranchers directly focusing on the perspective and experience of underrepresented farmers themselves.

¹ Washington State Department of Agriculture. From: <https://agr.wa.gov/washington-agriculture>

² “**Culturally Informed**”: The ability to work with people from a variety of cultures in a way that is safe and supportive and is not discriminatory or harmful. This also considers the awareness of our own cultures and understanding of implicit biases towards our personal cultural values and behaviors, making sure we are considering more than just our perspectives or needs. It’s important to note that one individual doesn’t represent an entire culture of people and farmers and ranchers have intersecting identities that make culture a nuanced topic. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

KEY THEMES

The following emerged as top challenges and barriers faced by underrepresented farmers and ranchers:

- **OBTAINING FARMLAND:** Quality farmland located in a safe, welcoming location at a reasonable price is often not listed publicly for purchase or lease. Farmers and ranchers need to be included in a community network and must often know the farmer selling their land to access it. If a farmer or rancher is leasing land, there may be stipulations around building infrastructure or limitations to accessing electricity and water which limits opportunity for success.
- **ACCESSING CAPITAL RESOURCES:** Limited intergenerational wealth, inadequate access to credit, and assistance to access and utilize grant funding were reported as major hurdles. The history of discrimination in credit lending, lack of support resources to know where to look for funding opportunities, and limitations to funding based on land ownership, citizenship status, types of crops grown, and language barriers compounded the difficulties in accessing capital to purchase land or equipment.
- **CLIMATE RESILIENCY:** Underrepresented farmers and ranchers are especially burdened by experiences of climate disruption, given access to capital needed to invest in climate resilient infrastructure and equipment (e.g., drip irrigation, chillers). Impacts include risk of flooding, drought, wildfire smoke exposure, and crop failures which are harder for underrepresented producers to weather, especially with fewer options for risk management supports as specialty crop producers.
- **ACCESSING BUSINESS SUPPORT AND MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES:** Limited access to community networks, language barriers, and learning how to develop business plans or marketing strategies necessary for loan or grant applications create hurdles for underrepresented farmers. This is especially for individuals who have newly immigrated to Washington, aren't connected to resource networks, experienced exclusion, and speak English as a second or third language.
- **REGULATORY COMPLIANCE, CERTIFICATIONS, AND COSTS OF LICENSES:** Accessing infrastructure for things like post-harvest wash stations to meet safety standards, as well as one-size-fits-all approaches to regulations may create financial barriers for underrepresented farmers and ranchers. This is compounded by lack of trusting relationships with regulatory bodies such as WSDA and/or fear of repercussions from drawing attention to themselves if they seek guidance. This missing guidance relationship can also result in heightened farmer apprehension when government employees conduct routine and required inspections on their farm.
- **LACK OF SUPPORT FOR CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT FOODS:** Producers of specialty crops or culturally significant foods, and Halal or Kosher meat producers, reported many barriers in pursuing funding opportunities, accessing meat processing that is culturally informed, and limited access to crop insurance or other support programs.

- **DISTRUST AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH ORGANIZATIONS MEANT TO HELP FARMERS AND RANCHERS:** Almost all the farmers interviewed shared that they didn't feel comfortable reaching out for technical assistance unless they knew and trusted the person they were connecting with.
- **CHRONIC STRESS AND BARRIERS WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE THEY LIVE:** Limited access to internet, medical insurance, food, and chronic stress due to the high-risk career of farming was compounded with the marginalization underrepresented farmers and ranchers experience.
- **INFLATION:** Increased costs for seed, animal feed, soil amendments, fuel, supplies, and equipment were reported as a barrier by all farmers and ranchers interviewed. The persistent barriers to accessing capital create more burdens for underrepresented farmers and ranchers in these inflationary circumstances.

OVERARCHING AND WEAVING THROUGH ALL OF THE TOPICS WERE CHALLENGES UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS UNIQUELY FACE THAT COMPOUNDED THESE BARRIERS, INCLUDING:

- Language accessibility of resources, grants, loan applications or continuing education that are only available in English with high-level jargon.
- Lack of community connections that are required to be successful in agriculture due to marginalization and previously stated language barriers.
- Historic exclusion and current barriers within key gatekeeping points or essential prerequisites of agriculture: finding land, obtaining land, learning about agriculture and the business of agriculture, obtaining equipment and seeking support resources such as grants or technical assistance.
- Lack of culturally informed and community-informed resources and education opportunities, such as assistance programs or grants developed to serve the dominant culture or ethnic group of people without consideration for the unique needs, barriers, and lived experiences of underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Cultural barriers such as geographic distances where farmland is located (rural versus urban), psychological barriers from marginalization, and language access.

THE REPORT DETAILS SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO ADVANCE THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE EQUITY FOR UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS IN WASHINGTON:

- Prioritize representation, inclusion, belonging, and centering the voices and experiences of underrepresented farmers and ranchers programs intended to benefit farmers and ranchers, including in all WSDA services.
- Prioritize and institutionalize efforts to increase language access and culturally informed service delivery that encompasses the diverse groups of underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington.
- Prioritize long-term relationship healing and building with underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Prioritize data collection and analysis that aligns with Pro-Equity and Anti-Racism (PEAR) efforts to ensure long term analysis of impact and continued goal setting.
- Support long-term funding for community organizations and farmer networks leading the way in supporting underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Prioritize resource allocation to support underrepresented farmers and ranchers in overcoming the common barriers and challenges identified in this report.

WSDA is grateful to the Legislature for the opportunity to understand and serve the individuals and communities who are finding their way to farming despite facing inequities and challenges as people who are underrepresented in our farmer and rancher population. WSDA also appreciates the opportunity to make recommendations for Washington to improve services for underrepresented farmers and ranchers and provide opportunities to include a broader diversity of people in agriculture in our state.

"I WAS TOURING A LARGE FARMING OPERATION IN WASHINGTON, WHEN I PAUSED AND LOOKED AROUND. THEN I ASKED MYSELF, 'WHY ISN'T THERE ANYONE THAT LOOKS LIKE ME?'"

INTRODUCTION

WSDA was directed by the following legislative budget proviso to engage with historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers, state agencies, and organizations to report on inclusion of historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington's agricultural industry.

ESSB 5092, Sec.311(5)(a) State appropriation for [fiscal years 2022 and 2023] are provided solely for the department to coordinate with the office of equity, the conservation commission, underrepresented farmers and ranchers, organizations that represent historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers, farmworkers, and labor advocates to:

(i) Ensure inclusion of historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers in the agricultural industry;

(ii) Evaluate related boards, commissions, and advisory panels to ensure inclusion of historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers;

(iii) Include historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers in the development, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies, and programs; and

(iv) Consider ways to increase engagement in agricultural education and workforce development opportunities by communities who have been historically underrepresented in agriculture.

(b) The department must report to the governor and legislature...on its activities and efforts to include historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers. The report must describe the department's efforts to serve historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers, identify existing gaps and financial barriers to land ownership and obtaining equipment, and must include recommendations to improve outreach to and services for historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

Washington stands apart from many other agricultural states in our nation thanks to the enormous diversity of crops and the variety of farm sizes with a vast range in the types of markets and business models that farms operate within to achieve success and to produce the food we depend upon. Our state is home to over 64,204 farmers and ranchers who produce over 300 different commodities on more than 35,000 farm operations, with a combined production value of around \$10 billion each year³. This variety of products, markets, and farm types and scales provides a measure of resilience, adaptability, and strength; yet, despite all this diversity in crops and farm sizes, over 98 percent of Washington farmers identify as white.

³ Washington State Department of Agriculture. From: <https://agr.wa.gov/washington-agriculture>.

A closer look at demographic diversity among farmers and ranchers themselves points to a broader concern about how inclusive, culturally informed⁴, and accessible opportunities in our agriculture sector are - and how Washington can support new generations of historically underrepresented farmers who are seeking opportunity and success in the industry, as they connect with their agriculture roots, build community networks, and participate in this essential part of our economy. The budget proviso supporting this report hints at the broad and complex factors that contribute to an underrepresentation of some groups in our farming and ranching population such as representation within positions of leadership, access to financial resources, and exploring how WSDA has previously served underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

WSDA is thankful to the Legislature for supporting the department to begin the important work of engaging with partners to improve inclusion and representation of a diversity of individuals and communities in agriculture in our state.

REPORT LIMITATIONS

WSDA recognizes that factors that lend support or hinder inclusion for underrepresented farmers and ranchers are multifaceted and complex. A full understanding and accounting of them requires far more time than was available for this initial report. Intentional community engagement, establishing relationships with underrepresented farmers and ranchers, and building trust requires ongoing work beyond the time and resources WSDA had available for this report. The COVID-19 pandemic made clear the need to proactively address equity throughout our food and agriculture systems. It also left WSDA short on staff with limited capacity to implement a large, multifaceted project, even as we valued the opportunity to begin the ongoing work that this report identifies.

Compounding the challenge of addressing an encompassing and complex topic on a short timeframe, was the reality that the timeline for welcoming stakeholder engagement and soliciting input fell during the height of the farming season. This created an obvious limitation for underrepresented farmers and ranchers and other agricultural stakeholders to participate.

Additionally, in many cases, WSDA was soliciting interviews with farmers and ranchers with whom the agency did not have established trust or previous community engagement. This is significant because requesting that people who have experienced historical marginalization⁵ share the painful experiences they have endured (for example as a result of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, able-ism, transphobia, or bigotry based on religion or country of origin) - without pre-existing trusted relationships and adequate time - can painfully exacerbate feelings of marginalization and exclusion. To expect farmers and ranchers to share these barriers on a quick timeline with the government without a guarantee that the things they share will have follow-up or attention creates problematic power dynamics and merits further exploration that was not possible within the time limitations for this report.

⁴ **"Culturally Informed"**: The ability to work with people from a variety of cultures in a way that is safe and supportive and is not discriminatory or harmful. This also considers the awareness of our own cultures and understanding of implicit biases towards our personal cultural values and behaviors, making sure we are considering more than just our perspectives or needs. It's important to note that one individual doesn't represent an entire culture of people and farmers and ranchers have intersecting identities that make culture a nuanced topic. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#)).

⁵ **"Marginalization"**: The social process of relegating a particular person, groups, or groups of people to an unimportant or powerless position. This use of power prevents a particular person, group, or groups of people from participating fully in decisions affecting their lived experiences, rendering them insignificant or peripheral. Some individuals identify with multiple groups that have been marginalized. People may experience further marginalization because of their intersecting identities. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#)).

Finally, underrepresented farmers and ranchers and agriculture organizations all noted that all farmers and ranchers are experiencing “survey burnout” due to extensive surveying during the pandemic. This is particularly true for underrepresented farmers and ranchers who are fielding many more requests for surveys, interview, advisory roles, etc. with the new interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. This survey exhaustion was compounded by the fact that the 2022 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture survey began rolling out during the project period of this report.

In light of all of these constraints, WSDA focused its attention on a range of topics more tightly related to the scope of work of the agency. WSDA used existing data sources provided by partner agencies and existing publications. Topics queried in the proviso that fall outside of the purview⁶ of WSDA, such as helping people obtain farmland or access land trusts, conservation programs, and agriculture education and career or workforce development, were explored with representatives of agencies with statutory jurisdiction over those scopes of work and missions.

Interview questions for underrepresented farmers and ranchers were not limited to WSDA’s scope of work, however, and many important barriers identified by underrepresented farmers, ranchers, and the organizations representing them addressed issues that were out of WSDA’s agency jurisdiction or influence.

METHODS AND OUTREACH

Recognizing the limited time and the challenges outlined above, WSDA approached this report with a focus on engaging with community and stakeholders directly to learn from and communicate about the experiences of underrepresented farmers and ranchers. WSDA also solicited input and experiences from an array of agencies and organizations that work to support our agricultural industry in a variety of ways. WSDA worked in partnership with Friendly Hmong Farms, Black Food Sovereignty Coalition and Northwest Agriculture Business Center to conduct a combined total of 106 interviews between 60 and 120 minutes long to inform this report. 44 interviews were with underrepresented farmers, ranchers and farmer cooperatives directly.

⁶ About WSDA. Washington State Department of Agriculture” (WSDA): WSDA was established in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.17.010. It’s general powers and duties encompass supporting agriculture viability. The agency carries out a range of activities but does not deal with every aspect of agriculture, focusing its work on: 1) Food and Feed- the safety, integrity and availability; 2) Pesticides, Fertilizers and Nutrients- safe and legal distribution, use and disposal; 3) Plant and Animal Health- protection from selected plant and animal pests and diseases; 4) Market Support- marketplace equity and access to markets; 5) Internal Agency Support- Organizational resources, planning and management. Agr.wa.gov

In order to maximize outreach and input, WSDA approached the task through a multi-system lens. First identifying existing reports about the barriers of underrepresented farmers and ranchers on a national and state level, looking at historical policies influencing agriculture systems⁷ and equity. Then interviewing system-level organizations such as Washington State University Extension programs, the University of Washington, Washington State Conservation Commission, Washington State Commodity Commission administrator (WSDA), Washington Food Policy Forum, Northwest Agriculture Business Center, EcoTrust, Washington Farmland Trust, and the USDA. This helped provide high-level context for the many community-focused organizations, farmer networks, and nonprofits that support underrepresented farmers and ranchers and, which in turn, provided recommendations of individual farmers and ranchers from whom to solicit interviews, and shared or oriented WSDA to public-facing research to inform the report. Figure 1 shares the wide range of organizations from which WSDA sought information.

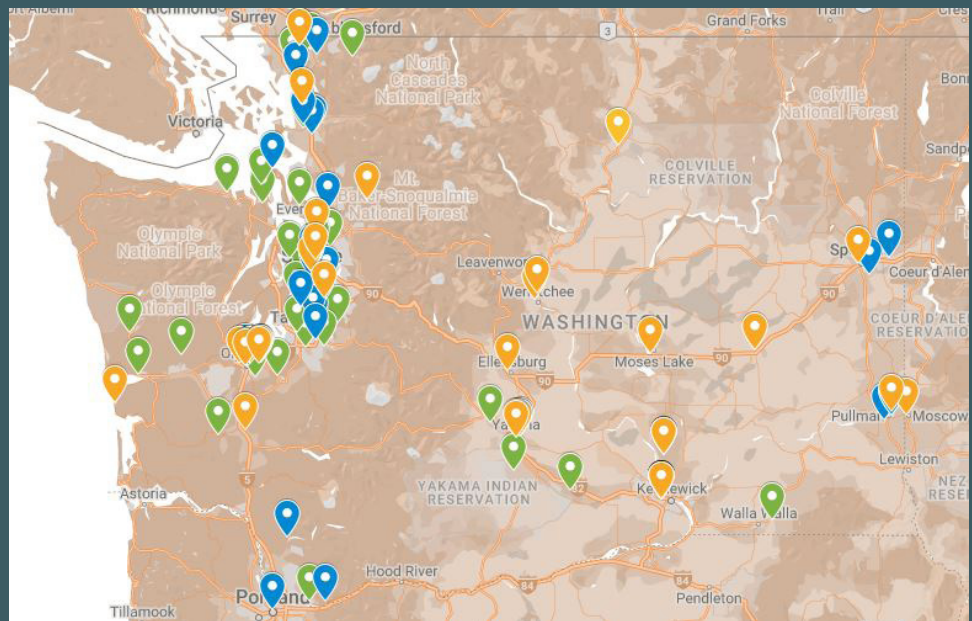


Figure 1: Taken from Google Maps. A non-exhaustive map of dozens of organizations and individual farms who were interviewed or made available their existing research to help inform WSDA.

