



REGION FORWARD'S GOAL FOR LAND IN FARMS

COG's FARM Policy Committee and Regional Food System Resiliency

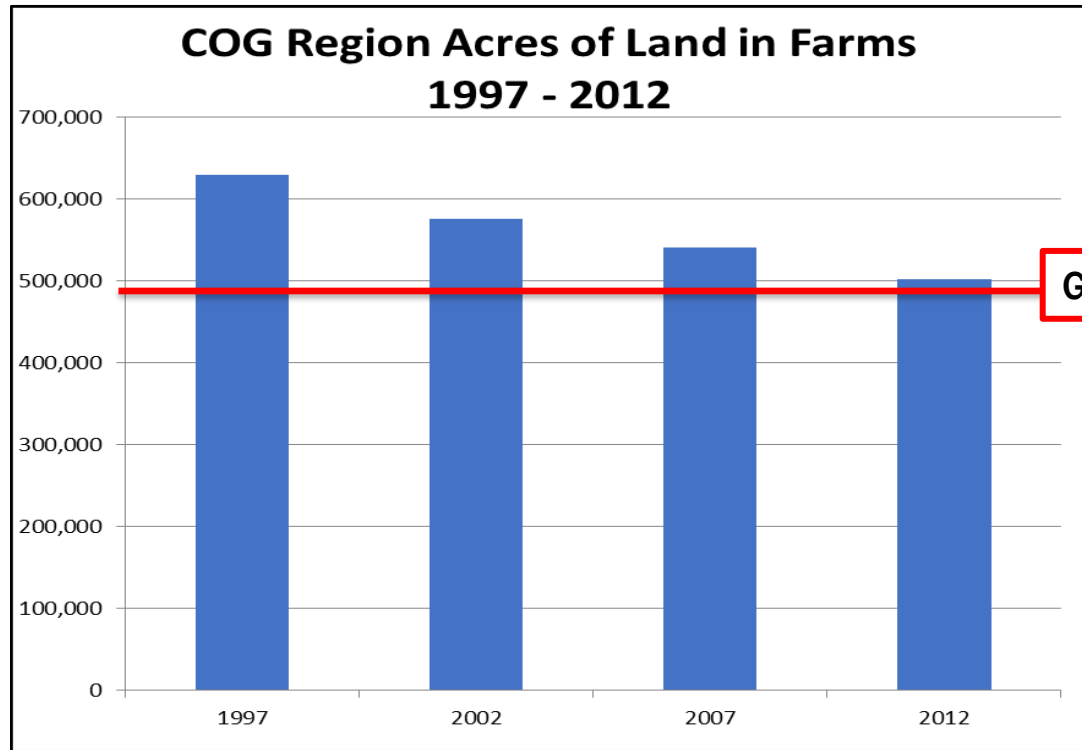
Jon Stehle
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Region Forward Coalition
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FARM Policy Committee Origins



Graphic shared with COG's Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) in March 2019 as part of *What Our Region Grows* presentation
Source: USDA NASS Census of Agriculture

- Region Forward: Maintain more than 497,500 acres of land in farms
- 2019 *What Our Region Grows* report shows continued loss of farms, farmers, land in farms
 - COG CBPC forms Task Force to assess need for regional commission
- COVID-19 severely exacerbates food insecurity
- 2020: Board creates Ad-Hoc Committee
- 2021: Board makes FARM a permanent policy committee, creates new FARM Fund



FARM Mission and Members

To support the development of long-term regional direction and collaboration toward a more secure, equitable, resilient, connected food and farm economy (food system) across Metropolitan Washington’s urban, suburban, and rural communities to provide more of the region’s food needs.

Gail Taylor, founder of Three Part Harmony Farm in Brookland talks with FARM Committee members and guests last Friday on the DC Farm Tour. (COG)



FARM Milestones in 2023 and 2024

Some of FARM's accomplishments include:

- Annual forums with US Department of Agriculture
- Annual farm tours of COG member jurisdictions
- 2024 Farm Bill Priorities Letter
- Certified Resolution R29-2024 - Federal and State Actions to Reduce Food Insecurity
- Education on supporting food security, farming across the region, food system infrastructure



3rd Annual FARM Forum with the US Department of Agriculture at USDA Headquarters in April of this year (COG)

