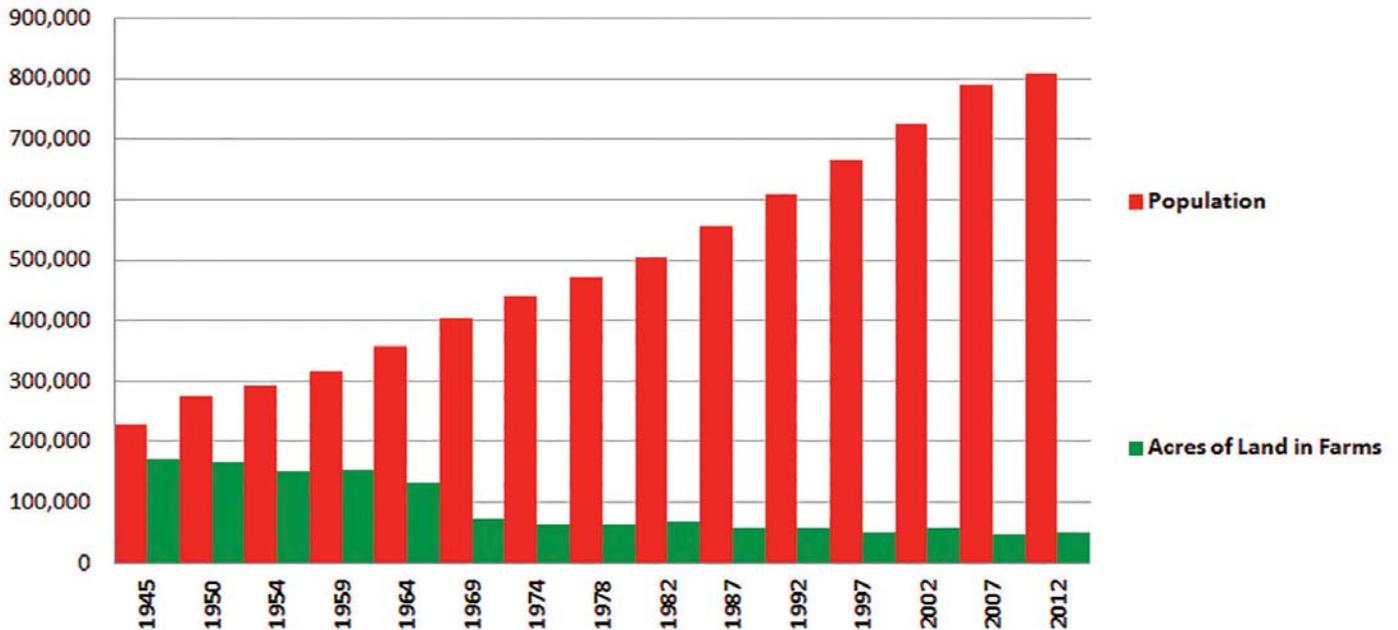


Pierce County Environmental Health 2014



Land and Food Land in Farms and Population



Data Source: United States Department of Agriculture 2012 Census of Agriculture Census of Agriculture and U.S. Census.

Pierce County land in farms has decreased to less than **1/3** of 1945 land, while population has increased more than **3 times** since 1945.

WHY CARE?

Benefits

About 1% of commercial farms in Pierce County are certified organic. About 6,000 acres of farm land were chemically treated in 2012, down from about 7,000 in 2007.¹ Local organic, Salmon-Safe, and other sustainable land management practices help:

- Improve water quality by reducing polluted storm water runoff.
- Decrease some food supply transportation impacts, such as vehicle emissions.

Human health impacts

- Well-managed agricultural lands can contribute to healthier drinking water, improved air quality,

productive green spaces, scenic relief, and a greater sense of place.²

- Pesticides can cause cancer, harm our nervous system, and disrupt our hormones. Some are also “obesogens,” that can contribute to weight gain and obesity.³
- Local farming helps ensure production of and access to fresher, safer food supplies. Food may be less processed and have fewer additives when sold closer to market.⁴
- Community Supported Agriculture members say they eat more vegetables.^{2, 5}

Who's most vulnerable?

