

COG FARM POLICY COMMITTEE

New Member Orientation

Lindsay Smith
Regional Food Systems Planner
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

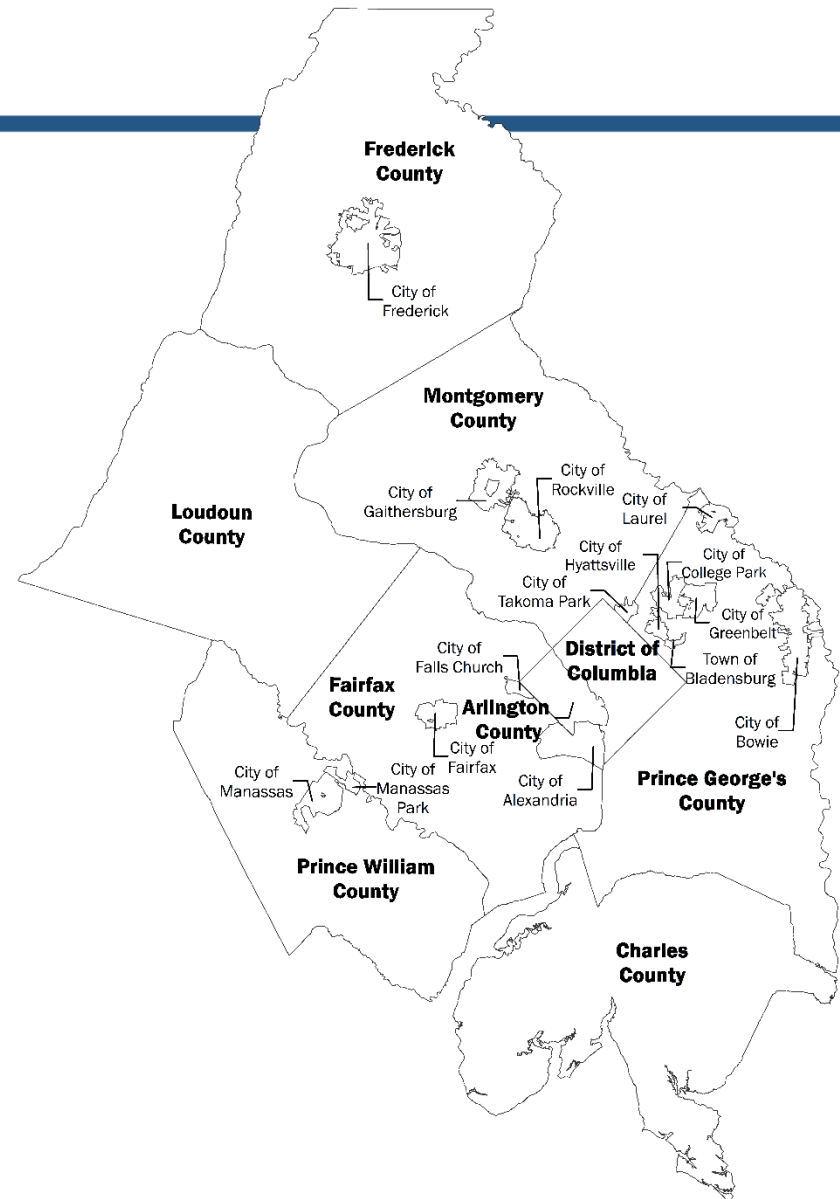
April 14, 2023



Metropolitan Washington
Council of Governments

About COG

- An independent, nonprofit association founded in 1957.
- Brings leaders together to address regional issues.
- Membership comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.
- 125+ staff.
- Region Forward Vision & Framework including equity emphasis areas.