- Yellow are regulatory organizations or agriculture system groups.
- Blue are agriculture education, nonprofits or advocacy organizations who represent underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Green are underrepresented farmers and ranchers and farm cooperatives.

⁷ "Agriculture System": used to describe the broader scope of state and local government agencies, non-profit support organizations, advocacy groups, and private sector stakeholders who operate within a system that supports farmers and ranchers with a wide range of services and information. In Washington this system includes, but is not limited to: Department of Agriculture, Department of Ecology, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Health, Washington State Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts, Labor and Industries, Land Grant Universities, especially Washington State University and its County Extension programs; Commodity Commissions and Fairs, Washington State Food Policy Forum; Washington State House and Senate Agriculture Committees; Federal House and Senate Agriculture Committees, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and its many programs including the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the Environmental Protection Agency; Farmland protection organizations such as Washington Farmland Trust and Washington Association of Land Trusts; membership organizations like the Farm Bureau, Tilth Alliance, many regional non-profit agricultural resource provider organizations.

WSDA considered which demographic groups within the farming population to oversample based on historical influences (e.g., historic public policies preventing access to farmland), rates of underrepresentation, and recommendations from partner organizations and community advocates. This included Black and African American farmers and ranchers, Asian farmers and ranchers, and Latinx farmers and ranchers. Given the limited time for relationship building, as well as process uncertainty pending completion of Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act guidance to ensure agency engagement with Native American communities and members is done effectively and appropriately, there were barriers in connecting with underrepresented populations of Indigenous farmers and ranchers in particular. Thus, there is a need to further explore specific agriculture barriers that tribal nations and people experience as well as opportunities to improve agricultural outreach and services for underrepresented tribal producers. This will require more time and thoughtful relationship building than was possible for this report.

WSDA is cognizant of additional considerations when soliciting interviews from farmers and ranchers, including possible fears that sharing honest feedback with those who have decision making power could have negative consequences, perhaps even jeopardizing funding opportunities or the ability to access technical assistance. There were also concerns of tokenism⁸; some farmers or agriculture organizations offered to provide or help with an interview and preferred anonymity. Because of these concerns WSDA and the Legislature can assume the systemic barriers shared in this report are not an exhaustive list of documented challenges underrepresented farmers and ranchers face statewide. To help mitigate these valid concerns and to help solicit feedback, WSDA partnered with community organizations representing underrepresented producers. This report also builds on existing research led by underrepresented farmers and ranchers in the community who have been leading these efforts before passage of the legislative budgetary proviso.

Exploring questions with underrepresented farmers and ranchers who were willing to engage with WSDA on a short timeline, points to a broader need for continued and sustained community outreach to underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

⁸ **"Tokenism"**: The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing. Examples of tokenism include but aren't limited to, asking a person of color to be on a hiring panel for the appearance of diverse perspectives, but they don't actually have a connection to the position or voice in the decisions related to the hiring process; you ask a community member to join a meeting to give input and you don't use their input but talk about how you had representation from that community. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#)).

WHO ARE UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS?

Historically, Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers are people who come from communities that have experienced exclusion from opportunity or have been disadvantaged because of discrimination or prejudice against a group to which they belong. This includes but is not limited to people who identify as: Black, African American, Asian, Indigenous ("American Indian" or "Alaska Native"), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latinx, Immigrant, Refugee, LGBTQ+⁹, Veteran, and Women. As used here, the term underrepresented is based on the total population as compared to the population of farmers and ranchers and who is in the majority or minority. This calls attention to the dynamic of a landscape of services, resources, and systems within agriculture in Washington that are shaped by the needs and norms of the majority¹⁰, resulting in priority consideration being given to the largest majority and reducing equitable access to information and resources that all need to become successful farmers or ranchers in Washington.

The 2017 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture reports that 98.4% of all farmers and ranchers in Washington identify as white. Of all agricultural producers in Washington, only 0.4% identify as Black or African American, 1.9% as Asian, 2.9% as Indigenous (American Indian/Alaska Native), 4.7% as Latinx (Hispanic/Latino/Spanish), and 0.4% Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander.

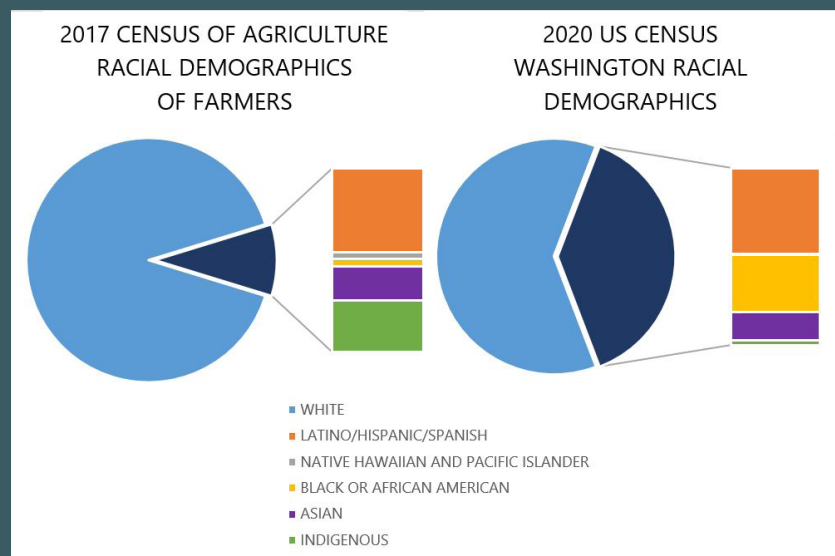


Figure 2: Racial demographics from the 2020 US Census of Washington State total population compared to the 2017 Census of Agriculture racial demographics of farmers and ranchers. It is important to note that the percent of diversity across racial demographic groups aren't mutually exclusive. For example, 94.7% of Latinx farmers (Latinx/Hispanic/Spanish) farmers depicted above identify as white and 4.6% of white farmers identify as Latinx. Of these Latinx farmers, many identify as white which is not visually depicted in this chart.

⁹ "LGBTQ+" An acronym that describes individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual. The "+" respectively includes, but is not limited to, two-spirit and pansexual. The term queer is sometimes used within the community as an umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ+ people. It may also be used as a political statement which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as fluid. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion-Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

¹⁰ This is the dynamic of "Dominant Culture", in which the culture, (the shared set of values, beliefs, customs, norms, and experiences) of the group who is in the majority is the most institutionally normalized, so that its power is widespread and influential across societal, political, and economic, structures and entities in which multiple other cultures are also present. (Adapted from Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion-Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

Washington State is diverse both demographically, geographically, and in terms of its agricultural production zones, with over 300 different agricultural commodities produced. Between 1910 and 2017, our state population has also become more diverse. Yet, data from USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) shows that while there has been an increase in farmers of different ethnicities and races, there are still large gaps in representation¹¹. Diversity among farmers has not kept pace with the increase in diversity within the population of the state over time Figure 3.

2020 US CENSUS RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF WASHINGTON STATE	RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF FARMERS AND RANCHERS	2017 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE**	1910 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE***
61.6%	WHITE	98.4%	99.7%
12.4%	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	0.4%	0.1%
6%	ASIAN	1.9%	0.6%
1.1%	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	2.9%	1.2%
18.7%	HISPANIC/LATINO/SPANISH	4.7%	-
0.2	NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER	0.4%	-
*COLUMNS SUM TO MORE THAN 100% BECAUSE CATEGORIES ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE **2017 WASHINGTON STATE PRODUCER DEMOGRAPHICS, US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, NATIONAL AGRICULTURE STATISTICS SERVICE ***16 TH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1940 AGRICULTURE - WASHINGTON STATE PRODUCER DEMOGRAPHICS, US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LATINX FARMERS ARE INCLUDED IN THE WHITE FARMER CATEGORY			

Figure 3: On the left side of the chart the racial demographics of Washington are compared to the racial demographics of the census of agriculture of 1910 and 2017, showing little change in demographics. It's important to note that in 1910 Latinx (Hispanic/Latino/Spanish) farmers were included under white farmers

It is important to note that the percent of diversity across racial demographic groups listed in Figure 3 adds up to more than 100%. This is because people have complex identities and there are intersecting categories that are not mutually exclusive, such as the 94.7% of Hispanic/Latinx farmers who identify as white. For example, of the 2,295 farms owned by 2,957 Latinx (Hispanic/Latino/Spanish) farmers in 2017, 94.7% identified as white (2,802 farmers); whereas of the 35,245 farms owned by 61,634 white farmers in 2017, 4.6% identified as Latinx (Hispanic/Latino/Spanish) (2,859 farmers).

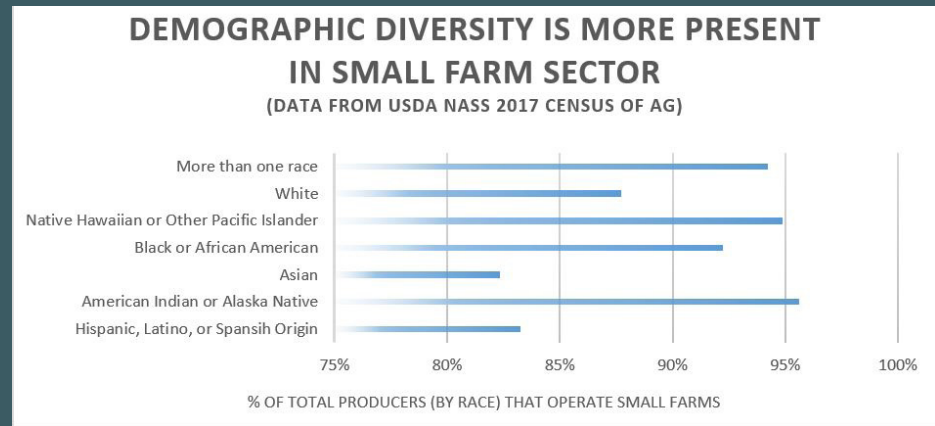
USDA NASS data is the most comprehensive farmer demographic data available. However, it is important to be aware of data missing for people who did not participate in the Census of Agriculture. People may not be included in the census for a variety of reasons including because they were unaware the census was happening. Some highly diversified farms find filling out a survey that was not designed with their type of farm in mind to be overly complicated and burdensome. Other operations may be too small to be counted. Nonprofit organizations who were interviewed for this report described additional nuanced reasons for gaps in data, including a fear of some farmers and ranchers of drawing attention to themselves, and distrust in government research that led some underrepresented farmers and ranchers to avoid the census altogether.

Much of the demographic diversity that does exist within the farming sector in Washington is found in our farmworker communities and our vibrant small farm and local food sector. Washington agriculture is recognized around the world for our significant exports of high-quality grains, tree fruit, berries, seeds, hay, processed vegetables, livestock, and more. It follows that many are surprised to learn that a full 89% of farms in our state are considered small by USDA definitions¹².

¹¹ 2017 Washington State Producer Demographics, US Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistics Service

¹² WSDA generally defines small farms as those grossing less than \$350,000 per year. For full explanation of farm types please see the 2017 USDA Farm Typology, https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Typology/typology.pdf

Demographic diversity among farm operators in Washington is concentrated in this small farm sector, where farmers and ranchers from groups that were historically excluded from land ownership are finding ways to establish themselves in the agriculture industry. USDA NASS Agricultural Census data for Washington shows that 93% of Black or African American farmers, 93% of women farmers, and 83% of Latinx (Hispanic/Latino/Spanish Origin) farmers operate small farms.



Many of these farms utilize business models and strategies focused on local and regional markets and they produce more specialty crops¹³ than commodity crops¹⁴.

Additionally, the largest amount of diversity within farmers and ranchers is seen on the Western side of the state along the I-5 corridor. This reflects a combination of factors ranging from a need for proximity to markets as direct and locally marketing producers, to where these farmers have found support in developing the community connections and access to resources farmers require for success.

Washington is enriched by a groundswell of emerging leadership and entrepreneurial efforts in its local farming and food sector that is rooted in specific underrepresented communities in our state. Examples of this vibrant diversity include Latinx/Hispanic immigrant communities making career transitions from farmworker to farm and business ownership (in Yakima County¹⁵, one of Washington's highest producing agricultural counties, twenty percent of principle farm operators are Hispanic/Latinx). Southeast Asian, especially Hmong and Filipino producers selling primarily into urban markets; Sikh families building generational berry farms; expanding Black farmer coalitions; more recent refugee and immigrant agriculturists from East Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe growing culturally important foods; Muslim communities seeking and producing Halal foods; and growing Indigenous food sovereignty movements among tribes. These small farmers, ranchers, and local food include Veterans, women, and LGBTQ+ people and are diverse in terms of age, family backgrounds, languages, cultures, and education.

Washington has an opportunity to lend support to these exciting and inspiring efforts, to encourage their success into the future, and to open more pathways to diversity in our agricultural sector.

¹³ **"Specialty Crops"**: [specialty crops are defined](#) by the USDA as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops including floriculture that are cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, or aesthetic gratification. Underrepresented farmers and ranchers tend to grow more specialty crops than commodity crops in Washington. Specialty crops typically lack the range of support and risk management programs and crop insurance options from the USDA Farm Service Agency.

¹⁴ **"Commodity Crops"**: crops and livestock that are raised and harvested to provide food and sometimes fuel that are sold and traded in commodity markets. Commodity crops producers are able to access certain kinds of credit or risk management programs like insurance protection due to their "high value" considerations in the global economy and are classified into six categories including: Oil seeds, cereal grains, meat, dairy, soft commodities such as cocoa, coffee, and sugar, and miscellaneous commodities such as lumber, wool and rubber.

¹⁵ 2017 Census of Agriculture, Yakima County. [cpd53077.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#)

LEGACY OF EXCLUSIONARY POLICIES AND LAWS

The current underrepresentation of farmers and ranchers from a diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds does not result from a lack of interest or experience with agriculture on the part of underrepresented communities. On the contrary, farming and ranching has been a point of pride and intergenerational tradition of many communities of color. Women and people of all genders have played important roles in agriculture throughout history and across cultures. Many of the farmers interviewed for this report exemplified this with stories of family roots in agriculture and they express deep reverence and appreciation for their trade that goes back for generations. As one farmer explained:

“IT’S NOT THE ISSUE OF LEARNING HOW TO FARM IT’S THE REST OF THE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THAT ARE CHALLENGING TO NAVIGATE.”

The lack of representation today is, in part, a legacy shaped by historic laws, policies, and attitudes which, at different times and in a variety of ways, limited the opportunity of specific groups of people to access resources needed to farm in Washington. Access to quality land is foundational to the ability to farm. Land is also a critical means of accessing capital and building generational assets to sustain farming as a viable livelihood from one generation to the next.

Policies enacted long before the establishment of Washington’s Statehood in 1889 were woven into the fabric of land ownership, land use, and agriculture in the state. Throughout the century following official statehood, a mix of policies and laws related to land access, ownership, immigration, citizenship, internment, and civil rights status excluded certain people. At various times Indigenous people (“Native American Indians”), Black Americans, people of Asian heritage, single women, and immigrants from certain places were excluded from owning land, building financial resources, and accruing generational wealth. This history provides context for a mix of nuanced barriers that communities have faced over time in becoming farm owner-operators, the legacy of which contributes to the significant gaps in diversity we see today. Understanding this historical context can inform future policies and programs that aim to improve inclusion. For more information specific to historic barriers that make land access and intergenerational wealth less prevalent in marginalized populations, please see Appendix C.

