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[Food to Bank On](#)

September 16, 2010



Shiitake Pride

Check out Sustainable Connections at the Washington Young Farmer Mixer.

[Food to Bank On provides support to beginning farmers](#)

Bellingham, WA – Applications are now available for the 2011 Food to Bank On, a Sustainable Connections project that connects beginning sustainable farmers with training, mentors and market support while providing fresh high-quality food to Whatcom's hungry. The Food To Bank On program provides farmers with less than three years experience with a consistent source of income at market rates, and helps them learn the intricacies of seasonal production and delivery. Twenty-seven farmers have participated in the three-year program.

Participants also gain business training, farmer-mentors, an educational stipend, marketing assistance and are paid market rates to deliver thousands of pounds of fresh produce to local food banks. This training provides a foundation to build their business through relationships with retailers and restaurants, and seasoned area farmers.

These fledgling farmer-run businesses offer products ranging from produce to medicinal herbs, mushrooms to eggs, reflecting the goal of diversifying locally-available agricultural products. In 2009, Food To Bank On farms delivered 5,000 lbs of food worth over \$9,000 to area food banks, soup kitchens, shelters and social service agencies.

“The business planning series was a huge help to me,” said Alex Winstead of Cascadia Mushrooms, a 3rd year Food to Bank On farmer. “The skills I learned have already been put to good use in applying to finance the expansion at my farm.”

Food To Bank On (FTBO) was founded in 2003 by the Community Food Co-op’s Farm Fund in cooperation with the local nonprofit Sustainable Connections, who now administers the program as its permanent home.

2011 Food to Bank On applications are due November 1 and are available at <http://sustainableconnections.org/foodfarming/FTBO>. For more information contact Sara Southerland at sara@sconnect.org.