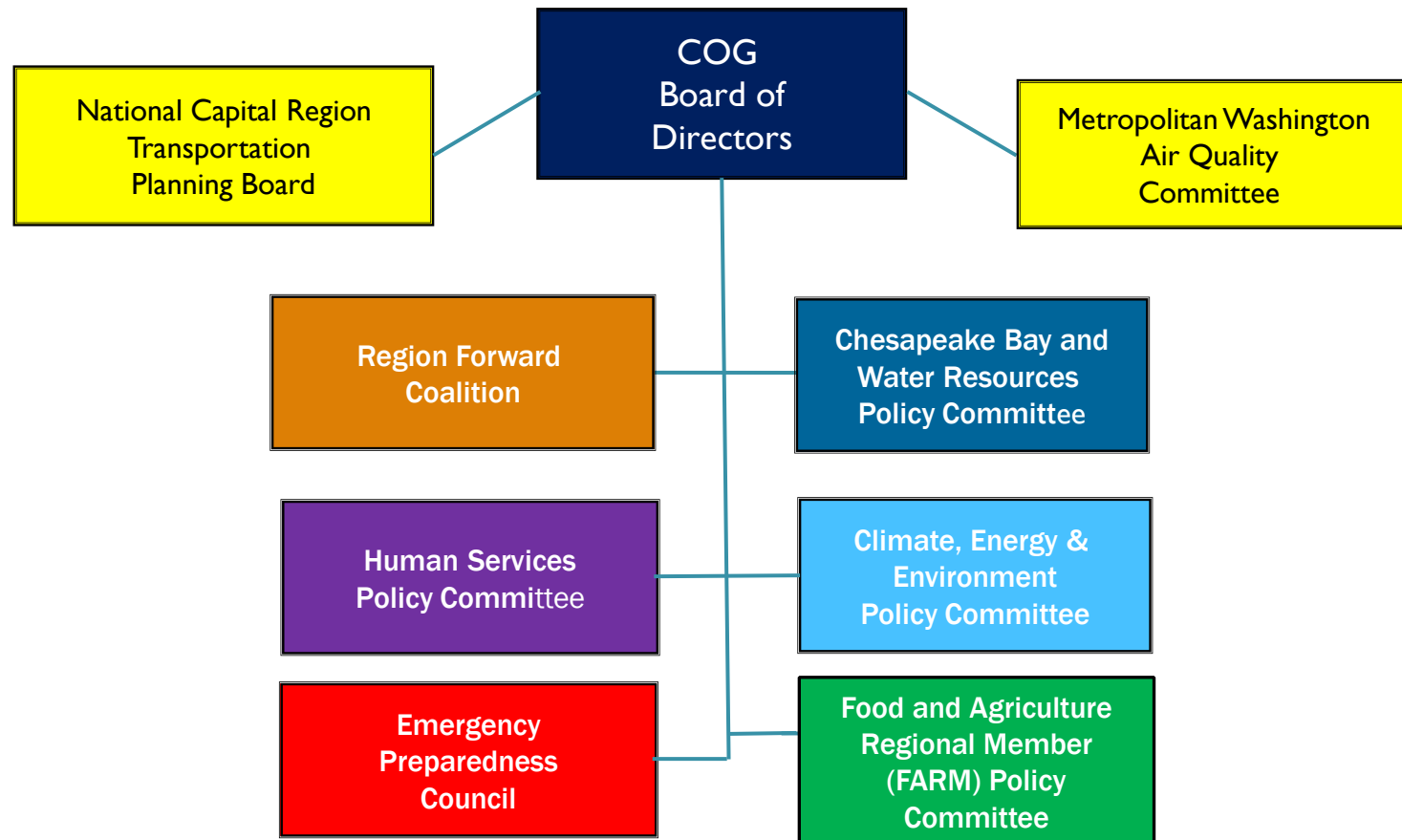


Hub for Regional Partnership

- Elected officials
- City and county managers
- Police, fire chiefs, and emergency managers
- Housing directors
- Environmental experts
- Transportation planners
- Local government staff
- Private, nonprofit partners