BARRIERS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCED BY UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS

Farming and Ranching is not an easy endeavor. The significant challenges facing all farm operators in the U.S. have been *widely reported*¹⁶. Farmers from all backgrounds share a commitment and sense of purpose for what they do that undergirds the very hard work and many challenges of farming.

The experiences of underrepresented farmers in Washington reflect this reality. The primary barriers faced by underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington align in many ways with the challenges outlined by farmers everywhere. Yet underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington experience these barriers to establishing and growing successful farming enterprises in specific ways that differ from the majority of farmers and ranchers.

¹⁶ Burchfield EK, Schumacher BL, Spangler K and Rissing A (2022) [The State of US Farm Operator Livelihoods](#). Front. Sustain. Food Syst. 5:795901. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.795901

Top Barriers reported by underrepresented farmers and ranchers include:

- Obtaining farmland
- Inadequate access to capital for equipment and operations
- Insufficient support for producers not effectively serving underrepresented farmers and ranchers

Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers come from a wide diversity of backgrounds, so it is no surprise that there are challenges experienced by some but not others. All of the barriers and challenges reported through interviews had intersections within each other that are not mutually exclusive.

OBTAINING FARMLAND

The biggest barrier experienced by any new, beginning, or expanding farm today is accessing land. Without fertile farmland¹⁷ it is nearly impossible to successfully farm or ranch, and participation in aquaculture requires access to healthy waters. All organizations, government inter-agency staff, and farmers and ranchers interviewed for this report indicated that the challenge is shared by underrepresented farmers and ranchers - and that underrepresented farmers and ranchers experience this common challenge in specific ways that are unique to the current and historical experiences of their communities.

FARMING ON LEASED LAND CONSTRAINS SUCCESS

In Washington, 27.4% of all farmland (3,361,027 acres) is stewarded by underrepresented farmers and ranchers. Of the total farmland in the state, only 13.1% is owned by underrepresented farmers and ranchers (1,604,728 acres). This reveals gaps in not only who has access to farmland but who is able to purchase versus lease land.

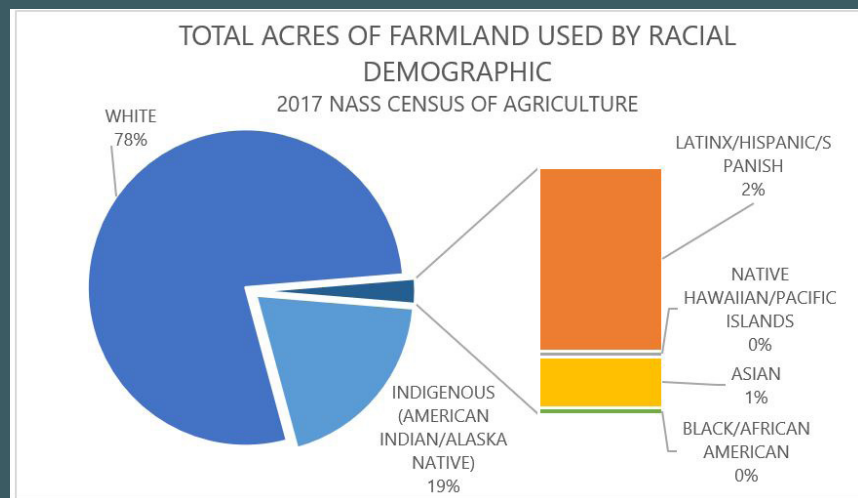


Figure 4: The graph above shows the total acres of farmland being used by farmers and ranchers in Washington. The percent of farmland in use by underrepresented farmers and ranchers is inflated in this instance due to the 19% of farmland being used by Indigenous farmers and ranchers who are utilizing reservation land. The experiences and barriers of Indigenous farmers and ranchers in obtaining farmland on their ancestral homelands and purchasing land is a topic outside the scope of this report but should be further explored with tribal governments and Indigenous farmers and ranchers.

¹⁷ "Farmland": generally synonymous with land used for Agriculture, both farmland and cropland as well as pasture or rangeland and woodland. Land is also categorized by "improved land" or "unimproved land" where improved land is typically higher quality, higher value and has infrastructure that has improved its working capacity such as soil tilling, irrigation systems, water, electricity, plumbing, internet and waste management. "Unimproved land" requires more labor to bring the farmland into ideal working conditions and typically values lower than improved land. Estate values of farmland vary according to agricultural use as well, with croplands having a higher value over pastureland due to mostly higher per-acre returns to crop production.

Farming on leased land, in contrast to owned land, brings added uncertainty and limitations on the types of investments farmers can wisely make in their operations. Leasing can limit options from the types of crops they might produce to what improvements they can make to land, equipment, and infrastructure. The uncertainty and operating constrictions hinder development of successful farming businesses. This in turn limits farmers' ability to develop intergenerational assets and wealth. The ability to accrue value in the land and business is important for the livelihood of individual farmers. It is also critical for building farming and ranching enterprises that can be sustained over time.

"If we owned the land, we would do certain perennials. Now we are limited in planting, because we can't fully commit to the crops that take multiple years to mature. For example, we would love to plant eucalyptus trees. As renters, we would never consider it, since it would be cost-prohibitive to dig it out if/when we needed to move. As renters, we also can't build storage, shed, barn to keep equipment (hoes, buckets, carts, and rototiller) secure. We have had so many theft issues and it is such a setback every time our equipment is stolen. There is no access to water, no electricity onsite at our farm. This makes it very difficult to process veggies, which we end up hauling to our residence. Our farmland landlord doesn't have water rights, so there's nothing he is willing or able to do for us."

- SHARED BY A FARMER WHO HAS LEASED LAND AND FARMED FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS

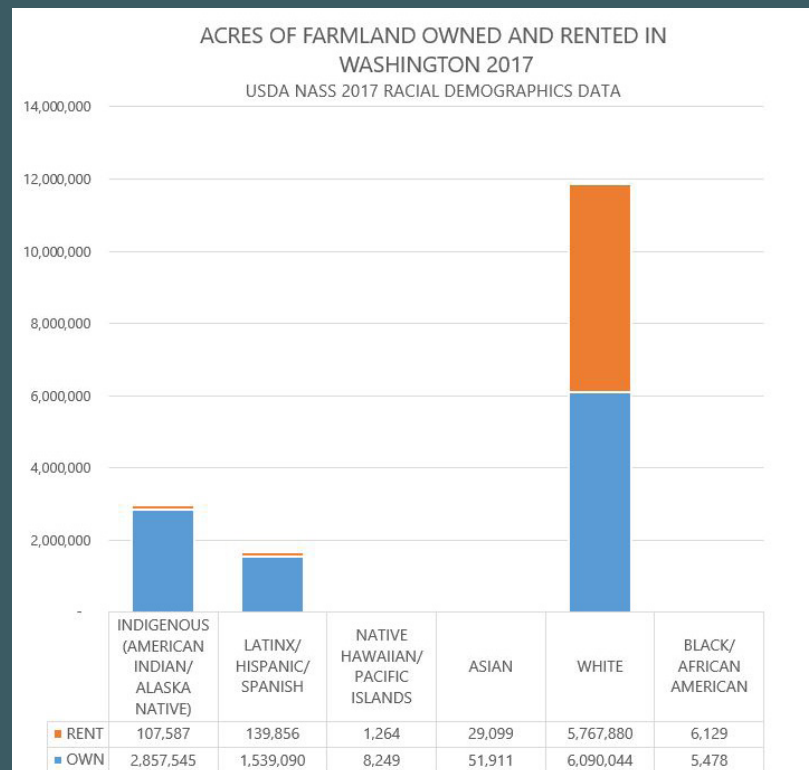


Figure 5: shows the distribution of farmland that is owned versus leased by all farmers and ranchers based on racial demographic from the 2017 Census of Agriculture. The amount of land occupied by some demographics such as Black/African American farmers and ranchers is so small that the bars on the graph cannot be seen in comparison to the amount of land occupied by white farmers and ranchers.

FINDING FARMLAND FOR SALE REQUIRES CONNECTIONS WITH LANDOWNERS

All farmers who were interviewed shared that finding farmland for sale was one of the biggest challenges they experienced getting started. From the beginning, underrepresented farmers and ranchers reported confusion on where to even start the process of trying to purchase land, as one farmer noted *"there's a lot of question marks as to what is the first step"*.

Procuring farmland in Washington frequently requires community connections and relationships with the farmers in the area. Farmers and ranchers hold a deep sense of pride and dedication to the land they steward; if a farmer is getting close to retiring or intends to leave the agriculture sector, they will not sell their land to just anyone. Often, a farmer who is wanting to sell their farmland will want to know who they are selling to and what intentions they have with the land, for example to ensure that it isn't developed into non-agriculture uses. As one farmer shared, *"people will keep tabs on who is selling land, knocking on their door frequently to see if they are selling the land and to build a rapport with them so they 'warm up' to the idea of selling it"*.

One farmer stated, *"If it's good land, you will never see a 'For Sale' sign out front"*.

Additionally, if a farmer is interested in leasing out their land, they will be particular about the kinds of farmers or ranchers who will be stewarding the land. They often want to know the farm practices of the potential leasee so that their land can maintain value and be managed in a way that is in line with their own preferences for particular farming practices.

Given that 96.8% of all farmers are white, this social aspect of land ownership opens up opportunity for implicit bias¹⁸, where the individual who owns the land has an unconscious association, belief, or attitude toward another social group. This can extend into views on what they believe is the best way to use land. For example, one farmer who was utilizing Indigenous traditional knowledge to farm on land they were leasing was kicked off their lease because the landlord believed they weren't using the land in the most profitable way.

Existing farmland owners determine case-by-case who gets the opportunity to purchase or rent the land, often informed by their views of who will steward the land in the way they envision will uphold the land's economic value. New or different crops or unfamiliar land management practices may be seen as a risk not worth taking for existing farmland owners and lessors. This is a real barrier to entry in farming experienced by underrepresented farmer and ranchers, *"We need land of our own. We need long-term access, so we aren't worried about being kicked off the land and having to start over. Farmland is expensive; we have been too discouraged to try to own."*

This theme rang true for almost all the farmers and ranchers interviewed that to access good land, they needed to either know the landowner or someone in relation to the landowner to establish a rapport, then ask if they plan on selling their land. *"I have had someone knock on my door each year asking if I plan on selling my plot,"* one farmer shared. Because of this, the social aspect in relation to the land ownership transfer requires shared language to communicate and build trust. If an individual speaks English as a second or third language, even connecting with English-only speaking landowners to explore who is selling land is especially challenging.

¹⁸ **Implicit or Unconscious Bias** refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

Farmers for whom English is a second language shared that being able to communicate and develop connections with English-only speaking farmers selling – or leasing – land created specific challenges in obtaining farmland. All of the farmers shared that to obtain land they needed the assistance of another farmer or an agriculture-focused organization to get them connected.

HIGH LAND PRICES PLACE LAND OUT OF REACH

The value of farmland in the U.S. has increased from an average of \$1,024 per acre in 1970 to \$3,160 per acre in 2020, when adjusted for inflation¹⁹. In Washington, over the past 20 years farmland prices have increased by \$1,200 per acre averaging about \$2,610 per acre as of 2019²⁰. This dramatic change is diminishing the viability of previously accessible approaches to farmland purchase. One farmer reported that *“[I’ve] spoken with a few realtors here and there. The market is so competitive. It’s really hard to find farmland at an affordable price. Upwards of \$1 million and FSA won’t approve her for that.”*

Government programs such as USDA FSA loans may no longer be able to support small farmers to the same extent they may have in the past. This is especially true for small farms that orient more to direct marketing models that are less familiar to FSA loans officers more accustomed to lending to large commodity producers. Even when a farmer seems to have financing, actually closing a deal is challenging without established relationships with sellers. One farmer shared: *“[We’ve] looked and applied to properties with angel donors and it hasn’t come through. Months of planning and business plans, called in relationships, took farm tours, spoke with appropriate managers. It was apparent that [we] were never in the running.”*

One factor of this land price rise is the pressure for agricultural land to be converted into residential and non-agricultural uses. Purchasing farmland and converting it into parcels or developing it into residential land is attractive in some areas because more housing and residential spaces create tax revenue, which is needed by rural communities who lack capital resources for funding local infrastructure. Additionally, as the general population of farmers ages towards retirement, many need the income from sale of their farms to support them through retirement. They may wish to see the land remain in agriculture but need to sell to a high bidder.

These pressures are driving up land values on what high quality farmland is available, further making it challenging for underrepresented farmers and ranchers with limited access to capital. One farmer reported in a recent National Young Farmers Coalition Report²¹ that they had to move away from Washington to find affordable farmland saying, *“After working on others’ farms and dabbling in farming on our own in Washington State for six years, we moved to Minnesota in order to find more affordable farmland.”* This story highlights not only the loss of rich diversity in agriculture within the state, but a loss to the economy as well.

“AS THE COST OF FARMLAND CONTINUES TO SKYROCKET, THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS FACE A CRISIS OF LAND AFFORDABILITY AND FINANCING BARRIERS AS THEY TRY TO NAVIGATE A FUTURE IN AGRICULTURE. THESE BARRIERS ARE ONLY EXACERBATED FOR BIPOC FARMERS WHO HAVE FACED A LONG HISTORY OF DISPOSSESSION AND DISCRIMINATION IN LAND TENURE.”

- ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF WASHINGTON FARMLAND TRUST

¹⁹ Congressional research Service. Racial Equity in U.S. Farming: Background in Brief. 2021. From: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46969>

²⁰ Acre Trader. Washington Farmland Prices. 2022. From: <https://acretrader.com/resources/washington-farmland-prices>

²¹ National Young Farmers Coalition. Building a Future with Farmers 2022: Results and Recommendations from the Young Farmer Survey. August 2022. From: <https://www.youngfarmers.org/resources/>

Between 2001-2016, 97,800 acres of agricultural land in Washington were developed or compromised, which cannot be converted back into farmland²¹. Land that is available, readily accessible and affordable often is not good quality, requiring the farmer to invest time and resources into improving the farmland. Some farmland lacks water rights or the ability to build infrastructure like drip systems on land that is rented, leased, or held in trust.

For farmers who were able to purchase land in earlier eras of relative affordability, owning land can have a benefit of improved access to capital as the price of farmland increases, because the increase in value can be used as collateral for obtaining credit. For farmers unable to acquire land, the subsequent limitations on accessing other types of capital without land assets is a double blow to their viability.

FARMLAND ACCESS PROGRAMS HAVE YET TO BUILD TRUST AND ORIENT SERVICES TO UNDERREPRESENTED FARMER AND RANCHER NEEDS

Programs have been launched at the national, state, and local levels more recently that could offer support for underserved farmers and ranchers with obtaining farmland. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission Farmland Protection and Affordability Investment program ([FarmPAI](#)) or programs offered by the non-profit organization Washington Farmland Trust are just examples of innovative responses. However, uptake of these programs may be slow for a variety of reasons. Some farmers noted that they were skeptical of taking on debt or of applying to programs that would burden them with heavy administrative work. One farmer shared *"I don't want to be burdened by debt, and don't have time or desire to apply for grants. I don't care for clerical work and don't have the focus for it."*

Another farmer who reported utilizing USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans shared the struggles they had with the confusing 100-page document to request assistance with financial planning and loans in order to purchase land. They were put on a waiting list for 5 years to finance 30 acres and during that time the land they originally wanted to purchase with an FSA loan was gone.

