



## King County

**Ron Sims**

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May 13, 2005

Dear Supporter of Local Farms and Healthy Foods:

A group of citizens and representatives of organizations is beginning the process of forming a Seattle/King County Food Policy Council. I hope that you will consider joining their efforts. Washington State University King County Extension is coordinating this effort. A Food Policy Council can convey new insight to local food policy issues by bringing a broad range of interests together. A Food Policy Council is about making connections between consumers and the producers. For example, improving what our children eat at school and ensuring that area farmers can produce a local supply of fresh, healthy, and safe food. Food Policy Councils have already been created in several communities including Portland, Oregon.

In Washington State, the number of people who go hungry or who face limited access to food has exceeded national averages for the past eight years. Obesity, especially troubling in children, has risen to epidemic proportions and brings with it a host of preventable health problems including diabetes. At the same time, the number of food bank clients in King County has increased by 37 percent since 2000. All this while our region is blessed with some of the most fertile farmland in the country.

Public Health-Seattle & King County, in conjunction with the King County Board of Health and the University of Washington School of Public Health, is focusing coordinated efforts on new activities to prevent obesity in King County. Work groups have begun formulating policy recommendations and action steps that make it easier for King County residents to choose healthier foods and to be more physically active. A Food Policy Council that will take a system-wide approach to examining local food supply and demand would be a helpful for the new Food & Nutrition Workgroup.

King County has preserved a significant amount of farmland in the past twenty years and has successfully stemmed the tide of conversion of these lands to other uses. Further, King County is now making real progress in helping farmers stay in business. We know that preserving farmland and farming requires dedication and commitment. We're continually looking for new and innovative ways to preserve farming and the supply of locally grown food products in our region, in collaboration with the King County Agriculture Commission. Farm businesses and support systems are disappearing. This creates pressure on rural communities to look for alternatives.

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Our region is grappling with these serious issues in a variety of ways. A Food Policy Council will bring together the voices from farms, food banks, health and nutrition, as well as the food industry, land use advocates, environmentalists, and local government. While food is a basic human need, locally grown, healthy food is paramount to improving the health of our region. It is time to take a coordinated approach to creating policies that will ensure all our citizens have healthy food to eat and that the supply sufficiently meets the needs of our community.

To learn more about the Food Policy Council in King County, please contact Sylvia Kantor, Extension Educator, at 206-205-3131, or via e-mail, at [sylvia.kantor@metrokc.gov](mailto:sylvia.kantor@metrokc.gov). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Sims". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "R" and a trailing flourish.

Ron Sims  
King County Executive