COG Policy Committee Structure



Short History: Food & Agriculture at COG

WHAT OUR REGION GROWS

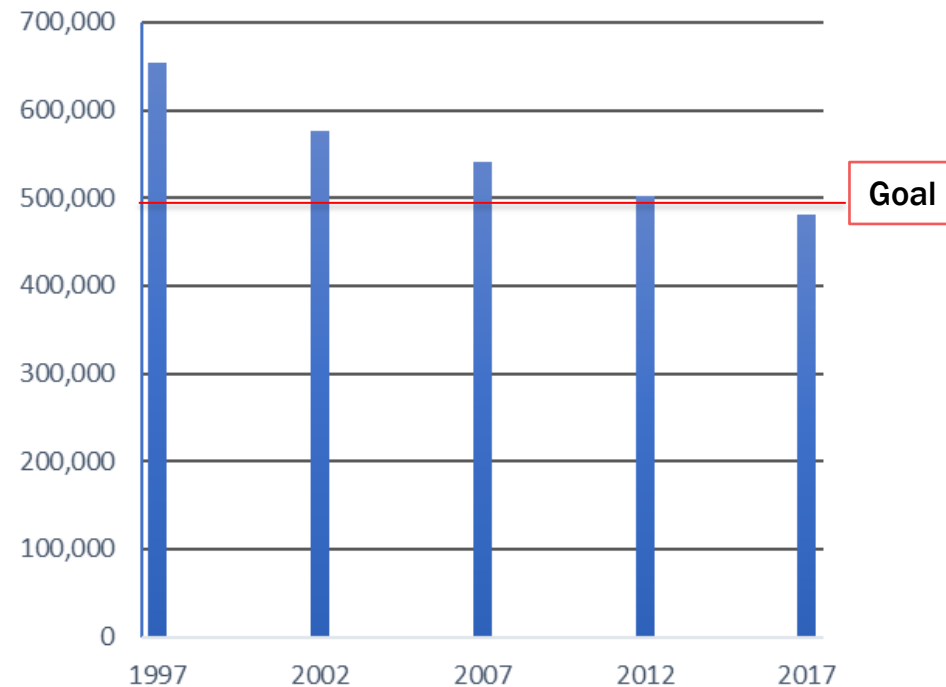
To Eat and Drink

Agriculture's Past, Present, and Future In and around the
Metropolitan Washington Region

January 2019



COG Region Acres of Land in Farms 1997 to 2017



Left: The Regional Ag Work Group published *What Our Region Grows* for the second time in 2019. Right: Here is the geography that *What Our Region Grows* covers for many, but not all data points. The Regional Ag Work Group has long recognized that our foodshed is larger than the COG region.

Question

In 1945, the District of Columbia had about how many acres land were farmed?

- a. 1,850
- b. 1,100
- c. 550
- d. 0

1945	Number of Farms	Acres Farmed
Charles County, MD	1,346	174,486
Frederick County	3,392	346,305
Montgomery County	2,179	247,018
Prince George's County	2,070	194,231
District of Columbia	40	
Arlington County, VA	27	826
Fairfax County	1,788	127,915
Loudoun County	2,015	305,117
Prince William County	1,117	130,176
COG Region	13,974	1,527,928
Maryland	41,275	4,199,859
Virginia	173,051	16,358,072

Question

Which COG jurisdiction has the greatest amount of land in farms today, per the 2017 Census of Agriculture?