When questioned about land access resources like land trusts, interviewees shared a wide range of opinions and experiences with using support services aimed at helping farmers get land. Challenges noted in interviews with underrepresented farmers and rancher included eligibility issues, citizenship status barriers, and strict rules on land use. Some farmers shared experiences with miscommunications and gaps in knowing who to talk to, where resources are, or how to identify farmland. One farmer expressed that they were unsure if it was just due to missed emails and lack of priority that they weren't hearing back from their local farmland conservation organizations - or if it was racism²². Whether or not the lack of follow-through by the organization was intentional, examples like these can leave underrepresented farmers and ranchers questioning their experiences, unsure if they can trust program offerings, and more hesitant to reach out for help.

²² **"Racism"**: A way of representing or describing race that creates or reproduces structures of domination based on racial categories. In other words, racism is racial prejudice plus power. In the United States, it is grounded in the creation of a white dominant culture that reinforces the use of power to create privilege for white people while marginalizing people of color, whether intentional or not. It is perpetuated in many forms of racism that include: Individual racism - An individual's beliefs, attitudes, and actions that perpetuates racism. Interpersonal racism - When individuals express their beliefs and attitudes with another person that perpetuates racism. Internalized racism - When people of color, knowingly or unknowingly, accept and integrate negative racist images, beliefs, and identities to their detriment. Institutional racism - Intentional or unintentional, laws, organizational practices, policies, and programs that work to the benefit of white people and to the detriment of people of color. Systemic racism: The way an entire system collectively contributes to racial inequities. This includes the health, environmental, education, justice, government, economic, financial, transportation, and political systems. Structural racism - The interplay of laws, practices, policies, programs, and institutions of multiple systems, which leads to adverse outcomes and conditions for communities of color compared to white communities. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

Farmland access programs often also come with additional barriers for beginning farmers who do not have existing capital to draw from. One farmer in the north Puget Sound shared they had received grant funding to purchase farmland, but first had to take out a line of credit and their extended family had to refinance their home to pay the upfront costs to purchase the land while they waited to be reimbursed at the end of the grant period. Depending on the historic opportunities to own homes or other assets for others within a farmer's extended community, many underrepresented farmers and ranchers do not have assets available to them, even though extended family connections as in this example. Another farmer noted, *"We tried to buy land, but there are no programs for bare land. Financing requires us to have 50% down and this is cost prohibitive to us becoming landowners."*

Additionally, traditional resources and services that support agriculture are only very recently orienting to urban agriculturalists. These service providers have not yet established themselves as trusted and relevant service providers for urban farmers, though urban and peri-urban farming is becoming an increasingly common way that first generation farmers are entering agriculture.

PERSONAL SAFETY AND COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE CONCERNS LIMIT OPTION FOR WHERE TO FARM

Many of the farmer interviews and organizations that support farmers and ranchers identified a nuanced issue of safety and representation within a region or community as a barrier to obtaining farmland. In some areas, land may be more available or affordable, but farmers shared fears about a lack of safety for their families and themselves if they were to live because of concerns about how their neighbors might interact with them. One farmer shared in a one-on-one interview, once their neighbor learned they were Muslim, the neighbor no longer wanted to engage with the farmer. Now, when that farmer has to go pick up farm supplies, they bring their white partner with them out of fear for their personal safety.

One organization that held extensive interviews with underrepresented farmers to contribute to this report shared that many of the individuals had safety concerns which prevented them from seeking available farmland in more rural areas. During this research period, one BIPOC identifying farmer contacted WSDA after they experienced gun shots toward their property. Another shared a story of how they purchased land with existing property-line fencing in a rural area. When the farmer moved in, their neighbor accused them of incorrectly building a fence, ripped the fence out, and sprayed pesticides onto their plants a few feet into their property line which killed their crops. Unfortunately, these experiences are shared by many underrepresented farmers and ranchers. Experiences like these were shared repeatedly in interviews. While all of the stories are not called out in this report, these real experiences compound the lived traumas many underrepresented farmers and ranchers have to endure daily.

One strategy some farmers employ in response to this reality is staying in areas where there is more diversity. Many underrepresented farmers and ranchers utilize urban and peri-urban farming on land in populated areas of the state. USDA defines urban farming as the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban areas, which can include community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic, aquaponics facilities and more. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service reported that Washington urban farmers shared barriers related to lack of awareness of opportunities for funding to access farmland, issues with scalability, historical relationships with government, limited language and translation services, and zoning or local restrictions²³. The relatively high cost of urban compared to rural farmland puts an additional barrier on underrepresented farmers and ranchers who may feel restricted in their land options due to real concerns about personal safety and community acceptance.

²³ Washington State Natural Resources Conservation Services. Urban Conservation Update presentation. 2022.

"FEELINGS OF SAFETY AND INCLUSION DOES NOT EXIST FOR MANY BIPOC [FARMERS] - WE WANT TO MAKE SPACE FOR OTHERS IN A COLLECTIVE MODEL, BUT IT FEELS LIKE WE ARE DOING IT ALONE. OUR CHILDREN FEEL ISOLATED LIVING IN THE COUNTRY, AWAY FROM PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE THEM AND SHARE A COMMON CULTURE. IN THE RURAL AREA WHERE WE LIVE, WE DON'T SHARE THE POLITICS AND CULTURE OF OUR NEIGHBORS. LATINO FARMWORKERS COME TO US LOOKING FOR HOUSING AND DESPERATE FOR SAFETY; THEIR LANDLORDS ARE NOT FIXING LEAKY ROOFS OR HEATERS, BECAUSE THEY KNOW THESE FOLKS ARE UNDOCUMENTED AND THEY CAN KICK THEM OUT AT ANY TIME. HOPEFULLY OTHERS WANT TO COME AND CO-STEWARD THIS LAND. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO FARM WITHOUT HAVING ONE OR TWO PEOPLE SACRIFICING OURSELVES."

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO CAPITAL FOR EQUIPMENT AND OPERATIONS

Accessing the capital, equipment, and information needed to successfully operate and expand a farm business were among the top barriers reported across all of the one-on-one interviews with farmers, organizations representing farmers and government inter-agency subject matter experts. The importance of accessing capital is vital for farmers, because without access to credit^{1,2} or financial opportunities they are unable to purchase land, equipment to farm, pay for labor and more.

A 2022 report from the National Young Farmers Coalition which surveyed 4,344 farmers (26.2% from the west coast) found consistent trends nationally and within states, including Washington. In the survey, 59% of Black farmers and 54% of BIPOC farmers reported that finding access to capital to grow their business was very or extremely challenging²⁴.

Loan and grant programs available for farm operations often require demonstration of assets that can be used as collateral. This can cause specific barriers for underrepresented farmers and ranchers from groups that faced historic barriers to access land ownership and other means of developing generational wealth, as that limits their present-day access to operating credit for their farms. Common eligibility requirements for grant programs that might finance equipment and facility improvements for farms require at least three years of demonstrated operating revenue and ownership of the land, which can cause farm businesses to stall out in a catch-22 of needing capital to grow to be eligible for the needed capital.

The USDA and various national, state and local government and non-profit programs exist to help farmers navigate these challenges. However, there are significant gaps in who is accessing or benefitting from available programs and services.

BARRIERS TO FINANCING EQUIPMENT LIMITS BUSINESS GROWTH AND HINDERS CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Challenges accessing equipment financing were reported as a limiting factor in the efficiency, success, and growth of farms. One farmer noted that for equipment purchases, *"understanding scalability is huge and understanding early on was helpful."* For farms and ranches to scale and grow into new and different markets they need access to new equipment. There is an opportunity to increase farm efficiency and output by upgrading tools. As one farmer shared, *"I could upgrade everywhere. I don't have all of what I want. I need to move away from hand tools."*

²⁴ National Young Farmers Coalition Survey Report, Building a Future with Farmers 2022. 2022. And related presentation by Katherine Un of the National Young Farmers Coalition to the Washington State Food Policy Forum, October 2022.

Several farmers reported that having a lack of credit^{1,2} created challenges in obtaining loans for business operation or expansion. Additionally, to qualify for certain loans requires land ownership, acceptable proof of collateral, an established business model, and a complicated application process with many terms and conditions. The USDA reported that there are high rates of incomplete or withdrawn applications among underrepresented farmers and ranchers due to the lengthy process²³. Some loans are only accessible for commodity crops, while statewide data shows more underrepresented farmers tend to grow specialty crops and a majority of the farmers interviewed reported that they primarily produce specialty crops.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers loans specifically tailored for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers^{26, 27}. However, as nonprofit organizations and government agency staff interviewed for this report pointed out, there are still hurdles for underrepresented farmers and ranchers in applying for and receiving those loans. Hurdles identified included language barriers, a need for internet access to apply for the loans, limited technical assistance on how to get a loan, a need to provide proof of collateral showing they will be able to pay back the loan, and proving their ability to farm.

Farmers reinforced this deeply frustrating experience with existing programs and services in their own words, *"None of it is useful and they are just so bureaucratic."* The lack of representation within key support roles was also noted by many of the farmers sharing, *"We want someone who is from and in our community, letting us know about potential opportunities and helping us fill out grant applications so we have a better chance and are not wasting our time."*

A farmer shared that she tried to get an equipment loan through FSA but *"working with them was difficult. It seemed like as an Indigenous woman farmer they didn't value [me]. They gave [me] extra paperwork and slow communication."* When she spoke with other farmers it appeared obvious to her that they had shown preference to male farmers over female farmers.

Another farmer explained, *"The language access point is a large barrier... The language of the applications for grant funding and the actual legal language doesn't make sense for anyone who is learning English."*

Lack of access to capital and lack of control or ownership of farmland create a particular barrier to investing in climate-resilient infrastructure; NASS data reveals over 50% of the farmland stewarded by Black and African American farmers is leased³, for example.

For Hmong flower producers, one farmer shared they weren't able to access climate-resilient infrastructure or enough ample water during droughts because they didn't own the land they grew on. *"If we owned our land, we would put up greenhouses and do our own starts. This would allow us to save money and start earlier in the year."* The lack of access to cool storage *"puts a stress on us to harvest and immediately sell our flowers. [The] increasing smoke from forest fires can damage our flowers. This is a loss for us."*

²⁵ USDA Newsroom, USDA Launches Loan Assistance Tool to Enhance Equity and Customer Service. 2022. From: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-room/news-releases/2022/usda-launches-loan-assistance-tool-to-enhance-equity-and-customer-service>

²⁶ Farm Service Agency, USDA. Loans for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Fact Sheet. 2019. From: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafiles/FactSheets/2019/sda_loans-fact_sheet-aug_2019.pdf

²⁷ "Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers": The USDA defines socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFRs) as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice. SDFRs include farmers who are Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander. For some but not all USDA programs, the SDFR category also includes women.

Research from the Environmental Protection Agency shows climate change is disproportionately impacting “socially vulnerable populations” in the United States. Black and African American individuals are projected to face higher impacts of climate change compared to all other demographic groups. Black and African American individuals are 40% more likely to live in areas with the highest-projected increases in extreme temperature-related deaths. Latinx individuals working in weather-exposed trades like agriculture are 43% more likely to live in areas with the highest-projected reductions in labor hours due to extreme temperatures or smoke. Latinx individuals are 50% more likely to live in areas with increased flooding²⁸.

Among underrepresented farmer and rancher interviewees, Sikh and Latinx raspberry producers interviewed noted an estimated 30% decrease in yield from the 2021 heat wave due to the lack of having infrastructure needed to buffer the impacts of the unusual temperatures. Sikh and Latinx vegetable producers who did not have access to environmentally resilient infrastructure noted that the wet spring, accompanied by the unexpected frost of 2022 delayed the start of the season and killed seedlings that had been planted. Smoke from wildfires is increasingly a challenge impacting farms. Several Hispanic/Latinx orchardists interviewed shared that the unhealthy air from the 2021 wildfire smoke delayed harvest that has to be picked by hand. Among flower growers shared that their lack of access to resources like cold storage and landlords preventing them from building out electricity infrastructure meant they had no other option but to work in the smoke each day without any time off and hope the ash wouldn't damage the petals or their lungs.

On the coast, a confluence of climate impacts are affecting Indigenous farmers with rising sea levels, and coastal flooding has increased by 48%²³. Conversely, the recent long droughts increase the risk of saltwater entering the water table and permeating fresh water that is used to water crops.

Those participating in aquaculture reported large die-offs of shellfish in Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and the Salish Sea from the June 2021 heat wave. Due to increasing ocean acidification, availability of viable shellfish has steadily declined. Others in aquaculture have reported the increase in water temperature has changed the way other farmers use pesticides in the water to kill invasive species, creating unusual toxic algae blooms which make shellfish unharvestable and has made it challenging to seed oysters needing cool water to grow.

CHALLENGES NAVIGATING “ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL” REGULATORY COMPLIANCE, CERTIFICATIONS, AND LICENSES

Many farmers interviewed shared that the one-size-fits-all models were not culturally inclusive of their needs and created undue financial burdens. While regulatory compliance is a challenge shared by all farmers and ranchers, it is especially burdensome on underrepresented farmers given the orientation of policy toward conventional farming practices.

For example, one farmer shared sympathizing with the reasoning for specific environmental laws or zoning, but that applying the same rules to small farms as bigger commercial farms did not feel fair. The interviewee noted how diligently they already work to implement regenerative practices and reduce the use of pesticides. Another farmer shared that having WSDA employees on the property conducting routine inspection tests created fear and unease, especially among those who recently immigrated to Washington. For others, becoming certified organic on leased land proved to be a challenge because providing previous land use records necessary for certification was difficult.

²⁸ EPA. Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impacts. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2021. 430-R-21-003

PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT PRODUCERS ARE NOT EFFECTIVELY SERVING UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS

The challenges facing all farm operators in the U.S. are significant²⁹. The USDA and a range of national, state, local government, and non-profit programs exist to help farmers navigate these challenges. However, there are gaps in who is accessing and benefitting from available programs and services³⁰.

The USDA Farm Service Agency recently reported that underserved and underrepresented farmers *"have not received the amount of specialized technical support that would benefit the launch, growth, resilience, and success of their agricultural enterprises. Underserved producers are more likely to operate smaller, lower-revenue farms, have weaker credit histories, and may lack clear title to their agricultural land, which increases difficulty in securing farm loans."*

Other USDA data on government payments to farms operated by underrepresented farmers provides one example of differential utilization of support programs related to many of the factors identified by the Farm Service Agency. USDA NASS data shows that underrepresented farmers and ranchers receive government payments for things such as conservation programs or crop insurance in amounts well below the overall average. For example, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Black producers receive an average of \$13,000 or less per farm, which is less than half the overall national average per farm of \$31,000. Hispanic/Latinx operated farms average payments that are approximately one third less than the overall average. These disparities reflect a complexity of contributing factors, and are in part driven by federal base acreage designations and eligibility rules for commodity programs that are not intended to serve smaller-scale and specialty crop producers, which underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington are more likely to be.

This trend is further illustrated in the 2022 National Young Farmers Coalition Survey to which a full 71% of respondents reported being unfamiliar with USDA programs. 26% reporting having applied for a USDA program but were denied³¹.

While these statistics report on utilization of federal programs, in fact, these federal programs and services are the supportive scaffolding that supports and shapes agriculture in the United States. For this reason, many state and local-level agencies and organizations, including WSDA, play roles in helping farmers connect with federal services.

Interviews with underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington and the organizations who represent them reinforced this disparity in access and utilization of services.

