

FARM AD-HOC COMMITTEE

Committee Charge and Near-Term Priorities Discussion

Mary Cheh, FARM Chair
Councilmember, District of Columbia

November 13, 2020

Committee Charge

From Certified Resolution R37-2020:

The Board endorses the establishment of a Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Ad-Hoc Committee for a period of one year from its commencement (with necessary extension as approved by the COG Board), which would be charged with:

- 1) Making policy recommendations for member jurisdictions to support a more resilient, connected food and farm economy in metropolitan Washington;
- 2) Recommending how to provide long-term direction and collaboration through a regional food and agriculture committee representing diverse entities across metropolitan Washington;
- 3) Furthering the goals identified in the *What Our Region Grows* report to the benefit of member jurisdictions; and
- 4) Assisting COG in continuing its COVID-19 food security collaboration.

Near-Term Priorities

- With Vice Chairs and COG staff, developed a few ideas to start discussion
- Interested in your ideas
- Conversation will continue at December meeting
 - Finalize recommendations for COG legislative priorities on Food & Agriculture



Gleaning from local farms on behalf of Montgomery County's Community Food Rescue program. (Community Food Rescue)

Near-Term Priorities

Broad areas for FARM consideration:

- Food Security
- Agriculture
- Data
- Food Procurement and Purchasing
- Food System Resiliency
- Advising on Future Direction of Regional Food System Coordination
- Other?



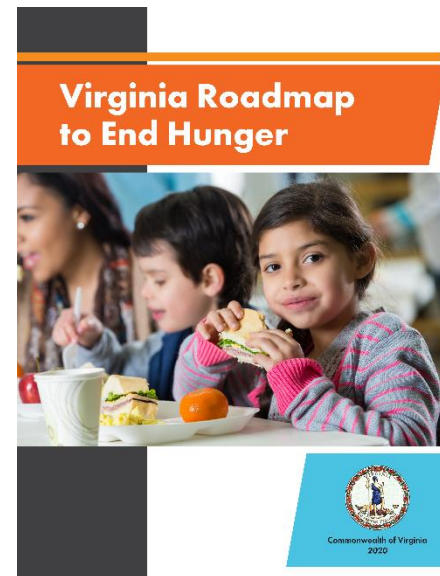
Summer produce grown at University of Maryland's Terp Farm in Upper Marlboro, MD (Lindsay Smith/COG)

Food for Thought

- Your thoughts on some of these priorities and opportunities to work together.
- Is your jurisdiction(s) taking action on any of these topics that you think could inform broader action?
- Are there any big categories or opportunities for near term gains that we're missing?

Food Security: Regional Background

- Number of people experiencing food insecurity is rising.
 - Demand on our region's food banks and pantries has increased dramatically.
- 1.7 million DC, MD, and VA residents received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in August.
 - Participation in DC has increased by 23%, 14% in VA, and 43% in MD.
 - SNAP provides 9-10 meals for every 1 meal provided by charity.



Several new studies call for maximizing enrollment in federal programs like SNAP.

Food Security

*Policy development and advocacy.
Sharing best practices for
implementation and outreach
on federal nutrition programs
(i.e. SNAP, WIC, school meals, etc.)*

Near Term Opportunities for Action

- Develop COG's 2021 Food and Agriculture legislative priorities.
- Generate regional letters on key food security issues (i.e. federal waivers for nutrition programs).



Staff at DC Central Kitchen at pack emergency groceries in the spring. (DC Central Kitchen)

Food Security

Policy development and advocacy. Sharing best practices for implementation and outreach federal nutrition programs.

Near Term Opportunities for Action

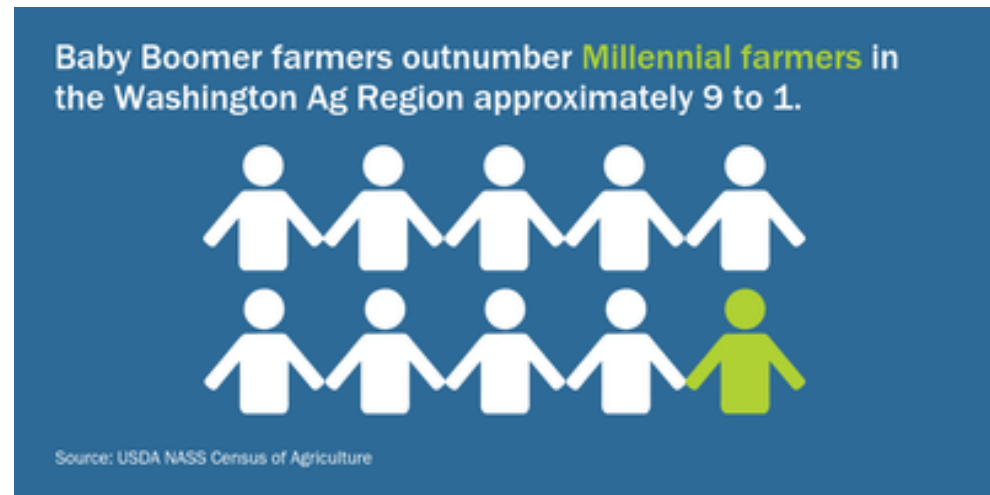
- Share best practices on maximizing enrollment in nutrition programs.
- Explore regional communication opportunities for promoting federal nutrition programs and other food access programs.
- Best practices in emergency food assistance planning and distribution.
- Shape COG regional food security calls.



