
**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING SUMMARY (DRAFT)

February 11, 2022

All presentations from the meeting, and the approved December meeting summary, can be found at: <https://www.mwcog.org/events/2022/2/11/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS:

- Short Term
 - Staff will work with new members and FARM's Chair and Vice Chair to schedule a New Member Orientation in March.
 - *The orientation was held on March 21st.*
 - *Here [is a link to the agenda, presentation, and updated member roster.](#)*
 - The optional tour of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve has been rescheduled and set for early September. A Save the Date has been sent to FARM Members.
 - Staff has shared the significantly updated draft of the *Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium* with the FARM Committee.
 - *Review/comment is requested prior to the end of May.*
 - FARM's Executive Committee will send a letter to the congressional delegation for the COG region in support of extending USDA's waiver authority on school meals.
 - *The letter was sent on February 28th.*
 - *Staff from Congressman Steny Hoyer's Office reached out to discuss the letter. COG Staff and FARM Member Michael J Wilson spoke with them on March 3rd to affirm the FARM Committee's request.*
 - Staff sent a survey to FARM members to share more information about proposed FARM Work Groups – open to members and alternates - and to assess capacity and interest.
 - *There is sufficient interest to form two Work Groups, one on Outreach and another on Catalytic Opportunities. Staff will be in touch with interested members to set up first meetings.*

NEW MEMBER WELCOME, FARM ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL

District of Columbia Councilmember Mary Cheh, FARM's Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:02 am.

Chair Cheh welcomed several new FARM committee members. Now that FARM is a permanent committee, all COG member jurisdictions can appoint members.

Action Item: A new member orientation will be scheduled in March.

The Chair provided a recap of FARM's work in 2021.

- Here is a link to a one-page list of activities and milestones. [COG FARM Committee 2021 Year-in-Review update.pdf](#)

She also began previewing the year ahead and announced a tour for interested FARM Members, Alternates, and their staff of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve.

- Participants will want to reserve most of the day for this event.

Action Item: COG staff will be sending a calendar invitation to members next week.

Councilmember Cheh announced the release of a working draft of the *Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium for Metropolitan Washington* and the regional food security legislative tracker.

- FARM Members received the legislative tracker prior to the meeting and were asked to alert staff to bills of regional significance that align with COG's 2022 Policy Priorities.
- Bills not included can also be added to the tracker.
- *Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium for Metropolitan Washington* will be published at the conclusion of the MD and VA legislative sessions to allow for inclusion of additional legislative and policy information.

FARM members approved the December meeting summary.

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN 2022 IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON: LOCAL HIGHLIGHT

Councilmember Todd Turner, Chair of the Prince George's County Food Security Task Force provided a presentation on the recently released [Prince George's County Food Security Task Force Report and Recommendations](#) and discussed next steps.

- He reviewed the Task Force's process, guiding principles, and ten recommendations.
- He emphasized the need for local action and state and regional collaboration to achieve Task Force goals.
- A copy of his presentation is available [at this link](#).
- Councilmember Turner answered several questions from FARM members.

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN 2022: FEDERAL PRIORITIES AND OTHER KEY STATE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

Luis Guardia, President of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) provided an overview of major challenges and priorities that FRAC is working on now.

- He addressed the importance of programs like the Child Tax Credit and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – and increased funding for SNAP – in avoiding a “hunger cliff.”
- FRAC and 2,200 organizations have asked Congress to extend USDA's waiver authority to enable the agency to extend free school meals for the 2022 to 2023 school year.

- They are also tracking several other bills.
- He also invited participants to the upcoming, virtual [National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference](#) co-hosted by FRAC and Feeding America.

Action Item: FARM will send a letter to the congressional delegation for the COG region in support of extending USDA's waiver authority on school meals.

Radha Muthiah, CEO of Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB), discussed CAFB's plans for 2022.

- Ms. Muthiah shared how CAFB has been responding to increased need as a result of the Omicron variant, and how the organization is planning for distribution for the remainder of this calendar year.
- CAFB will be releasing three reports this spring: the 2022 Hunger Report and reports on childhood food insecurity and senior food insecurity.