²⁹ Burchfield EK, Schumacher BL, Spangler K and Rissing A. Front. Sustain. Food Syst. 5:795901. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.795901. 2022. From: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsufs.2021.795901/full>

³⁰ The United States Government Accountability Office. Agricultural Lending, Information on Credit and Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers is Limited. July 2019. From [GAO-19-539](#). [AGRICULTURAL LENDING: Information on Credit and Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Is Limited \(ewg.org\)](#)

³¹ National Young Farmers Coalition. Building a Future with Farmers: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmer Survey. 2022 From: <https://www.youngfarmers.org/22survey/>

INACCESSIBLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE LIMITS MARKET ACCESS AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

The top barrier most commonly cited by farmers interviewed for this report, was a challenge in accessing technical assistance support needed to build viable farm enterprises with sustainable business growth. The specific barriers preventing farmers from accessing this assistance include language inaccessibility³² for English language learners who could not access interpretation or translated materials. But barriers related to language were reported by native English speakers as well who frequently reported that information, program applications, and other materials are presented in such complex and technical language that it is functionally inaccessible.

Many of the beginning farmers and newly immigrated farmers interviewed reported a variety of barriers around access to information about marketing and business planning. Some were not sure about all of the market channels available to them or how to access them. One shared in their interview, *"We don't know how to price our crops, because we don't know what the market value is or how to find competitive buyers."* Many indicated needing more information and support around how to organize a business plan in order to be eligible for loans or grants. Some indicated needing help selecting the right kind of equipment needed for their business.

Sikh, African American, Asian, and Latinx farmers interviewed who had begun their farming careers in Washington as farmworkers, reported a steep learning curve for finding market channels. Two felt they had been taken advantage of by the more established packing houses. Another farmer shared that accessing market channels or existing business planning resources was difficult because the only resources were in English and tailored to well-represented US born farmers. Peer-to-peer mentoring and community resource and information sharing were key elements of interviewee's success.

A Sikh farmer summed up the challenge, *"I feel like I will always have to go through a broker, because the good ole boys have a better relationship and get better deals"* with selling their products. *"So, I have to find an avenue to build a relationship with them otherwise I have to drop my prices."*

DISTRUST AND UNEASE ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT AND NONPROFIT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Many farmers reported lack of trust and disinterest in engaging with government financial support programs or technical assistance programs due to gaps in cultural understanding, and experiences of marginalization and bias. Almost all of the farmers interviewed shared that they did not feel comfortable reaching out for help unless they knew and trusted the person they were connecting with. Black and African American farmers in particular have experienced discriminatory practices within financial services affecting their ability to obtain credit and loans^{33,34} through USDA programs³⁵, and farmers who have recently immigrated to Washington have many barriers to obtaining credit to access financial resources.

³² "Accessibility": a quality of an agriculture resource- such as technical assistance, grant funding, land resource, or learning opportunities - that influences how easily reached, entered, or used available resource are for underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

³³ United States Government Accountability Office. Agricultural Lending: Information on Credit and Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers is Limited. July 2019. From: https://static.ewg.org/reports/2021/BlackFarmerDiscriminationTimeline/2021_GAO-Report.pdf?_ga=2.126570127.362542473.1668536738-1975250374.1657899912

³⁴ United States Government Accountability Office. Financial Services: Fair Lending, Access and Retirement Security. February 24, 2021. From: https://static.ewg.org/reports/2021/BlackFarmerDiscriminationTimeline/2021_GAO-Report.pdf?_ga=2.126570127.362542473.1668536738-1975250374.1657899912

³⁵ USDA. Black Farmers in America, 1865-2000 the Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives. 2003. From: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RR194.pdf>

Farmer and rancher nonprofit organizations reported a need for equity- and culturally informed delivery of services, that take into account the lived experiences and hardships farmers endure in their daily lives so that the experience of accessing capital resources and grant support services encourages participation rather than alienation.

Many farmers who were interviewed shared their perspectives and experiences engaging with WSDA technical assistance programs or financial resources, such as grant opportunities. Many of the farmers interviewed were unaware of the programs or services the department offered, which leaves opportunity for increased community outreach and engagement. Organizations interviewed expressed the need for more bilingual staff and more language options for WSDA grant opportunities. This was related to citizenship status, fear of drawing attention and getting in trouble if they weren't in compliance, or resentment from past interactions with government agencies.

"MOST OF THE TIME, SPANISH IS THE SECOND LANGUAGE INDIGENOUS LATINOS SPEAK- SO BOTH OF US ARE TRANSLATING WITH SPANISH AS THE BRIDGE LANGUAGE BUT NEITHER OF US ARE ABLE TO EXACTLY CONVEY WHAT WE MEAN"

– ADVOCATE ON LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY OF PROGRAMS

Additionally, all farmers and ranchers who engaged with WSDA or local level agriculture resource providers like WSU Extension or a Conservation District reported that they felt misunderstood and not prioritized when their emails were ignored, or the only available resources were in English. Whether or not agriculture system organizations, such as WSDA, have the capacity to respond to requests for guidance, farmers and ranchers feeling ignored has a negative effect on the relationships, trust, and faith in the systems they pay taxes into for support.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES ACCESSIBLE OR FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO MEET UNDERREPRESENTED FARMER AND RANCHER NEEDS

Many farmers said they were unaware of where to find grant opportunities or were unclear if they were eligible to apply because of complex legal language and lack of translation options to determine whether the services were right for them. Farmers shared that the requirements for grant reporting are burdensome and do not have enough technical assistance to assist potential applicants, leaving them ambivalent about the practicality of applying. A farmer shared that *"It would be great if there was a program to subsidize equipment purchase. That said, grants take time to apply and keep track of all the requirements."* One larger scale fruit grower summed it up, *"Applying for grants is like pulling teeth."*

Additionally, most government grants require disbursement of funds on a reimbursement basis. This can make them functionally inaccessible to low-resource farmers who do not have adequate cash flow to pay all the needed resources up front and wait on a reimbursement. Farmers with existing relationships with lenders may be able to obtain and afford reasonably priced bridge loans to cover up front costs, but this is not the case for many black, Indigenous, or other individuals of color whose communities have historically faced challenges in accessing financial services with interest rates that are affordable. One farmer reported that when they received grant funding to help their operation obtain equipment and labor costs, they had to take out a personal loan with high interest to pay for equipment and pay employees while they waited until the end of the grant period for reimbursement³⁶.

³⁶ WSDA and WSU. Assessing WA Food Systems Through an Equity Lens: Bridging the Gap Through a Culturally Relevant Approach. 2021. <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2206/2021/12/WSDA-Food-Systems-Report-Final.pdf>

One farmer who received a recent WSDA grant shared that despite being awarded \$100,000 to purchase needed equipment, they couldn't even secure a \$30,000 loan to place a down payment on the equipment in order to begin the process of purchasing and waiting on reimbursement. After contacting multiple banks and credit card companies the farmer reported that they felt the grant was only a grand gesture to make WSDA look like they were helping the community, when in reality they still couldn't use the money since they were unable to access the needed capital to pay upfront.

INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO CROP INSURANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL CONTRIBUTES TO CHRONIC STRESS

Farming is a high stress career filled with risk. Since underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington are more likely to grow specialty crops this limits their options to access resources risk management tools like crop insurance which is more readily available to commodity crops. While there are options such as the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) which is intended to serve diversified producers, relatively few farmers utilize this program. Many are unaware of it, and others find it does not fully meet their needs, with structure as a reimbursement after the farmer files taxes.

"WE ARE UNDER FINANCIAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL STRAINS OF FARMING UNDER A CAPITALIST SYSTEM, WORKING FOR POVERTY WAGES, WITH NO ABILITY TO OFFER A LIVING WAGE TO OTHERS."

There are additional programs available to manage risk associated with potential crop loss or price loss for commodity agriculture producers which can help ease the stress and burden of events that are out of a farmers control such as wildfires or crop failure. However, these resources are more limited for small farms, farms on leased land, and specialty crops. Farmers shared:

"WE FARM IN A VERY LABOR- INTENSIVE WAY. WE DON'T MAKE ENOUGH TO HIRE LABORERS. DUE TO THIS, THERE ARE MANY SACRIFICES WE MAKE TO FAMILY TIME, WHICH CREATES A LOT OF MENTAL STRESS AND FRICTION. WE AREN'T HOME UNTIL 11PM FROM THE FIELDS, AND BACK TO THE MARKETS IN THE EARLY MORNING THE NEXT DAY. THIS IS VERY STRESSFUL FOR OUR FAMILY AND KIDS. WE DON'T GO ON VACATIONS, HIKING, AND VISIT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY. THE OLDER KIDS ARE TAKING CARE OF THE YOUNGER ONES. THERE IS NOT ENOUGH MONEY IN EXCHANGE FOR THE LEVEL OF WORK WE ARE TAKING ON AND THE TIME WE ARE SACRIFICING WITH OUR FAMILY. WHITE FARMERS ARE GROWING MONOCULTURE CROPS, UNLIKE US. WE FARM A DIVERSITY OF CROPS AND IT'S MORE COMPLEX TO TAKE CARE OF. THINGS ARE ALWAYS COMING UP AND NEEDING TO BE HARVESTED. WE ARE NEVER RESTING DURING THE SEASON."

Many underrepresented farmers and ranchers have to maintain part time jobs to receive health care benefits or afford food. Calls to Farm Aid's farmer hotline doubled in 2018 compared to 2017, with 53% of the year's calls representing farmers in crisis³⁷.

³⁷ Farm Aid, Western Regional Agricultural Stress Assistance Program Baseline Survey Data. Agricultural Producer Stress: Washington Statewide Report

LACK OF SUPPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT FOOD PRODUCTION

Support and infrastructure for culturally relevant food production is currently limited. For example, difficulty finding a meat processor who can provide halal or kosher services was shared by many of the farmers interviewed. There is limited grant funding that can support culturally significant food production.

Underrepresented farmers and ranchers who grow and sell culturally significant foods³⁸ play an important role for local communities who rely on them to access these foods. These farmers feel particularly challenged by current inflationary increased costs of inputs and operating expenses that all farmers are currently facing. When asked, one farmer shared that they didn't feel comfortable raising the prices of their products because of how valuable and important the cultural foods they produced were. The farmer shared they were absorbing the costs rather than passing on the burden to the customer, but that they weren't sure how long they would be able to sustain that. Another farmer mentioned trying to save costs by switching what they grew, which created additional risk and uncertainties for their farm business.

CROSS-CUTTING IMPACTS OF UNDERREPRESENTATION

As alluded to in the proviso language that guided this report, and in the experiences shared by stakeholders interviewed for this report, representation within Washington's agriculture systems matters. The ways this appears are many. The impacts are complex and intertwined, and sometimes subtle, but nonetheless real and impactful. A lack of representation can influence all aspects of an individual's experience as a farmer working to find success in our agricultural system. A detailed look at specific types of underrepresentation is in Appendix E and they influence and infuse the systemic barriers experienced by underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

WSDA EFFORTS TO SERVE UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS

HOW HAS WSDA HISTORICALLY SERVED UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS?

WSDA provides many of its services and programs at the behest of the agriculture and food production industry. The services and the ways they are provided have been shaped through a mix of input from industry stakeholders including commodity commissions and other associations of farmers and ranchers, legislation and rulemaking at both the state and federal levels, and through the day-to-day work of WSDA staff within the agency's divisions and program. Because of the nature of WSDA's different programs and services being targeted to specific segments within the agricultural industry, the history and nature of engagement between different WSDA programs and underrepresented communities in agriculture also varies.

Overall, underrepresented farmers and ranchers have seldom been involved in leadership roles within the groups that are seen as being the primary representative organizations for WSDA's agricultural stakeholders. This means that they have historically had little opportunity to be included in decision-making that impact them whether within boards, advisory panels, or at the program level developing policies, regulations or grant funding opportunities. This reflects the lack of racial diversity across all agriculture systems, in part due to a lack of intentional outreach or engagement in the past. Underrepresented farmers and ranchers interviewed reported not being engaged, and at times being excluded from decision-making processes that impact them. Some shared experiences of outreach to WSDA without response, and experiences of being tokenized if they were included in leadership roles. WSDA welcomes the opportunity to increase community engagement and relationship building to encourage greater participation of underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

³⁸ "Culturally Specific Foods" or "Culturally Significant Foods": safe and nutritious foods that meet the diverse tastes and needs of customers based on their cultural identity. For example, people who identify with Muslim or Jewish religious traditions may want foods that are Halal or Kosher, respectively.

WSDA programs whose specific purpose and activities mean they engage with stakeholders from underrepresented farming and ranching communities on a more regular basis, have some relationships and experiences that the agency can build from as it works more proactively to bring a Pro-Equity, Anti-Racist PEAR) approach to its work.

For example, the primarily Spanish/English bilingual Pesticide Program has developed strong relationships with many Hispanic/Latinx famers and farmworkers through the pesticide training programs they provide. Farmworkers who are working to establish farming operations of their own often rely informally on the Pesticide Program staff as trusted conduits to other information and resources they need.

The Food Assistance Program's Farm to Food Pantry initiative, is a specialized program that creates an opportunity for small farms to connect hyper-locally and grow products that local food pantries purchase. The program has potential to include more culturally specific foods in food banks and to give small farmers a certain market.

The Regional Markets Program purpose is to support the economic viability of small and direct marketing farms and promote development of local food systems. The program often acts as a de-facto advocate for the types of smaller-scale farms that underrepresented farmers and ranchers tend to operate and elevates their particular needs for funding and policy attention. The Regional Markets program focuses its service delivery on peer-to-peer learning, training, and capacity building and develops resources and publications specifically oriented to the needs and realities of small and direct marketing farms.

These examples are starting places from which to springboard more improvements as resources become available. For example, a key resource developed by WSDA's Regional Markets Program, the [Handbook for Small and Direct Marketing Farms](#), which includes guides for running a successful farm business, direct marketing strategies, guidance on voluntary certifications, and regulations for food processing or specific products. The resource includes [resources for Veteran Farmers](#), [Spanish-speaking Farmers](#) and [Hmong Farmers](#). While this book is free and available for download, the current edition is only available in English, which the program is aware, creates barriers for communities who use English as a second or third language.

WSDA Director Derek Sandison launched the [Focus on Food Initiative](#) in 2019 with a vision for further developing synergies within WSDA's work to improve outcomes for farmers, ranchers, and for building connections between the diversity of urban and rural communities in our state, with food and agriculture as the cornerstone.

Since then, WSDA has had an intimate view of the challenges and inequities within our food and agriculture system, especially those that were compounded and created by the COVID-19 pandemic. WSDA has taken the initiative, to integrate equity considerations into new ways of doing business. This has included new grants to help fill identified gaps in access to resources within our local food and farming system, as well as in grant-making processes that aim to simplify application processes and consider equity impacts in the awards made³⁹. It has also driven WSDA's efforts expand partnerships in hunger relief work to both expand market access opportunities to a wider range of farmers and ranchers and to engage with a broader array of community-based organizations engaged in anti-hunger efforts.

