

**Chapter 15.04 RCW**  
**GENERAL PROVISIONS**

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**RCW 15.04.010 Definitions.** As used in this title except where otherwise defined:

"Department" means the department of agriculture.

"Director" means the director of agriculture.

"Person" includes any individual, firm, corporation, trust, association, cooperative, copartnership, society, any other organization of individuals, and any other business unit, device, or arrangement. [1961 c 11 § 15.04.010. Prior: (i) 1941 c 56 § 3; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 2828-4. (ii) 1941 c 56 § 4; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 2828-5. (iii) 1943 c 150 § 1, part; 1937 c 148 § 1, part; 1927 c 311 § 1, part; 1921 c 141 § 1, part; 1915 c 166 § 1, part; Rem. Supp. 1943 § 2839, part.]

**RCW 15.04.090 Lease of unnecessary lands to nonprofit groups—Funds.** The director of agriculture may, at his or her discretion, for a period of not to exceed ten years, lease state lands which are now or may hereafter be, under his or her direction and control, the retention of which he or her [she] deems unnecessary for present state purposes or needs, to any nonprofit group or organization having educational, agricultural, or youth development purposes. Such leases shall be upon such terms as the director deems beneficial to the state. All rental funds received by the director under the provisions of this section shall be deposited in the fair fund created under RCW

15.76.115. [2010 c 8 § 6002; 1998 c 345 § 1; 1961 c 11 § 15.04.090.  
Prior: 1953 c 119 § 1.]

**Severability—1998 c 345:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1998 c 345 § 14.]

**Effective date—Contingent effective date—1998 c 345:** "(1) Sections 1 through 9, and \*16 of this act are necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and take effect immediately [April 3, 1998].

(2) Sections 10 through 12 of this act take effect July 1, 2001, if the repeal of RCW 67.16.100, 67.16.105, and 67.16.170 under section 9 of this act becomes effective." [1998 c 345 § 15.]

**\*Reviser's note:** Section 16 of this act was vetoed by the governor.

**RCW 15.04.110 Control of predatory birds.** The director of the state department of agriculture may control birds which he or she determines to be injurious to agriculture, and for this purpose enter into written agreements with the federal and state governments, political subdivisions and agencies of such governments, political subdivisions and agencies of this state including counties, municipal corporations and associations and individuals, when such cooperation will implement the control of predatory birds injurious to agriculture. [2010 c 8 § 6003; 1961 c 247 § 1.]

**RCW 15.04.120 Control of predatory birds—Expenditures and contracts.** For the purpose of carrying out the provisions of RCW 15.04.110 the director may make expenditures and contract for personal services, control materials and equipment as required to carry out such predatory bird control functions. [1961 c 247 § 2.]

**RCW 15.04.150 Berry harvesting by youthful workers—Legislative finding.** The legislature finds that the crops of berry growers in the state are imperiled by a recent change in the federal law relating to youthful agricultural workers. Since the berry harvest season is so short that few migrant agricultural workers find the trip to this state to pick berries worth the trouble, the long-established use of younger pickers must be permitted to the extent where such employment will not interfere with interstate commerce and the federal law. Further, the legislature finds that such employment is healthful, a good indoctrination for youth in the work ethic and the role of agriculture in society, and an opportunity youths welcome to earn extra spending money. [1975 1st ex.s. c 238 § 1.]

**RCW 15.04.160 Berry harvesting by youthful workers—Authorized—Restrictions.** (1) An employee engaged to pick berries in this state outside of school hours for the school district where such employee is living while so employed may be less than twelve years of age:

PROVIDED, That (a) the employee is employed with the consent of his or her parent or person standing in the place of his or her parent, (b) the berries are for sale within the state only, and are not to be shipped out of the state in any form; (c) the secretary of agriculture or his or her designated representative has certified that there are not sufficient workers available in the immediate area to harvest the crop without such youthful employees, and (d) all employees of any employer engaging youthful employees are paid at the same rate for picking berries.

(2) Each basket, package, or other container containing berries or berry products picked by an employee under twelve years of age shall be distinctively marked so as to insure that the berries do not enter interstate commerce: PROVIDED HOWEVER, That nothing in RCW 15.04.150 and 15.04.160 shall apply to employers who are exempt from the federal fair labor standards act. [2010 c 8 § 6004; 1975 1st ex.s. c 238 § 2.]

**RCW 15.04.200 Agricultural development or trade promotion and promotional hosting—Expenditures, approval by commodity commission—Exemption from housing requirements.** (1) Under the authority of Article VIII of the state Constitution as amended, agricultural commodity commission expenditures for agricultural development or trade promotion and promotional hosting by an agricultural commodities commission under chapters 15.24, 15.28, 15.44, 15.65, 15.66, 15.88, 15.89, 15.115, and 16.67 RCW shall be pursuant to specific budget items as approved by the agricultural commodity commission at the annual public hearings on the agricultural commodity commission budget.