Organizational Processes

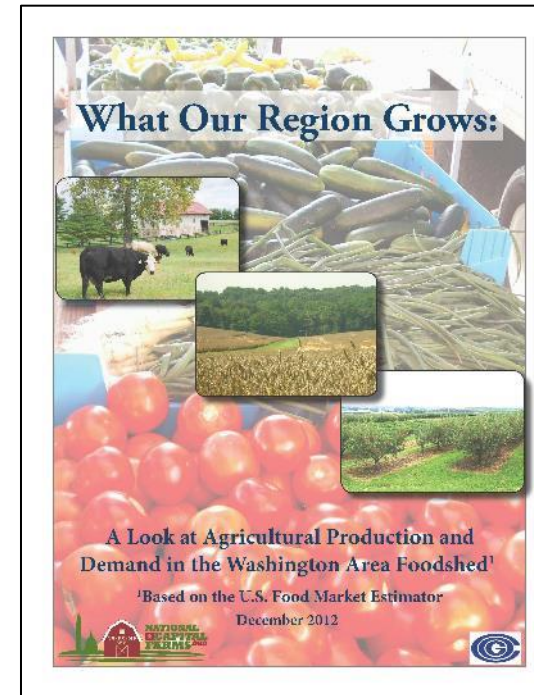
- Two-year strategic plan, leadership terms, and transition planning
- Leveraging forums, tours to advance plan priorities and action
- Chair engagement between meetings
- FARM Work Group meetings and events
 - May 2024 Food Aggregation & Distribution Summit
- PSA: Consider joining in 2025!
 - Several COG/FARM members leaving office.



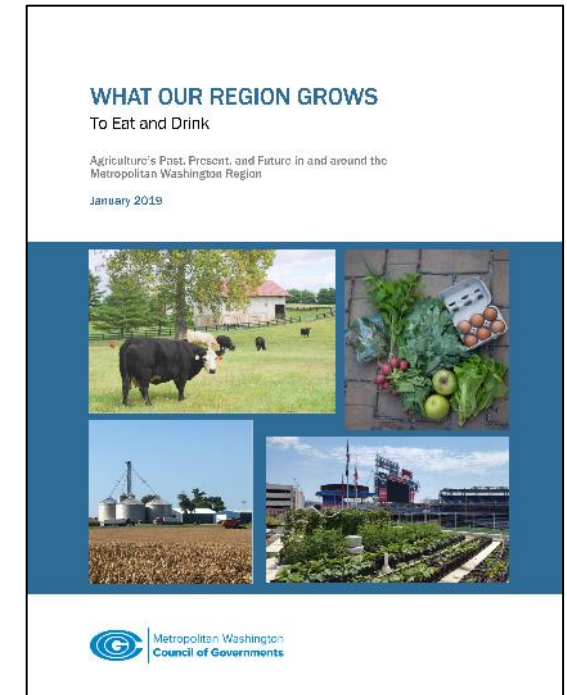
Past and Current FARM Chairs gather after the DC Farm tour last week. (COG)

What's Next

- Collaboration with COG Human Services Policy Committee, Capital Area Food Bank to implement Certified Resolution R29-2024
- FARM deliverables
 - *Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium for Metropolitan Washington* (update)
 - COG Priorities for 2024 Farm Bill Reauthorization
 - *What Our Region Grows* (3rd Edition)



COG What Our Region Grows reports: 2012 and 2019



Land (Acres) in Farms

Region Forward Vision adopted in 2010
Maintain more than 497,500* acres of agriculture land in farms

Acres in Farms	1945	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
District of Columbia	1,854							
Maryland	4,199,859						1,990,122	1,978,036
Virginia	16,358,072						7,797,979	7,309,687
COG Region	1,527,928	663,249	654,203	575,670	541,187	502,593	480,281	473,370

Source: USDA NASS Census of Agriculture

National and Regional Picture

- Growing work to improve farm soil health
- “Prime soils” of special importance for superior quality, suitability for agricultural production
 - Finite and while often prioritized for protection, not always the reality
- Farming is a difficult business
 - Multiple competing uses for ag land in our urbanizing region
 - How do we reverse the trend and protect ag land for agricultural use?
- Promising federal, state, and some local, pandemic era investments, policies and programs have helped connect some dots between improving profitability for food-producing farms and increasing healthy food access for all now, and in future



Help Inform FARM's next *What Our Region Grows*

The COG Region has experienced a significant decline in the number of farms and acres of agricultural land. Agriculturally productive soils are a finite resource.

As we look into the future, what kind of information do policymakers, local government staff, residents, and businesses need about the social, economic, and environmental value of farming to inform local and regional action to increase our food system's resiliency?

THANK YOU

In FRESHFARM's Food Prints classroom at Watkins Elementary School in the District. (COG)



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