The [WSDA Local Food System Infrastructure grant](#) is a recent example of one approach WSDA is exploring to make accessing capital resources less challenging for underrepresented farmers and ranchers (even within the constraints of structural systemic barriers that exist including requirements for reimbursement-based funding and budget-cycle timelines). The application portal was available in multiple language options and was a simple application with low barriers. The agency received 717 applications through intentional outreach and engagement and utilized a diverse group of 32 grant reviewers with a variety of perspectives and experiences. WSDA awarded more than \$16 million in grants to 137 awardees, 55.5% of whom were Black, Indigenous or People of Color, and women. Five farmers interviewed reported applying to this grant, and two community organizations who helped underrepresented farmers and ranchers apply to the grant expressed appreciation for how simplified the application process was, lessening the burden on them.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF APPLICANTS TO WSDA LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	TOTAL PERCENT OF APPLICANTS	WASHINGTON STATE PRODUCER DEMOGRAPHICS**	PERCENT OF ALL GRANT DOLLARS REQUESTED	DOLLARS REQUESTED
VETERANS	41	5.5%	12.8%	6%	\$8,963,599
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	32	4.3%	0.1%	6%	\$9,148,898
INDIGENOUS	24	3.2%	0.9%	3%	\$4,459,641
HISPANIC, LATINO/LATINA/LATINX	73	9.8%	4.7%	11%	\$16,513,833
ASIAN	44	5.9%	1.4%	6%	\$9,611,848
NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER	6	0.8%	0.1%	1%	\$1,202,000
REFUGEE OR IMMIGRANT	31	4.1%	UNAVAILABLE	4%	\$6,289,785
FEMALE, TRANSGENDER OR NON-BINARY	338	45.2%	42.4%	41%	\$61,520,881
LESBIAN, GAY, BI-SEXUAL, OR QUEER	67	9.0%	UNAVAILABLE	6%	\$9,596,678
NONE OF THE ABOVE	134	17.9%	UNAVAILABLE	18%	\$26,498,136
I PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	62	8.3%	UNAVAILABLE	10%	\$14,506,952
TOTAL APPLICATIONS: 717 ELIGIBLE OF 748 TOTAL					
*COLUMNS SUM TO MORE THAN 100% BECAUSE CATEGORIES ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE					
**2017 WASHINGTON STATE PRODUCER DEMOGRAPHICS US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE					

³⁹ These include Covid Relief and Recover Grants for Small Businesses, Local Food System Infrastructure Grants, Farm to School Purchasing Grants, Small Scale Meat Processor Capacity and Infrastructure Grants, as well as grants to improve capacity of hunger relief organizations. It also includes programs like We Feed Washington and Food Assistance Program purchasing contracts that aim to broaden opportunities for smaller scale agricultural producers and distributors within Washington to compete for contracts to provide healthy, Washington-grown foods to communities and individuals experiencing food insecurity.

Grant funding opportunities still have systemic limitations despite good-faith efforts. These include very short timelines, driven by budget cycle timelines which can mean short turn-around time from when grants are announced to when they close, disseminating information broadly to harder-to-reach networks and the barrier of the reimbursement-only model of grants. Some state and local level grantors have been able to maneuver the reimbursement-only model through cash-advance models with limited success based on assessments of the organization's risk, although some of the designs of these assessment models are rooted in the same systems that work against underrepresented farmers and ranchers, such as requiring an assessment of their business models.

WSDA collaborates with other state agencies; the Department of Commerce, Department of Health, Department of Ecology, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, the Puget Sound Partnership, and the Environmental Justice Council to implement the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act. WSDA is also shifting the lens of the agency work to Pro-Equity⁴⁰ and Anti-Racism⁴¹ (PEAR) approaches through Executive Order [22-02 - Equity in State Government](#) and Executive Order [22-04 - Implementing PEAR](#). Agencies are developing, embedding, and implementing PEAR strategies into their work through more equitable policies, activities, and actions.

WASHINGTON STATE FOOD POLICY FORUM

The Washington State Food Policy Forum was initially created by the Legislature through a budget proviso in 2016 and 2017 to help make meaningful [recommendations to policymakers](#) regarding ways of improving the food system in Washington. In 2020, the Washington State Legislature formally established the Forum in statute (RCW 89.50) and the Washington State Food Policy Forum committed in its Early Implementation Action Report to identify how actions and recommendations of the Forum to impact equitable outcomes for Washingtonians. In Spring 2021, the Forum developed and tested their [equity filter](#)⁴² which will be embedded into how the forum approaches their work. The Forum continues to use this filter as it develops recommendations for improvements to Washington's local food system, including forthcoming recommendations for improvements to the Farm Bill as it is negotiated and reauthorized in the coming year.

NATIONAL

There is also a broader national conversation around advancing racial equity. The USDA has begun prioritizing support for underrepresented farmers and ranchers after historic exclusionary practices. Recent national legislation, such as the [Agriculture Resilience Act](#) and the upcoming 2023 [Farm Bill](#), are calling attention to inequities within agriculture to prioritize better service for underrepresented farmers and ranchers.⁴³

⁴⁰ "Pro-Equity": The proactive way of doing equity work with the knowledge that we live in a society permeated by racism and bigotry, combat or control in every action (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

⁴¹ "Anti-racism": a process of actively identifying and opposing racism- rooted in action- taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural level (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

⁴² The filter was developed by the Forum's Equity Subcommittee, members include: Department of Health, LINC Foods, Northwest Harvest, WA State Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Conservation Commission, Washington State University, Representative Mary Dye, King Conservation District, Tilth Alliance, Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship, and the Farm Bureau. The filter questions were developed based on the following: The Forum's equity questions in its recent Early Implementation Action Report; GARE Racial Equity Toolkit; Northwest Harvest's equity filter; and the WA State Board of Health HIR guiding questions.

⁴³ Farmbill Law Center. Equity in Agricultural Production and Governance. From: <https://www.farmbilllaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Equity-Report.pdf>

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced up to \$50 million in cooperative agreements to support with climate-smart agriculture and forestry for historically underserved farmers⁴² and ranchers. Additionally, as part of selecting recipients for funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Conservation Innovation Grants, priority was given to projects benefiting historically underserved producers. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) invested nearly \$1 million in 2021 in risk management education and training programs to support historically underserved producers and small-scale producers.

USDA created an Equity Commission in February 2022 leadership team of 28 appointed members who have experience working with historically underrepresented communities and are committed to shaping policies that are more inclusive. In support of Executive Order 13985 *Advancing Racial Equity and Support to Underserved Communities*, they are developing data-driven and evidence-based approaches in building trust, reducing barriers, and increasing investments for those who need help the most. USDA is developing an Equity Action Plan that will advance equity at USDA and its programs. USDA has specific resources for minority and women farmers and ranchers [here](#) and offers programs supporting land conservation, production, processing, distribution and markets that can be found [here](#).

A challenge is that many of these more community-centered and pro-equity approaches to supporting underrepresented farmers and ranchers, have one-time or temporary funding, and policy priorities change depending on the election cycle. Inconsistent funding and support do not sustain the impact of the efforts and can dissolve trusting relationships with the stakeholders intended to benefit from programs or policy priorities.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP BASED IN EXPERIENCE NAVIGATING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

In spite of these systemic barriers, emergent leaders from within communities of underrepresented farmers and ranchers are generating ways to engage in agriculture with pursuit of equity and justice.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

There are countless examples of community organizations leading the way for WSDA and other agricultural resource providers in supporting underrepresented farmers and ranchers with pro-equity changes to the agricultural support system. These community-level efforts can be amplified through sustained, continued financial investment and genuine, supportive partnerships that build agency and support capacity within communities of farmers and ranchers.

Multiple underrepresented farmers and ranchers reported that they band together to share the limited resources they can access within the community networks they forge. One shared, *"since [I'm] in an incubator [farm] there's a shared arsenal of common tools."*

BIPOC COMMUNITIES BAND TOGETHER TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER DUE TO THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE EITHER FINANCIALLY OR SYSTEMICALLY, WHICH IS ALSO THE ROLE THE COLLECTIVE HELPS PLAY AS A "CONNECTOR."

CREATIVE APPROACHES TO INCREASE EQUITY IN ACCESS TO LAND, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, MARKETS, AND CAPITAL

Regional community and statewide organizations have developed creative solutions to work-around the challenges of finding farmland and maneuvering access to capital. A few examples include: utilizing land trusts, agriculture easements, farm transition planning programs and financial loans at the local level with zero-interest or low-interest directly to the farmers and ranchers.

Statewide, a number of programs are geared toward connecting farmers to land. Washington Farmland Trust's [Farm to Farmer program](#) helps farmers find the land opportunities they need to grow their businesses, and help landowners sell or lease their land to keep it in farming through personalized technical assistance to current and aspiring farmers, farming and non-farming landowners, veterans, real estate agents, and organizations looking to expand their incubator or agriculture park programs.

Another very effective approach being developed in some areas are farmer incubation programs that provide use of farmland, shared equipment, peer-to-peer connections, technical assistance from resource providers, and support accessing markets with shared sales and marketing, all integrated into a single beginning farmer program. Viva Farms in the Skagit Valley is a notable example. Their bilingual (Spanish/English) program is proving to be an effective pathway to entering farming for first generation farmers.

Building on that model in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. Viva Farms partnered with state agencies and local partners to utilize Community Development Block Grant funds in a one-time-funded program that allowed low-income, Latinx farmers to purchase land directly with access to capital and technical assistance to navigate language barriers and business model challenges. The loans could be repaid over 10 years to Community Action of Skagit County in other forms of capital like produce, wood, and hay.

While these examples do not solve all of the systemic barriers reported in farmer interviews, these examples of locally led projects are exploring responses to barriers experienced by underrepresented farmers and ranchers with creative and innovative approaches that are tailored to the needs of each region and community. These are models to support and learn from as we make investments and design approaches to increase equity and representation in Washington agriculture.

Please see Appendix C for a sampling of highlighted examples to learn from and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations expand upon WSDA learnings through the preparation of this report in relation to the specific tasks defined in proviso. While some of these recommendations focus on investments in actions WSDA can take, those recommendations may also be applied to other agencies and organizations that work to support farmers and ranchers in Washington.

Prioritize representation, inclusion, belonging, and centering the voices and experiences of underrepresented farmers and ranchers programs intended to benefit farmers and ranchers, including in all WSDA services.

- Fund programs which foster the community-led efforts of underrepresented farmers and ranchers, and which center their needs.
- Support policies, programs and regional efforts that prioritize inclusion and engagement of underrepresented farmers and ranchers in leadership positions such as boards, commissions, and advisory panels and in the development, implementation and enforcement of agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies and programs.
- Institutionalize policies and programs that require intentional engagement and solicitation of opinions of underrepresented farmers and ranchers, such as the Healthy Communities for All Act or building in standard requirements for grant proposals and applications that include budgets for community engagement and prioritization within work plans.
- Prioritize building stronger government-to-government working relationships with sovereign tribal nations who are federally and those that are not federally recognized.
- Expand the relationships of agencies, including WSDA, in regard to who is understood to be a stakeholder, taking special consideration to who has lobbying power and whose voices are underrepresented.

Prioritize and institutionalize efforts to increase language access and culturally informed service delivery that encompasses the diverse groups of underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington.

- Dedicate funding for language translation services on web pages, in printed resource materials, external communications, webinars, and prioritize hiring and retaining bilingual staff.
- Implement and prioritize policies requiring language access and cultural-inclusivity standards for agriculture resources, including but not limited to languages in Spanish, Hmong, Mien, Punjabi, Khmer, Urdu, Arabic, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, and some Eastern European dialects.
- Support efforts that increase local-level culturally informed resource providers who come from the same communities as underrepresented farmers and ranchers, who can help with technical assistance or connect underrepresented farmers and ranchers to resources.

Prioritize long-term relationship healing and building with underrepresented farmers and ranchers through active community engagement and frequent follow-through in communications.

- Dedicate time and resources toward cultural-inclusivity training and how to support communities that experience marginalization through a trauma-informed lens⁴⁵. Resources recommended:
 - o Soul Fire Farm's [Uprooting Racism training](#)
 - o Book: *Farming While Black*
 - o National Young Farmer Racial Equity [Toolkit](#)
- Continue working on building and implementing the WSDA Pro-Equity Anti-Racism strategic plan and embed it into all divisions.
- Support WSDA staff in exploring and taking ownership of their unique roles in supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and belonging, including administrative staff, procurement, contracting, policy, and each division.

Prioritize data collection and analysis that aligns with Pro-Equity and Anti-Racism efforts to ensure long term analysis of impact and continued goal setting.

- Prioritize resources for regular data analysis that include racial and gender demographics to assess impact and reach of programs or where resources need to be allocated to best support underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Incorporate racial and gender demographics as options on all license and certification applications and administrative paperwork to track metrics on impact and reach.
- Utilize demographic data to assess updates of programs and the percent of resources allocated to underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Partnering with underrepresented community leaders to ensure accurate, disaggregated, and consistent demographic data collection and sharing with other decision makers or regulatory agencies to increase positive outcomes for programs targeting underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Identify metrics to evaluate the impacts of programs, grants or initiatives that consider the longer-term return on investment- understanding that equity-focused efforts will take longer to see an impact than one or two typical grant cycles.

⁴⁵ Trauma-Informed approaches include the consideration of the lived experiences an underrepresented farmer or rancher may be carrying with them when WSDA interfaces with the community. A trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. CDC, 6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma-Informed Approach. From: https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

Support long-term funding for community organizations and farmer networks leading the way in supporting underrepresented farmers and ranchers

- Support and prioritize low-barrier funding opportunities for innovative solutions being led by farmers and ranchers at the local level, such as tool sharing networks and resource hubs.
- Prioritize intentional and equitable community contracting that gives opportunity to underrepresented farmers and ranchers and identifies creative solutions to work around statutory barriers of reimbursement-only grant models or rules around contracting with the lowest bidder on grant applications.

Prioritize resource allocation to support underrepresented farmers and ranchers in overcoming the common barriers and challenges identified in this report.

- Support funding allocation of grant opportunities at the local level to underrepresented farmers and ranchers, rather than passing through funds at the state level or organizations who don't represent underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Identify and support innovative ways of connecting underrepresented farmers and ranchers to land and protecting farmland, such as farmer-created small land trusts, creative land zoning, low-cost resources to improve land, and low-barrier applications with flexible ways of proving collateral or credit to obtain a loan.
- Support and foster coordination of inter-agency efforts to improve land access for underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Support further policy exploration concerning leasing of farmland, such as tenant protections for leasing land and addressing barriers created by short term leases.
- Support resource allocation toward infrastructure that helps mitigate climate change impacts and increase investments for underrepresented farmers and ranchers in obtaining climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Provide input and advocacy for the reauthorization of the 2023 Farm Bill and encourage the allocation of resources for programs and policies that support underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- Support and prioritize funding opportunities for community groups who are educating the next generation of underrepresented farmers and ranchers and supporting community building, cultural resiliency, and agriculture.