FRESHFARM's Pop Up Food Hub provides a food access solution supplied by regional farmers. Image from 2019. (FRESHFARM)

Agriculture: Regional Background

- Farmers are aging and farmland will be changing hands
 - Land and capital access can be obstacles, especially for new and beginning farmers
- Covid-19 brought to light disproportionate, negative impacts on health and economic opportunity in communities of color
 - Face of farming in the region does not reflect our diversity



In 2012, there were approximately 522 Millennial Generation farmers (principal operators) age 34 or younger. Compare this to the estimated 4,802 farmers who were Baby Boomers (ages 55 to 69).
Source: USDA NASS Census of Agriculture



Agriculture

History, equity, and opportunity related to Black land ownership and profitable farms, connecting immigrant farmers and expertise to opportunity, etc. Leveraging expertise of economic development corporations to support the region's farm economy.

Near Term Opportunities

- Learn from the Georgetown University, University of Maryland *Urban Agriculture Covid-19 Pivot Study*.
- Inventory regionally specific information available on the experience of Black farmers, immigrant farmers, and other minority or women-owned farmers.
- Consider aligning state, locally-designated commemorative weeks or months in DC, MD, and VA on urban agriculture, farm-to-school, farmers markets, anti-hunger awareness, etc. to amplify further

Agriculture

Medium Term Opportunities for Action

Revisit early achievements of COG's Agriculture Program by planning a regional forum on farmland access and land preservation in partnership with FARM members, agencies and other organizations.

- Include focus on new and beginning farmers, minority and immigrant farmers
- Emphasize land preservation; bringing in new information on the nexus with soil health, water and climate



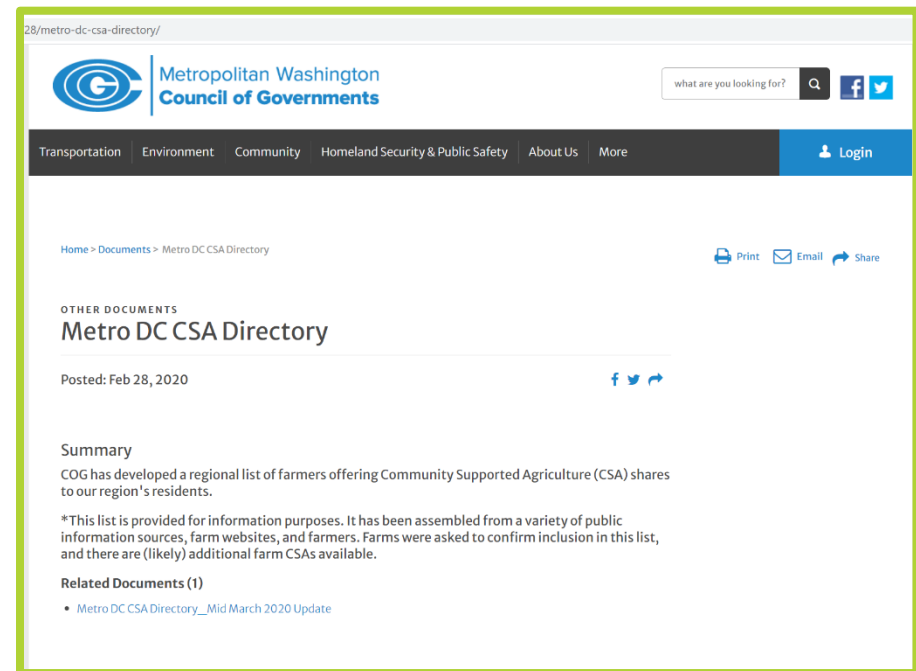
Potomac Vegetable Farms in 2019. Loudoun County, VA. (Lindsay Smith/COG)

Data: Regional Background

Food system data availability for the Greater Washington region varies.

Examples:

- U.S. Census of Agriculture does not capture all information, only provides standardized information for MD and VA
- No standardized, annual *regional* listings of direct market outlets like farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs



In the absence of a regional list of farms offering Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to residents of Greater Washington, COG created one.

Data

Leveraging data, spatial analysis to inform solutions to challenges and to promote the region's food and farm economy.

Near Term Opportunities for Action

Develop listing *for the COG region* for media outlets on direct markets (e.g. farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs), including food access programs

Develop a Metro DC Food Systems Research Collaborative to advance FARM priorities.

Champion development and maintenance of regional food assistance GIS layer in NCR GDx



Volunteers working to pack and deliver food assistance in Prince William County, VA (Prince William Food Rescue)

Discussion

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Fort Stevens Community Gardens in Northwest D.C. in mid-June 2020. Lindsay Smith/COG

More Information

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