

March 2020



Dear Grower/Food Producer/Market Buyer,

Given our current situation with the coronavirus, there is a need and an opportunity to provide and showcase what a resilient local food system can look like. Working with Northwest Agricultural Business Center and Whidbey Island Grown, we are **creating a Farmers Cooperative**. We believe these are two steps we can take immediately: 1) collaborate

to form a **food hub**, and 2) establish an **aggregation and distribution site** for wholesale orders, as well as a direct to consumer orders.

As we all struggle to find our way through this confusing and difficult time, we see opportunities: chefs and restaurants are adapting by creating value added product; there is consumer demand, and in turn chefs and restaurants can still buy local products; farmers are seeing a spike in demand, but during this hunger gap season many do not have a large variety or volume. Farm stands are ready-made locations to pick up groceries and practice social distancing, with good communication and sanitary practices, of course. With the support provided by NABC and Whidbey Island Grown, we will be establishing an online ordering process. (Please take a look at the Kitsap Fresh [kitsapfresh.org](http://kitsapfresh.org) website as a model). We are taking big steps very quickly and we're bound to have a few bumps, but we can work through those.

If you are a farmer/grower, chef, producer, here are our immediate needs:

- USDA meat
- vegetables, seeds, herbs
- dairy products
- value added products (breads, jams, dressings, ferments, etc)
- walk-in refrigerator/freezer with space for aggregation of products (south and north)
- spare barn or warehouse space (south and north)
- refrigerated truck

(We cannot accept alcohol at this point but we'll work on it.) Heads up — we want to make sure your farm brand is promoted, but we also want you to identify with Whidbey Island Grown. We are **currently ordering twist ties** for produce bunches, so if you need them, order now.

We plan to have customers from Day One so we need to get this right.

Please reach out to us in order to get more details, and **get your name on the list** so we can start supplying product and keep our local food system strong and healthy during these tough times!

Contact [foodhub@whidbeyislandgrown.com](mailto:foodhub@whidbeyislandgrown.com) or call Lee Fritsch (360) 929-1843.

Regards,

your team at Whidbey Island Grown