*IT IS IMPORTANT TO PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON THE NEEDS OF BIPOC COMMUNITIES AND INCLUDE WAYS TO ELIMINATE STRUCTURAL RACISM THAT HAS HISTORICALLY CAUSED TRAUMA, CREATED BARRIERS TO FOOD ACCESS, AND PROMOTED RESOURCES INADEQUATE TO CERTAIN AGES AND INCOMES.
– 2021 WSDA Food Systems Report*

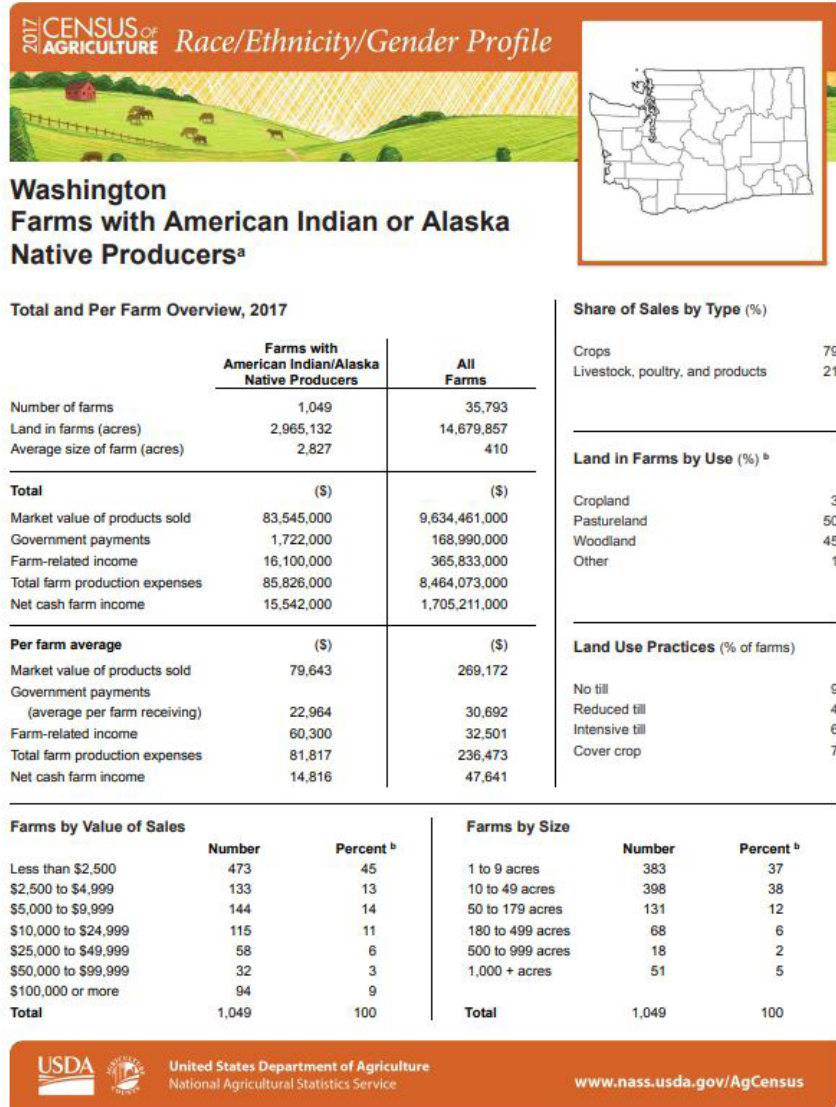
CONCLUSION

WSDA is thankful to have this opportunity to begin engagement and work on this important topic. Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers play important roles in agriculture in Washington state. They are finding creative ways to enter agriculture and build farming enterprises that benefit our local economies and communities – and are doing so while facing many significant challenges and barriers. WSDA hopes this report is a first step and an opening to a longer process of listening, learning, relationship building, and systems change that will be needed to address barriers and advance equitable inclusion and support for underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: 2017 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE RACE, EQUITY AND GENDER PROFILE

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE FULL REPORT](#)



APPENDIX B: RESEARCH TOOLS

Outreach to underrepresented farmers and ranchers consisted of solicitation either directly or through partner organizations who had existing relationships with underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

Interviews were 60-120 minutes and the staff conducting interviews utilized a template to create qualitative data.

INTERVIEW SHEET FOR FARMERS AND RANCHERS

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK FOR AGENCIES AND RESOURCE PROVIDERS

Agriculture system interviews included outreach, interview solicitation and a breakdown of questions related to the Proviso directly. An example below includes outreach to the Washington State Conservation Commission:

QUESTIONS FOR AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS	
PROVISO INQUIRY	QUESTIONS
"Evaluate related boards, commissions, and advisory panels to ensure inclusion of historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers"	The Proviso inquires about the relationship between diverse representation and boards, commissions, and advisory panels who have influence or authority within agriculture and farmland preservation. Does the organization work regularly with boards, commissions and advisory panels to guide program implementation, policy or priorities of the agency?
"Include historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers in the development, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies, and programs"	- Has the Organization made outreach efforts to engage Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers in the development, implementation and enforcement of conservation programs, policies, and regulations? - What have your barriers been with involving the community in your scope of work? - Are there success stories within the last 5 years of collaboration between these groups and Organization that resulted in the development of new policies, guidelines, ideas, relationships or programs?
"Consider ways to increase engagement in agricultural education and workforce development opportunities by communities who have been historically underrepresented in agriculture."	- Has the Organization participated in outreach around education and workforce development in the last 5 years? (If yes, was there sustained funding?) - Was there targeted outreach to underrepresented communities?
"Identify existing gaps and financial barriers to land ownership and obtaining equipment"	- What observations and barriers have you heard from Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers in regard to land use, land access and management of air, water, soil, habitats and farmland? - Does ownership or procurement of land intersect with barriers around conservation practices?
"Identify existing gaps and financial barriers to land ownership and obtaining equipment"	- What programs exist to support Underrepresented Farmers and Ranchers with land use and farmlands? Are they pilot projects with temporary funding? - Are there meaningful programs or shifts in priorities that the Organization would like to continue but lack capacity and funding?

APPENDIX C: HISTORICAL POLICY CONTEXT FOR LAND ACCESS AND GENERATIONAL WEALTH

Beginning in the era of Western expansion, when Washington was part of the Oregon Territory and was not yet a state, doctrines of Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal combined with policies such as Oregon Land Claim Donations and the Donation Land Claim Act to make land available to farmers who were willing to work the land -and who were white, male citizens. Non-white people and unmarried women were excluded from claiming land to own. This foundational land program was followed by a century of laws and policies relating to citizenship, immigration, and civil rights that defined who could own land, control finances, and inherit assets to build generational wealth.

Oregon Donation Land Claim Act and Donation Land Claim Acts: a foundation of race-based land access and ownership in Washington

Spurred by reports of abundance from the earliest European explorers, fur trappers, loggers, and hopeful farmers began colonizing the region that is now Washington State at the end of the 1700s. The number of settlers increased in the early 1800's, as migrants came West along the Oregon Trail. Waves of immigrants from Europe increased resource and population pressures in the East. Migrants were enticed westward by United States policies that encouraged settlement by granting squatters' rights of up to 640 acres to White, male citizens of the U.S. and their wives to settle and cultivate the land in the western territory. In 1850, the Oregon Donation Land Law⁴⁶ formalized these land claims in law and provided for subsequently arriving white male settlers to claim up to 320 acres for free, provided they settled and cultivated the land for at least four years⁴⁷. The law explicitly excluded Blacks and Hawaiians. but did allow claims from "half breed Indians" who were willing to reject traditional communal land use practices to become U.S. citizens. Subsequent extensions of the act continued to encourage settlers to make land claims, though for smaller acreages and, eventually, at a cost of \$1.25 per acre. The act encouraged white settlers to move into the region, making 1,070 claims⁴⁸. This policy remained in place, establishing a pattern of land ownership by exclusively white male citizens until it was replaced by the Homestead Act in 1862.

For a short period in early Washington history, accessing farmland by some Black Americans was possible. One notable example is the story of George Washington Bush⁴⁹. George Bush traveled the Oregon Trail with intentions to settle in the Willamette Valley, but he arrived to face exclusion laws that barred blacks from the region. Instead, in 1845, he settled north of the Columbia River instead, becoming one of the first farmers to settle in Washington and founding what is now Tumwater⁵⁰. However, in 1850, the Donation Land Claim Act was authorized which excluded Black people from claiming land, barring George Bush from owning the land his family had settled despite his important contributions to the economy and agriculture. It took the advocacy of white supporters in the region and an act of Congress for a specific exception to allow George Bush and his family to retain the same rights to their land as white settlers.

⁴⁶ Robbins, William G., "Oregon Donation Land Law", Oregon Encyclopedia.org, Oregon Historical Society, retrieved 12/3/2022,

https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/oregon_donation_land_act/#.Y4wMY3bMKUk

⁴⁷ HistoryLink.org Essay 9501, Margaret Riddle, "Donation Land Claim Act" Posted 8/09/2010, <https://www.historylink.org/File/9501>,

⁴⁸ Washington Donation Land Claims Index. Genealogical Forum of Oregon https://gfo.org/file_download/inline/d65adbb1-0d24-4e46-8cc1-076d37aa1fc5

⁴⁹ Millner, Darrell. "George Bush of Tumwater: Founder of the First American Colony on Puget Sound." Columbia Magazine. 4.8 (Winter 1994-1995): 14-19. From <https://www.washingtonhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/george-bush-tumwater.pdf>

⁵⁰ KUOW, "George Bush: The black pioneer who founded Tumwater", Feb. 11, 2022, <https://www.kuow.org/stories/george-bush-the-black-pioneer-who-founded-tumwater>

The Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln early during the Civil War, continued government encouragement of land claims by settler-farmers, transferring more than 270 million acres of fertile land to hopeful homesteaders^{51,52}. This act was more inclusive than the previous acts, inviting non-citizen immigrants intending to become citizens, single women, and formerly enslaved people who were over 21 years old to travel West and receive 160 acres of land at the cost of a small registration fee, for homesteading and actively utilizing land they occupied for five years. The Homestead Act, and subsequent variations of it, remained in effect in the mainland states until 1976, the same year the film "Rocky" was released. (The law extended 10 more years in Alaska.) In all, more than ten percent of all of the land in the United States was granted to individuals through this process⁵³, laying the foundation of land use and land ownership for generations to come.

INDIAN REMOVAL AND RELOCATION ACTS

The laws and policies supporting land distribution by the U.S. government were inextricably intertwined with a parallel set of U.S. Government Indian Acts and policies that dispossessed and forced removal of Native Americans from their lands. The specific term, "manifest destiny," was not coined until 1845, but it described a chauvinist belief present since the founding of the nation that the United States was divinely destined to expand from the original Eastern states across the entire continent in order to impose its exceptional values. John Quincy Adams summarized this belief that shaped U.S. laws, policies, and society, writing in 1811⁵⁴,

"The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs. For the common happiness of them all, for their peace and prosperity, I believe it is indispensable that they should be associated in one federal Union".

As European immigration to the Eastern U.S. intensified, President Andrew Jackson signed the **1830 Indian Removal Act**, which set a legal framework for the United States to displace Indians from tribal lands with a combination of treaties, land exchange, and forced relocation West of the Mississippi to make more land available for agriculture in the East⁵⁵. Weary from a century of pandemic deaths from European diseases and wars with colonizing forces, some tribes entered treaties with the United States that promised reserved lands or rights set aside for them in exchange for forfeiting the territories they had occupied from time immemorial. Tribes that did not agree to land exchanges or the terms of treaties that often nullified their standing as sovereign nations - instead positioning them as wards of the U.S. government, were violently forced to relocate. The brutal forced march of the Cherokee Nation from their homelands in what is now Georgia to what is now Oklahoma is an example. Between three and four thousand people died on what is known as the Trail of Tears.

⁵¹ Bureau of Land Management. U.S. Department of Interior. Official Federal Land Records. From <https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/default.aspx>

⁵² National Park Service. About the Homestead Act. From <https://www.nps.gov/home/learn/historyculture/abouthomesteadactlaw.htm>

⁵³ National Archives. The Homestead Act of 1862. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act#:~:text=The%20passage%20of%20the%20Federal,extension%20on%20claims%20in%20Alaska>

⁵⁴ National Archives, "To John Adams from John Quincy Adams, 31 August 1811", From <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-2020>

⁵⁵ United States Office of the Historian, Indian Treaties and the Removal Act of 1830, From <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/indian-treaties>

The process of removal of Indians from their own homelands and appropriating that land for settlement expanded into the territories of the West with the multiple Indian Appropriations Acts passed between 1851 and 1889. These laws moved Indian people onto reservations, ended the practice of treaties by determining all native people to be wards of the government, not independent nations, established federally run Indian boarding schools, and broke up tribal lands for private use, sale, or homesteader claims. U.S. citizenship was only available tribes and individual Indian people who accepted the division of tribal lands⁵⁶. Under these US Indian policies Native American farmers who managed land in a way that was determined to be “not optimal” by the United States Government, were removed and the land made available to someone else who would homestead.

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP POLICIES EXCLUDED ASIANS FROM LAND OWNERSHIP INTO THE 1960’S

The Black and Native American people were not the only groups who were legally prevented from retaining land and who experienced forceful removal. A series of “Alien Exclusion” laws, including the federal 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and Alien Land Laws in Washington state⁵⁷, targeted Asian immigrants and barred non-white immigrants from owning land in Washington, including requiring forfeiture of land owned prior to the law’s passage⁵⁸.

After relying on Chinese men for the labor needed to bring railroads to the west coast and support resource extraction of gold and timber, the federal government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which barred entry to Chinese people and explicitly prohibited them from becoming citizens. The law became permanent in 1902 and remained in place until 1943. Washington State’s constitution, ratified with statehood in 1889, explicitly reserved land ownership for citizens only. During this time, a series of riots against Chinese people in Seattle, Tacoma, and elsewhere throughout Washington violently drove people of Chinese heritage from the region.

To fill the labor gap, Japanese families were actively recruited to Washington. In addition to filling the labor jobs, many of the Japanese families in Washington established successful farms on leased land. By 1920, Japanese farmers supplied nearly 75 percent of the produce consumed in King County, including being the majority of farmers at Pike Place Market⁵⁹. Their success stirred envy from whites and led to the passage in 1921, of the Alien Land Bill with the purpose of preventing Japanese farmers from buying or leasing farmland. This bill also required Japanese people to forfeit their land to the government and criminalized engaging in businesses with Japanese people. An update to the statute prohibited land being held by American-born children of Japanese descent who were American citizens by birth, as the child was presumed to be holding the land in trust for their immigrant parents. The Washington law remained in effect until 1967.

⁵⁶ University of Maryland, University of Libraries, Research Guides. “Legislative Acts of Colonial Land Appropriation” From: <https://lib.guides.umd.edu/c.php?g=1261350&p=9246797>

⁵⁷ Caldbick John., History Link.org Essay2124, “Washington Governor Louis Hart Signs Stringent Alien Land Bill on March 8, 1921”. From <https://www.historylink.org/file/2124>

Aerial view of Puyallup Assembly Center, Washington, c. 1942. (2020, November 18). Densho Encyclopedia. Retrieved 10:20, December 5, 2022. From <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/enshopd-i224-00008-1/>.

⁵⁸ Grant, Nicole. White Supremacy and the Alien Land Laws of Washington State. Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project. 2008. From https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/alien_land_laws.htm

⁵⁹ Pike Place Market Foundation. Day of Remembrance: 80 years since Japanese American farmers were forcibly removed from Pike Place Market. From <https://pikeplacemarketfoundation.org/2022/02/23/day-of-remembrance/>

A generation later, in 1942, during World War II, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which immediately forced relocation of approximately 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese descent, including American citizens, into remote incarceration camps throughout the inland west. In the haste of relocation and the years of internment, Japanese Americans lost property in homes, farms, businesses and income valued at over \$4 billion (as calculated by Congress in 1993 dollars)⁶⁰. Upon returning to the west coast, daunted by the losses, many left farming. By 1960, the number of Japanese American farmers dropped to a quarter of their prewar presence⁶¹. At the turn of 20th century, there was only one Japanese American farmer selling produce at Pike Place Market.

Strategically, these naturalization and land laws of the U.S. and Washington allowed only white immigrants to naturalize which allowed the alien land laws to appear unbiased on paper to anyone unaware of the context driving them⁶². Anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese legislation and policies such as Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt in 1942 further blocked farmers with Japanese ancestry from maintaining agricultural businesses. During the years of incarceration, families lost homes, property, and income⁶³ - hindering farming operations and eroding the ability to build generational wealth that was available to others.

DISCRIMINATORY LAWS AND POLICIES LIMIT OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY GROUPS

For yet other groups of people, including Blacks, women, and LGBTQ+ people, the lack of equal rights and discriminatory policies at the federal, state, and local levels in housing, real estate, and lending limited access over time to resources needed to enter farming today. This includes policies of **racial segregation**⁶⁴, redlining based on race, discriminatory lending to black farmers by the USDA⁶⁵, practices that restricted financial independence for women who could be denied credit in their own names until 1974⁶⁶, and exclusion from the rights to common property that come with legally recognized marriages⁶⁷.