(2) Agricultural commodity commissions shall adopt rules governing promotional hosting expenditures by agricultural commodity commission employees, agents or commissioners. The rules shall identify officials and agents authorized to make expenditures and the objectives of the expenditures. Individual agricultural commodity commission commissioners shall make promotional hosting expenditures, or seek reimbursements for these expenditures, only in those instances where the expenditures have been approved by the agricultural commodity commission. All payments and reimbursements shall be identified and supported on vouchers.

(3) Agricultural commodity commissions shall be exempt from the requirements of RCW 43.01.090 and 43.19.500 and chapter 43.82 RCW. [2009 c 33 § 33; 2006 c 330 § 24; 1987 c 452 § 16; 1986 c 203 § 24; 1985 c 26 § 1.]

**Construction—2006 c 330:** See RCW 15.89.900.

**Construction—Effective dates—1987 c 452:** See RCW 15.88.900 and 15.88.901.

**Effective date—Contingency—1985 c 26:** "This act shall take effect January 1, 1986, if the proposed amendment to Article VIII, of the state Constitution authorizing agricultural commodity assessments for agricultural development or trade promotion and promotional hosting to be deemed a public use for a public purpose is validly submitted to and is approved and ratified by the voters at a general election held in November 1985. If the proposed amendment is not so

approved and ratified, this act shall be null and void in its entirety." [1985 c 26 § 2.] The proposed constitutional amendment was approved by the voters on November 5, 1985. See Article VIII, section 11 of the state Constitution.

**RCW 15.04.300 Guide to state and federal programs of assistance to farm families.** The department of agriculture is authorized to develop, in cooperation with Washington State University and other state agencies, an informational guide to programs offered by state and federal agencies which would be of assistance to farm families. The informational guide shall be made available to farmers and ranchers through county extension offices, farm organizations, and other appropriate means. [1987 c 393 § 26.]

**RCW 15.04.400 Findings—Department's duty to promote agriculture, protect public health and welfare.** The history, economy, culture, and the future of Washington state to a large degree all involve agriculture, which is vital to the economic well-being of the state. The legislature finds that farmers and ranchers are responsible stewards of the land, but are increasingly subjected to complaints and unwarranted restrictions that encourage, and even force, the premature removal of lands from agricultural uses.

The legislature further finds that it is now in the overriding public interest that support for agriculture be clearly expressed and that adequate protection be given to agricultural lands, uses, activities, and operations.

The legislature further finds that the department of agriculture has a duty to promote and protect agriculture and its dependent rural community in Washington state however, the duty shall not be construed as to diminish the responsibility of the department to fully carry out its assigned regulatory responsibilities to protect the public health and welfare. [1994 c 46 § 9; 1991 c 280 § 1.]

**Effective date—1994 c 46:** See note following RCW 15.58.070.

**RCW 15.04.402 Department to advance private sector, economic well-being of agricultural industry.** The department shall seek to enhance, protect, and perpetuate the ability of the private sector to produce food and fiber. Additionally, the department shall seek, consistent with its regulatory responsibilities, to maintain the economic well-being of the agricultural industry and its dependent rural community in Washington state. [1994 c 46 § 10; 1991 c 280 § 2.]

**Effective date—1994 c 46:** See note following RCW 15.58.070.

**RCW 15.04.410 Declarations of "Washington state grown"—Restrictions—Violations unlawful—Application of consumer protection act.** (1) Before being offered for retail sale in this state, any agricultural commodity, defined under RCW 15.66.010, that was grown or raised in this state may be advertised, labeled, described, sold, marked, or otherwise held out, with the words "Washington state

grown," or other similar language indicating that the product is from Washington state grown or raised agricultural commodities.

(2) An agricultural commodity that was not grown or raised in this state and packages of that product shall not be advertised, labeled, described, sold, marked, or otherwise held out as "Washington state grown," or in any way as to imply that such product is a Washington state grown or raised agricultural commodity.

(3) It is unlawful for any person to violate this section.

(4) The legislature finds that the practices covered by this section are matters vitally affecting the public interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW. Violations of this section are not reasonable in relation to the development and preservation of business. A violation of this section is an unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of competition for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act, chapter 19.86 RCW. [1995 c 97 § 1.]

#### **RCW 15.04.415 Information on product country of origin—Findings**

**—Use of placards.** (1) The legislature finds that it is a common practice for consumers to be provided information as to the country [of] origin for many products available to them for purchase. The legislature finds that consumers have a right to know the origin of the fresh fruits and vegetables being offered to them at retail sale. The legislature finds that there is value to the consumer being able to make an informed buying decision as to whether the fresh fruit or vegetable was produced under standards and conditions required in the United States. Further, the legislature finds that consumers should be given the ability to make an informed choice to buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are grown in Washington state as a means of supporting the economy of the state.