- Farmers experiencing high land prices and taxes,

limited access to capital, and high water, power, and other costs that limit their viability.⁶

Economic impacts

Farms in Pierce County generated over \$90 million of agricultural products in 2012, up from over \$83 million in 2007.⁷

- For every \$100 spent at a farmers' market, about \$62 is re-spent locally.⁸
- Agricultural lands provide an estimated \$3,500 per acre in ecosystem services: food production, erosion retention, climate regulation, pollination, nutrient cycling, aesthetic value, and more.⁹
- Farmlands generate about twice as much public revenues as public costs. In comparison, residential areas generally cost the public 20% more than the revenues they generate for the public.¹⁰

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Policy actions

In 1970 Washington State adopted the Open Space Taxation Act to conserve adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber, and forest crops, and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for economic and social well-being.¹¹

- In 2011 more family farms became eligible for open space designation and tax relief.¹²

In 1999 Pierce County created Pierce Conservation Futures to conserve agricultural and farm lands, open space, wetlands, habitat, timber and other lands by buying land and development rights.¹³

In 2007 Pierce County adopted a voluntary Transfer and Purchase of Development Rights Program which helps farmland owners receive a financial return, conserve farmland, and direct growth into urban areas.

- Federal Farm Bills help fund farmers markets, organic agriculture, beginning farmers, and other local food programs, and SNAP (food stamp) benefits. The 2014 Farm Bill cut food stamp benefits, but helps make it easier to use them at farmers' markets and through Consumer Supported Agriculture.¹⁴

Personal actions

- Grow food in your garden, planters, community gardens, and other places!
- Support your local farmer:
 - o Buy from local farm stands, farmers' markets, and Community Supported Agriculture. Find out what is in season and where you can get it at www.puget-soundfresh.org or with their free mobile app.
 - o Ask for local farm products at supermarkets, restaurants, schools, wherever you eat and buy food.



Puyallup Valley Farmland

- Get involved in local land use planning, including comprehensive plan updates. Share your concerns, values, and vision with your planning commission and elected officials.
- Support sustainable food and farming policies. Find out more at www.wsffn.org or (360) 336-9694.
- Find out more about farming in Pierce County at www.piercecountywa.org/farming or (253) 798-2616.

More than 500 acres of farmland have been conserved by Pierce County, Pierce Conservation District, Washington State Wildlife and Recreation Program, Puget Consumer Coop Farmland Trust, Forterra, and others from 2008 to 2013.

- 1 United States Department of Agriculture 2012 Census of Agriculture, County Data, Fertilizers and Chemicals Applied: 2012 and 2007.
- 2 WSU Extension Small Farms Team; A Primer on Community Food Systems: Linking Food, Nutrition and Agriculture, Cornell University.
- 3 Obesogens: An Environmental Link to Obesity, Environmental Health Perspectives, February 2012. US EPA Pesticides: Health and Safety, www.epa.gov/opp00001/health/, May 2014.
- 4 Feeding the Interest, Scottish Consumer Council, 2004.
- 5 Local Food Consumption and Rural Public Health, Rural Roads, September 2006.
- 6 Preserving Farmland and Farmers: Pierce County Agriculture Strategic Plan, Pierce County, January 2006.
- 7 Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Including Direct Sales: 2012–2007, U.S. Department of Agriculture, May 2014.
- 8 Why Local Linkages Matter: Findings from the Local Food Economy Study, Sustainable Seattle, 2008.
- 9 The Puyallup River Watershed: An Ecological Economic Characterization, Earth Economics, 2011.
- 10 Farmland Information Fact Sheet: Cost of Community Services, American Farmland Trust, August 2006.
- 11 Revised Code of Washington 84.34.010.
- 12 Revised Code of Washington 84.34.020.
- 13 Pierce County Ordinance No. 2012-82s.
- 14 2014 Farm Bill Summary, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network, May 2014.