The specifics of experiences with exclusionary laws and policies throughout our history vary by group, but all reflect unequal access to opportunity. Combined, these policies created explicit divisions between who was able to obtain financing to purchase farmland and the equipment needed to farm and created unequal opportunities to grow financial capital through generations. The lingering impacts of these policies in Washington are reflected in the demographics of our farmer and rancher population today.

⁶⁰ National Archives. "Executive Order 9066: Resulting in Japanese-American incarceration (1942)" From: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9066>

⁶¹ Moorehouse, Lisa. "Farming Behind Barbed Wire" The Salt. National Public Radio Feb. 19, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/02/19/515822019/farming-behind-barbed-wire-japanese-americans-remember-wwii-incarceration>

⁶² Washington State Constitution. From: https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/alien_land_laws.htm#note10 Statute adopted in 1889 as Article Two, Section 33 of the Washington State Constitution

⁶³ National Archives. Executive Order 9066: Resulting in Japanese American Incarceration (1942), accessed November 2022 From: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9066>

⁶⁴ University of Washington. Race and Segregation in Washington Cities and Counties 1940 – 2020. Accessed November 2022 From: https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/race_segregation.shtml

⁶⁵ Politico. "Rampant Issues: Black Farmers and still left out at USDA" July 5, 2021, From <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/07/05/black-farmers-left-out-usda-497876>

⁶⁶ Equal Credit Opportunity Act, 1974. Federal Trade Commission. From: <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/statutes/equal-credit-opportunity-act>

⁶⁷ Stein, Alan J. "Marriage Equality and Gay Rights in Washington" History Link.org Essay 10255, From: <https://www.historylink.org/File/10255>

APPENDIX D: A SAMPLING OF COMMUNITY-BASED LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS AND RANCHERS

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

Haki means Justice in Swahili. [Haki Farmers collective](#) seeks to bolster and reincorporate traditional and inherently sustainable farming knowledge that is present in our migrant and indigenous communities. By holding close decolonization frameworks, Haki seeks to encourage people of color, including Indigenous peoples, Immigrants and Black peoples, to reclaim life-giving knowledge of truly sustainable farming and plant medicine creation. Within the Coast Salish territories they continue to build alongside those who also cherish their ancestral foodways as the place to heal the wounds of colonial displacement that has impacted our bodies, cultures and the Earth. The collective has built out a network of peer-to-peer learning, hosting community led workshops focusing in traditional foods and medicine, and youth programs focused on social, climate and food justice. They collaborate with other like-minded organizations/entities in the food system supporting Black, Brown, African, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and Communities who have experienced marginalization such as veterans, elders, members of LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities.

[Sisterland Farms](#) on the Olympia Peninsula hosts a variety of Farm School education and peer-to-peer learning opportunities since they first started in 2018, including sessions with the National Academy of Science, the Audubon Society, Port Angeles Public Schools, and the Port Angeles Farmers' Market's "Keepin' it Local" project. They also have an Online Barn Library, stocked with radical reading that is assembled by volunteers in the community that includes a roster of online courses and in-person sessions that prospective farmers and ranchers can RSVP to.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), Washington State University (WSU), and the [Washington State Tree Fruit Association \(WSTFA\)](#) host an Agricultural Leadership Program (ALP) that is a comprehensive bilingual training program designed to enhance leadership skills of farm supervisors and managers, by providing them with the knowledge and tools to effectively administer their tasks related to improving leadership skills such as emotional intelligence, communication, conflict resolution, delegating amongst other soft skills that could result in having a better work environment, safety, efficiency and economics, regulations, and others. This program also involves peer-to-peer mentorship to provide support and encouragement along the way."

[Wakulima USA](#) is a farming and food business cooperative that supports peer-to-peer agriculture, small business development and food sovereignty for low-income immigrants in the Puget Sound region. The cooperative currently includes 20 farmers from various countries in Africa who cultivate in Western Washington through their farming program. They offer a farming program that empowers people to harness their traditional foodways, modern farming techniques, and food innovation strategies to build successful businesses centered around healthy, sustainable, local farming and food production. Additionally, they have a youth program and mental health program that incorporates agriculture as a connector to wellness and fostering the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Wakulima's vision is to expand operations to a total of 20 acres. Wakulima is still in search of additional resources and land to build out their support for underrepresented farmers.

LAND-BASED FARM INCUBATION AND FARMER TRAINING PROGRAM

[Viva Farms](#) has a mission to empower aspiring and limited-resource farmers by providing bilingual training in holistic organic farming practices, as well as access to land, infrastructure, equipment, marketing, and capital.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Department of Commerce, Community Action of Skagit County, WSU Skagit County Extension and VIVA Farms worked to connect Latinx farmers to capital through a Community Development Block Grant Program. They provided Spanish speaking staff, outreach materials and a culturally informed approach to increase access to the economic resource. This one-time-funded program allowed low-income farmers to purchase farm infrastructure directly with access to capital and technical assistance to navigate language barriers and business model challenges. The loans could be repaid over 10 years to Community Action of Skagit County in other forms of capital like produce donated to food banks, firewood, and hay. This model allowed the farmers to repay their loans quickly and obtain farm infrastructure with fewer barriers. Learn more [here](#).

APPENDIX E: CROSS-CUTTING IMPACTS OF

UNDERREPRESENTATION: WAYS REPRESENTATION MATTERS

As the language of the proviso that guided this report alludes, representation within Washington's agriculture systems matters. The impacts are complex, and they influence and infuse the systemic barriers experienced by underrepresented farmers and ranchers.

- The inclusion of underrepresented farmers and ranchers in agriculture leadership roles, such as representation within boards, commissions and advisory panels is important because being included within leadership can influence the operations or decision-making within their scopes of work. This can include planning around outreach and community engagement, how resource materials are created, and what issues they will advocate for externally. Diverse representation from many lived experiences and perspectives, paired with intentional community engagement, can help improve outreach and increase access to support resources for underrepresented farmers and ranchers.
- The outreach, engagement and inclusion of underrepresented farmers and ranchers in the development, implementation and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies and programs are vital. When these system frameworks are being created, underrepresented farmers and ranchers historically have their concerns, barriers or needs drowned out among the larger population of well-represented farmers and ranchers. Additionally, historical marginalization, biases and politics have influenced who is able to provide input or express concern around unintended consequences of new laws, rules, and regulations. Input from underrepresented farmers and ranchers about things that may impact them fosters equitable, inclusive, and culturally informed engagement and support services.
- Intentional engagement and invitations to participate in agriculture education and workforce development opportunities for underrepresented farmers and ranchers can encourage more beginning farmers and ranchers from underrepresented communities to participate in farming. This can also help foster more diversity and culturally relevant information in agriculture education and provide equitable workforce development opportunities.

Historically, underrepresented farmers and ranchers have not had the same opportunity for social influence in the development, implementation and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, rules, regulations, policies, and programs. This is important to note because diverse perspectives and participation in the agriculture systems help drive the creation of programs and support resources that reflects the diversity of people - rather than one perspective and a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Of all the farmers interviewed, few had attended a meeting with a governmental organization such as their commodity commission or conservation district and only one farmer previously held a seat on a commodity board. These gaps in participation were reported by interviewees as limited times to participate, no remote options and not knowing when meetings were happening. Interviews with all of the organizations who represented farmers and ranchers reported the lack of diversity within key gatekeeping roles, such as boards, led to the development of technical assistance programs or grant resources that didn't target the underrepresented farmers who needed it most.

For example, multiple farmers brought up grant opportunities that were advertised as supporting underrepresented farmers and ranchers; yet the grant application was only available in English with complex legal language, and there weren't technical assistance options to get support in applying; the grant required the farmer to own the land they farmed, and to have upfront capital or access to credit since the grant provided reimbursement only at the end of the project period. These barriers in even accessing grants meant to help underrepresented farmers and ranchers highlight the need to have more representation of diverse farmers and ranchers in the creation and implementation of resources such as programs, policies or grants to reduce unintended consequences.

During interviews, Black, African American, and Asian farmers reported negative interactions with staff from various agencies and programs within the agricultural system that made the farmers feel unwelcome, contributing to distrust in the programs and leading to the assumption that "they weren't meant for them". When there is diversity within an organization that is representative of the populations an agency or organization serves, the peer-to-peer exposure to unique lived experiences, cultures and identities different from their own can help staff engage more effectively with the underrepresented farmer who is coming to WSDA needing resources. Providing technical assistance to an underrepresented farmer with background knowledge about their community or a general understanding of systemic barriers can help facilitate a trusting relationship with the agency.

Almost all the female and femme identifying farmers interviewed shared that accessing help at retail stores and not being taken seriously as a prospective buyer were challenges when they needed to purchase equipment or get help from their local level suppliers. Additionally, it was reported that the lack of diversity and representation even influences subtle things such as the design, production, and sales of agriculture products like clothing, tools, and seats on equipment that are tailored for larger masculine bodies which can create safety hazards for smaller bodies and increase risk for ergonomic or repetitive movement injuries. Two farmers who identify as Black and African American and Arabic shared their experiences in difficulty getting retailers to take them seriously when they tried to purchase new equipment such as a tractor and one shared about the blatant hate speech, they experienced trying to purchase animals and hay.

Unfortunately, these retailers were the only options available to access the resources they need. Interviews with organizations who represent underrepresented farmers and ranchers also expressed that the lack of diversity in agriculture generally has created an insulating effect where current products and resources are designed for the well-represented groups of farmers and ranchers, and the large agriculture businesses with resource and lobbying power.

In all the interviews with underrepresented farmers and ranchers, the topic of discrimination, marginalization and implicit bias came up as shared experiences. One farmer noted, *“as long as you have money you won’t be discriminated, but outside of business transactions is another story.”*

Of all the barriers experienced by farmers and ranchers that we know of, there is one common theme connecting them: *that community and community networks have been essential foundations to the success of farmers and ranchers since time immemorial*. This also means that community connection, inclusion, belonging⁶⁸, tenacity, and creativity are key components necessary to shift the dial toward equity for underrepresented farmers and ranchers in Washington.

Shared by a Latina farmer:

“Being a woman and being young I definitely experience barriers- [the white-owned businesses] won’t want to talk business with them and challenge [my] credibility, authority and knowledge - especially if I go to the warehouses and need to challenge an issue, I will be dismissed as a woman.”

⁶⁸ **“Belonging”**: Your well-being is considered and your ability to design and give meaning to society’s structures and institutions is realized. More than tolerating and respecting differences, belonging requires that all people are welcome with membership and agency in the society. Belonging is vital to have a thriving and engaged populace, which informs distributive and restorative decision-making. (Office of Financial Management Diversity, [Equity and Inclusion- Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#))

APPENDIX F: RESOURCES AND CONTINUED READING

To learn more about the history, experiences, and stories of underrepresented farmers and ranchers, please explore the following resources:

A History Bursting with Telling: Asian Americans in Washington State - 2001

The Asian American experience is part of this mosaic in which they came to Washington, struggled against discrimination, labored to earn their living, and created distinctive cultures and identities.

<https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Curriculum%20Packets/Asian%20Americans/Asian%20American%20Main.html>

Asians and Latinos Enter the Fields - 2010

Farm workers in Washington state.

https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/farmwk_ch4.htm

Assessing Latinx-Owned Farms' Need for Spanish-Language Advanced Business Training in King & Skagit Counties, Washington - 2021

Through in-depth interviews with Latinx farmers, community-based organizations, and advisors, Viva Farms, Ecotrust and Washington State University (WSU) Skagit County Extension assessed the need for intermediate and advanced bilingual (English/Spanish) business training support for farmers, catalogued existing programs and services aimed at Latinx Spanish-speaking farmers, and identified opportunities for additional support.

https://ecotrust.org/wp-content/uploads/Latinx-Farm-Business-Resiliency_FinalReport.pdf

Broken Promises: 4-H's LGBT+ Controversy - 2019

[Podcast] The 4-H program and USDA retracting LGTBQ+ policies in 2017.

<https://www.youngfarmers.org/2019/02/4h/>

Cannery Workers' and Farm Laborers' Union 1933-39: Their Strength in Unity - 2010

Filipino cannery unionism across three generations, 1930-1980s.

<https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/cwflu.htm>

Farm Debt Relief Changes Spur New Bias Controversy- 2022

Farmers of Color have created a class action lawsuit in order to receive the promised aid from the 1.9 trillion pandemic recovery funding, of which Black farmers were allocated a never received \$4 billion.

<https://www.capitalpress.com/>

Farm Walks: Education for Farmers, by Farmers - 2022

[podcast] Interviews of farmers supported by WSU and Dept. of Agriculture

<https://www.farmwalks.org/>

Filipino Cannery Workers' and Farm Laborers' Union - 2021

History of Filipino cannery workers waiting to leave for Alaska.

<https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/filipino-cannery-workers-and-farm-laborers-union.aspx>

Meet Maura, from Silva Family Farm - 2022

NABC Maura Silva's experience serving on the Puget Sound Food Hub Board. Meet Maura Silva, a small mixed berry farm that she runs with her family. Maura's life demonstrates hard work and resilience in the face of white supremacy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7rav4Ty4ck>

Plight of Washington's Hmong Farmers Underscores Disparities in US Agriculture - 2022

The power dynamic between white landowners and their Hmong farmland tenants is analyzed through the struggle to become landowners.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/plight-of-was-hmong-farmers-underscores-disparities-in-us-agriculture/>

Pike Place Market's Hmong Flower Farmers Adapt During the Coronavirus Pandemic - 2020

The story of resilience and perseverance of Hmong farmers is told.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/pike-place-markets-hmong-flower-farmers-adapt-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Raise the Flag High: Queer Farming in Rural America - 2015

The growing LGBT farming community and their resiliency.

<https://modernfarmer.com/2015/01/raise-flag-high-queer-farming-rural-america/>

The Faces of Small Farms - 2020

The need for food is a growing problem that is met by a dwindling population of farmers. Yet, the number of diverse, young farmers face obstacles to success on farms/agricultural projects that, historically, the majority of farmers did not have to face.

<https://magazine.wsu.edu/2020/10/31/the-faces-of-small-farms/>

These BIPOC-Owned Washington Farms Deliver CSA Boxes to Seattle - 2021

List of BIPOC-owned, local farmers who provide Community-supported agriculture (CSA) seasonal subscriptions.

<https://www.seattlemet.com/eat-and-drink/2021/04/bipoc-owned-washington-farms-deliver-to-seattle-csa-boxes>

This Rancher Believes Her Land Was Stolen from Native Americans. She's Making Amends - 2022

A story comes from Women's Work, a new podcast from environment reporter Ashley Ahearn that explores how women ranchers across the West are changing how we raise meat.

<https://www.kuow.org/stories/this-rancher-believes-her-land-was-stolen-from-native-americans-she-s-making-amends>

Timeline: Black Farmers and the USDA, 1920 to Present - 2021

An account of Black farmers' disparities from 1920 to the present.

<https://www.ewg.org/research/timeline-black-farmers-and-usda-1920-present>

100 Years Ago, Whites Drove Sikhs Out of Bellingham. Now Sikh Farmers Flourish - 2019

Spotlight on the growing Sikh farming community.

<https://kuow.org/stories/100-years-ago-whites-drove-sikhs-out-of-bellingham-now-sikh-farmers-flourish>

63 Years of Oyster Farming: Western Oyster's Jerry Yamashita - 2017

A telling of Jerry Yamashita's life and career as an Oyster Farmer.

<http://wsg.washington.edu/oysterstew/people/yamashita/yamashita.html>