



Farmland Protection and Land Access

This request will keep high-quality agricultural land in production and facilitate land access to historically underrepresented farmers and ranchers. Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) will enable conservation entities to purchase agricultural conservation easements on land secured through the Washington State Housing Finance Commission's new Farmland Protection and Affordability Investment Program (FarmPAI).

SCC request: \$2,000,000 | Governor's proposal: \$--

Why this request can't wait


- ▶ New farmland affordability tools, like FPLA, are necessary to increase agricultural land access and opportunity in Washington.
- ▶ Washington farmland is at risk. USDA Census of Agriculture data shows we lost 640,000 acres of farmland between 2002 and 2017.
- ▶ The bulk of Washington farmers are at or near retirement age. More than 70 percent of our retiring farmers have not identified a successor.
- ▶ Cost of land is the #1 barrier for young, beginning, and multi-generational farmers in starting or expanding their businesses.
- ▶ COVID-19 market trends are dramatically increasing the cost of farmland; some areas report increases of 20-50 percent year over year. High land prices limit farm business expansion and prevent the creation of new farm businesses.
- ▶ With FPLA, the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) – Office of Farmland Preservation will fill a gap in a multi-partner effort to conserve farmland and maintain the diversity of producers and products we need for a resilient food system.

How will partners work together to promote farmland preservation and access, and where does FPLA fit in the process?



What makes FPLA an important piece of Washington's farmland preservation strategy?

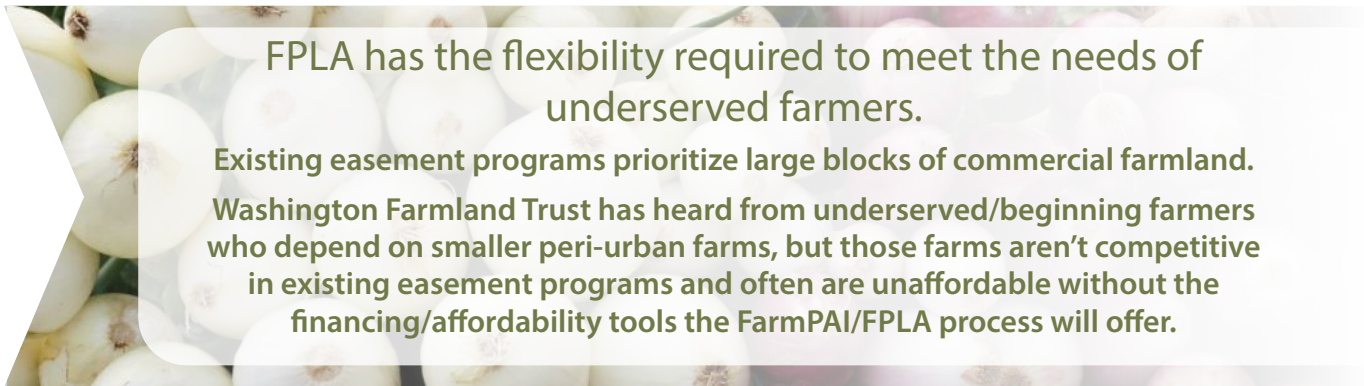
- ▶ **It's timely:** FPLA will maintain an open/rolling application process. Projects that come through FarmPAI may apply to FPLA at any time, rather than waiting for a set application period.
- ▶ **It's efficient:** The program will act swiftly to get successful easement applications under contract within a matter of months, allowing partners to preserve farmland that's at immediate risk of development.
- ▶ **It's accessible:** FPLA won't require matching funds to secure an easement. Removing this potential financial barrier makes preserving and purchasing farmland more obtainable.
- ▶ **It's flexible:** The program will accept and value easement applications for farms of all sizes, including small farms that are more typical around urban areas where there's limited open acreage.
- ▶ **It's equitable:** Once the easement is purchased and the farm is ready to sell at its agricultural value, priority will be given to buyers who represent historically underserved and/or first-time farmers and ranchers.



Pierce County lost a 70-acre farm to development because there wasn't a timely, efficient, and accessible strategy available to protect it.

Washington Farmland Trust tried to preserve the farm, but they were unable to respond opportunistically. They were constrained by public grant timelines and couldn't compete with offers from developers.

The farm was sold to a developer who constructed 16 homes on the property, forever losing prime agricultural land and wildlife habitat.



FPLA has the flexibility required to meet the needs of underserved farmers.

Existing easement programs prioritize large blocks of commercial farmland.

Washington Farmland Trust has heard from underserved/beginning farmers who depend on smaller peri-urban farms, but those farms aren't competitive in existing easement programs and often are unaffordable without the financing/affordability tools the FarmPAI/FPLA process will offer.

Contact

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