(2) Stores or other businesses offering fresh fruit and vegetables for retail sale to consumers shall place a placard on the bin, shelf, or other location the product is displayed that informs the consumer where the fruit or vegetable was grown if it was grown in the United States or grown in Washington. The placard shall indicate that the product was either "Grown in United States" or "Grown in Washington." Placards are not required if (a) the product was grown outside of the United States, or (b) each item in the bin, shelf, or other location contains a sticker or label that indicates where the fruit or vegetable product was grown. [2002 c 40 § 1.]

#### **RCW 15.04.420 Compost reimbursement program—Eligibility—**

**Application form—Limitations on distribution of funds—Report to the legislature.** (1) (a) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department must establish and implement a compost reimbursement program to reimburse farming operations in the state for purchasing and using compost products that were not generated by the farming operation, including transportation, spreading equipment, labor, fuel, and maintenance costs associated with spreading equipment. The grant reimbursements under the program begin July 1, 2023.

(b) For the purposes of this program, "farming operation" means: A commercial agricultural, silvicultural, or aquacultural facility or pursuit, including the care and production of livestock and livestock

products, poultry and poultry products, apiary products, and plant and animal production for nonfood uses; the planting, cultivating, harvesting, and processing of crops; and the farming or ranching of any plant or animal species in a controlled salt, brackish, or freshwater environment.

(2) To be eligible to participate in the reimbursement program, a farming operation must complete an eligibility review with the department prior to transporting or applying any compost products for which reimbursement is sought under this section. The purpose of the review is for the department to ensure that the proposed transport and application of compost products is consistent with the department's agricultural pest control rules established under chapter 17.24 RCW. A farming operation must also verify that it will allow soil sampling to be conducted by the department upon request before compost application and until at least 10 years after the last grant funding is used by the farming operation, as necessary to establish a baseline of soil quality and carbon storage and for subsequent department evaluations to assist the department's reporting requirements under subsection (8) of this section.

(3) The department must create a form for eligible farming operations to apply for cost reimbursement for costs from purchasing and using compost from facilities with solid waste handling permits, including transportation, equipment, spreading, and labor costs. All applications for cost reimbursement must be submitted on the form along with invoices, receipts, or other documentation acceptable to the department of the costs of purchasing and using compost products for which the applicant is requesting reimbursement, as well as a brief description of what each purchased item will be used for. The department may request that an applicant provide information to verify the source, size, sale weight, or amount of compost products purchased and the cost of transportation, equipment, spreading, and labor. The applicant must also declare that it is not seeking reimbursement for purchase or labor costs for:

(a) Its own compost products; or

(b) Compost products that it has transferred, or intends to transfer, to another individual or entity, whether or not for compensation.

(4) A farming operation may submit only one application per fiscal year in which the program is in effect for purchases made and usage costs incurred during the fiscal year that begins on July 1st and ends on June 30th. Applications for reimbursement must be filed before the end of the fiscal year in which purchases were made and usage costs incurred.

(5) The department must distribute reimbursement funds, subject to the following limitations:

(a) A farming operation is not eligible to receive reimbursement if the farming operation's application was not found eligible for reimbursement by the department under subsection (2) of this section prior to the transport or use of compost;

(b) A farming operation is not eligible to receive reimbursement for more than 50 percent of the costs it incurs each fiscal year for the purchase and use of compost products, including transportation, equipment, spreading, and labor costs;

(c) A farming operation is not eligible to receive more than \$10,000 per fiscal year;

(d) A farming operation is not eligible to receive reimbursement for its own compost products or compost products that it has

transferred, or intends to transfer, to another individual or entity, whether or not for compensation; and

(e) A farming operation is not eligible to receive reimbursement for compost products that were not purchased from a facility with a solid waste handling permit.

(6) The applicant shall indemnify and hold harmless the state and its officers, agents, and employees from all claims arising out of or resulting from the compost products purchased that are subject to the compost reimbursement program under this section.

(7) There is established within the department a compost reimbursement program manager position. The compost reimbursement program manager must possess knowledge and expertise in the area of program management necessary to carry out the duties of the position, which are to:

(a) Facilitate the division and distribution of available costs for reimbursement; and

(b) Manage the day-to-day coordination of the compost reimbursement program.

(8) In compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department must submit an annual report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 15th of each year of the program in which grants have been issued or completed. The report must include:

(a) The amount of compost for which reimbursement was sought under the program;

(b) The qualitative or quantitative effects of the program on soil quality and carbon storage; and

(c) A periodically updated evaluation of the benefits and costs to the state of expanding or furthering the strategies promoted in the program. [2022 c 180 § 502.]

**Findings—Intent—Scope of authority of chapter 180, Laws of 2022**  
**—2022 c 180:** See notes following RCW 70A.205.007.