

Building Support for Small Farms and Sustainable Agriculture:

Partnerships Between Community-Based Organizations

Bonnie Rice, coordinator
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network
Chris Feise, director
Washington State University

In the past year, an exciting new partnership has been formed between Washington's land-grant university, Washington State University (WSU), and the Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network ("the Network"), a grassroots network of farmers, non-profit organizations, and businesses advocating for small farms and sustainable agriculture in Washington State. In late 1998, a groundbreaking "Letter of Mutual Commitment" was signed by the two groups to increase support for small farms and sustainable agriculture at WSU - the mark of a new era in communication among small farmers and community organizations and WSU. The partnership is currently developing a statewide Small Farm Program and other initiatives.

The Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network has also been working with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to increase its awareness and support of small farms and sustainable agriculture. In 1998, a Sustainable Agriculture Program was created at WSDA as a result of collaborative work among the Network, the EPA, and WSDA.

These initiatives between grassroots organizations and institutions have attracted interest from organizations and institutions in several other states that are also working to create more institutional support for small farms and sustainable agriculture, and they will be used as case studies in upcoming seminars on creating institutional change.