UPDATE: REGIONAL FOOD AND WATER RESILIENCE CATASTROPHIC PREPAREDNESS GRANT

Mark Scott, Critical Infrastructure Specialist with the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (DC HSEMA) provided an update on the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant.

- DC HSEMA is undertaking this work with partners in metropolitan Washington on food and water resilience planning.
- Mr Scott shared key questions, some findings and data analysis that was used ahead of a recent storm event, and a schedule of key project milestones.
- A copy of his presentation is available [at this link](#).
- Mr. Scott is expected to brief FARM again as the project proceeds.

FOOD FLOWS: POTENTIAL POST-PANDEMIC PATTERNS RELEVANT TO METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON

Philip J Palin, a subject matter expert on supply chain resilience, and consultant to the food and water resilience planning project, provided an overview of the grocery supply chain.

- Mr. Palin shared how this industry, a critical source of nutrition for the region, has changed during the pandemic.
- He highlighted trends to consider for the future including sales, market leaders in the region, the projected growth of e-commerce, the importance of building relationships outside of the region, and more.
- A copy of his presentation is available [at this link](#)

FARM members shared several questions with Mr. Scott and Mr. Palin, many related to stakeholder engagement and policy recommendations.

FARM COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WORK GROUP PROPOSAL, AND OPEN DISCUSSION

Chair Cheh and Lindsay Smith, COG staff offered several remarks related to organizational development of the FARM Committee.

- Chair is recommending the establishment of Work Groups for members who have time to engage.

- Ms. Smith provided an overview of existing work groups that are connected to FARM and priorities for 2022.
- She shared a proposal for two additional work groups. More details can be found in the presentation [at this link](#)
- Owing to a lack of time, these will be discussed further in the future.
- Councilmember Jon Stehle (Vice Chair) thanked everyone for their continued engagement in the committee.

Action Item: COG will follow up with FARM members to provide more information about Work Groups and to assess capacity and interest.

NEXT MEETING

The next virtual FARM Committee meeting is Friday, April 8th at 11:00 am

Chair Cheh adjourned the meeting at 1:00 pm.

ATTENDANCE:

Mary Cheh, Chair, District of Columbia
 Jon Stehle, Vice Chair, City of Fairfax
 Reuben Collins, Charles County (alternate)
 Marybeth Connelly, City of Falls Church
 Libby Garvey, Arlington County
 Penny Gross, Fairfax County
 Kate Kennedy, City of College Park
 Maria Mackie, City of College Park (alternate)
 Carrol McBryde, City of Bladensburg
 Tom Ross, City of Fairfax (alternate)
 Bill Bailey, City of Laurel (alternate)
 Ona Balkus, District of Columbia Food Policy Council
 Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Food Council
 Jeremy Criss, Montgomery County Office of Agriculture
 Julia Gross, Maryland Hunger Solutions (alternate)
 Sara Hoverter, Georgetown University
 Kate Lee, District of Columbia Office of Urban Agriculture
 Radha Muthiah, Capital Area Food Bank
 Selena Mendy Singleton, Montgomery County Council (alternate)
 Nick Stavely, FRESHFARM (alternate)
 Victoria Treski, Bainum Family Foundation
 Chris VanVlack, Loudoun Water and Soil Conservation District

Ariel Ardura, Office of Councilmember Cheh
 Kristin Trible, Office of Councilmember Rice
 Kim Haun, Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation
 Anna Sierra, Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM)
 Vanessa Calaban, MDEM
 Max Broad, DC Voters for Animals

Rebecca Gates, Northern Virginia Food Rescue
Jim Hilleary, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Stuart Vermaak, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Bridget Warren, Prince George's County Health Department
Robert Love, City of Laurel
Larry Schaefer, Schaefer Global Management LLC
Julia Groenfeldt, IPHI and Prince George's Food Equity Council

Five call-in participants

Speakers

Councilmember Todd Turner, Prince George's County
Sydney Daigle, IPHI and Prince George's Food Equity Council
Luis Guardia, Food Research and Action Center
Mark Scott, DC HSEMA
Philip J Palin, SME on supply chain resilience

COG Staff

Christine Howard
Lindsay Smith
Steve Bieber
Brian LeCouteur
Lisa Ragain
Scott Boggs