

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

Washington's Agricultural Commodity Commissions: An assessment of effectiveness

Rich soils, diverse climates and large-scale irrigation all contribute to Washington's robust and productive agricultural sector. Agriculture comprises roughly 13 percent of the state's overall economy, and ranks first or second in the U.S. for production of 19 commodities, including apples, stone fruits, potatoes, onions and forest products. Agriculture generates income and employment on farms in all 39 counties, serving as an economic pillar of many rural communities.

Washington has 21 commodity commissions that each represent a key sector of the state's agricultural economy. The commissions are primarily engaged in activities related to marketing and research. Compulsory producer fees, based on production, fund the commissions and their programs. Between them, the 21 commissions collect between \$40 million and \$50 million annually from fee assessments to fund their programs.

Commodity commissions are considered state agencies, and are run by boards of elected or appointed members. The director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture (Agriculture) or someone he appoints serves on each of the 21 boards. Thirteen commissions were established through marketing orders issued by the director of Agriculture. The Legislature created and codified the remaining eight.

Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will assess the benefits Washington's agricultural commodity commissions provide to the state's agricultural industry, based on the results of their programs and the perspectives of the producers whose fees fund them. The audit will also identify opportunities to increase the commissions' effectiveness.

The audit will answer the following questions:

- To what extent do Washington's agricultural commodity commissions benefit the state's producers and its agricultural industry?
- What opportunities exist to enhance the effectiveness of the state's agricultural commodity commissions?



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