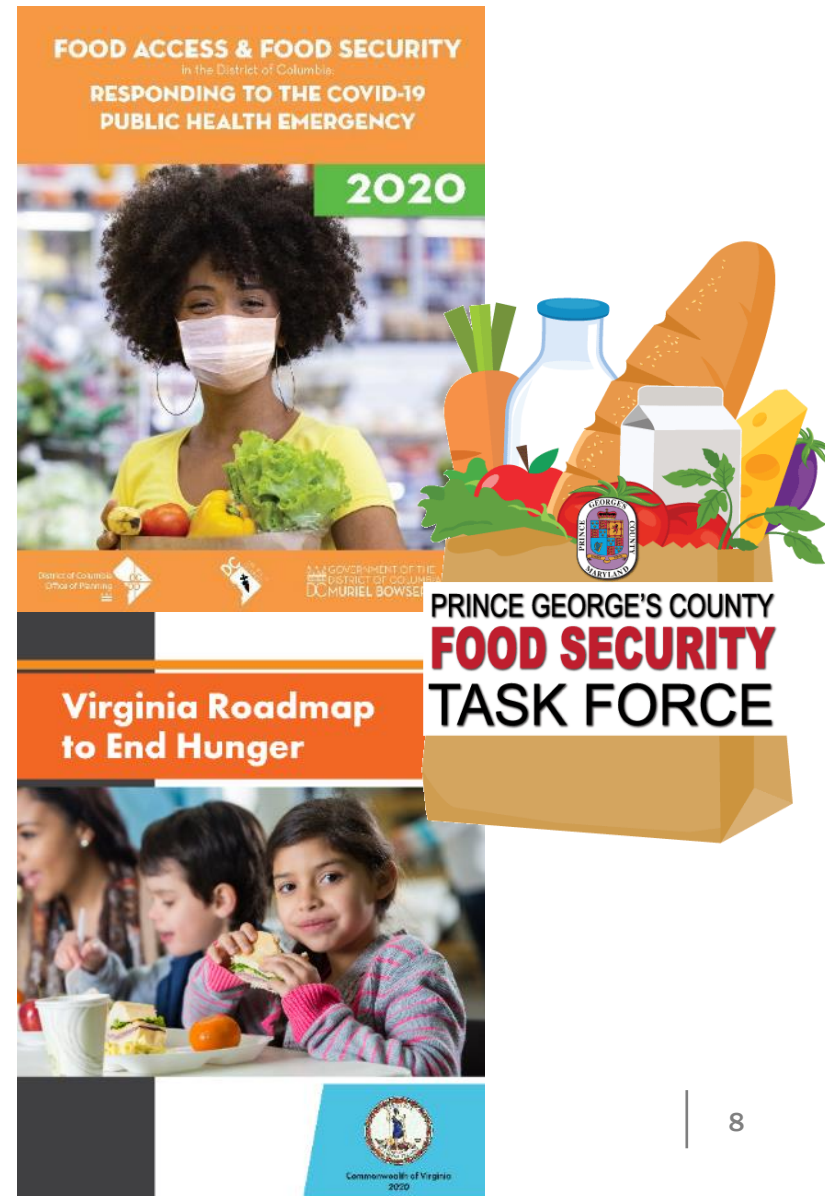
- a. Montgomery County
- b. Frederick County
- c. Charles County
- d. Loudoun County

2017	Number of Farms	Land in Farms
Charles County, MD	385	41,021
Frederick County	1,373	188,576
Montgomery County	558	65,537
Prince George's County	367	34,399
District of Columbia		
Arlington County, VA	5	5
Fairfax County	117	5,937
Loudoun County	1,259	121,932
Prince William County	304	22,874

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Food Insecurity in the COG Region

- Households with children, Black and Hispanic/Latino households disproportionately burdened
- SNAP is our first line of defense against food insecurity
 - 40% increase in participants between Jan 2020 and Nov 2022
 - SNAP Emergency Allotments ended in March 2023
 - Region's emergency food assistance providers seeing increases in demand even prior to this.



Question

What did the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program used to be known as at the federal level?

The Food Stamp Program

Question

When did its name change?

2008

Question

Where is the farmers market located that was the first in the country to match SNAP benefits for participants to increase their purchasing power?

Takoma Park, MD

FARM Policy Committee

Mission

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.



FARM Committee virtual meeting in 2021: Members and speakers (Lindsay Smith/COG)

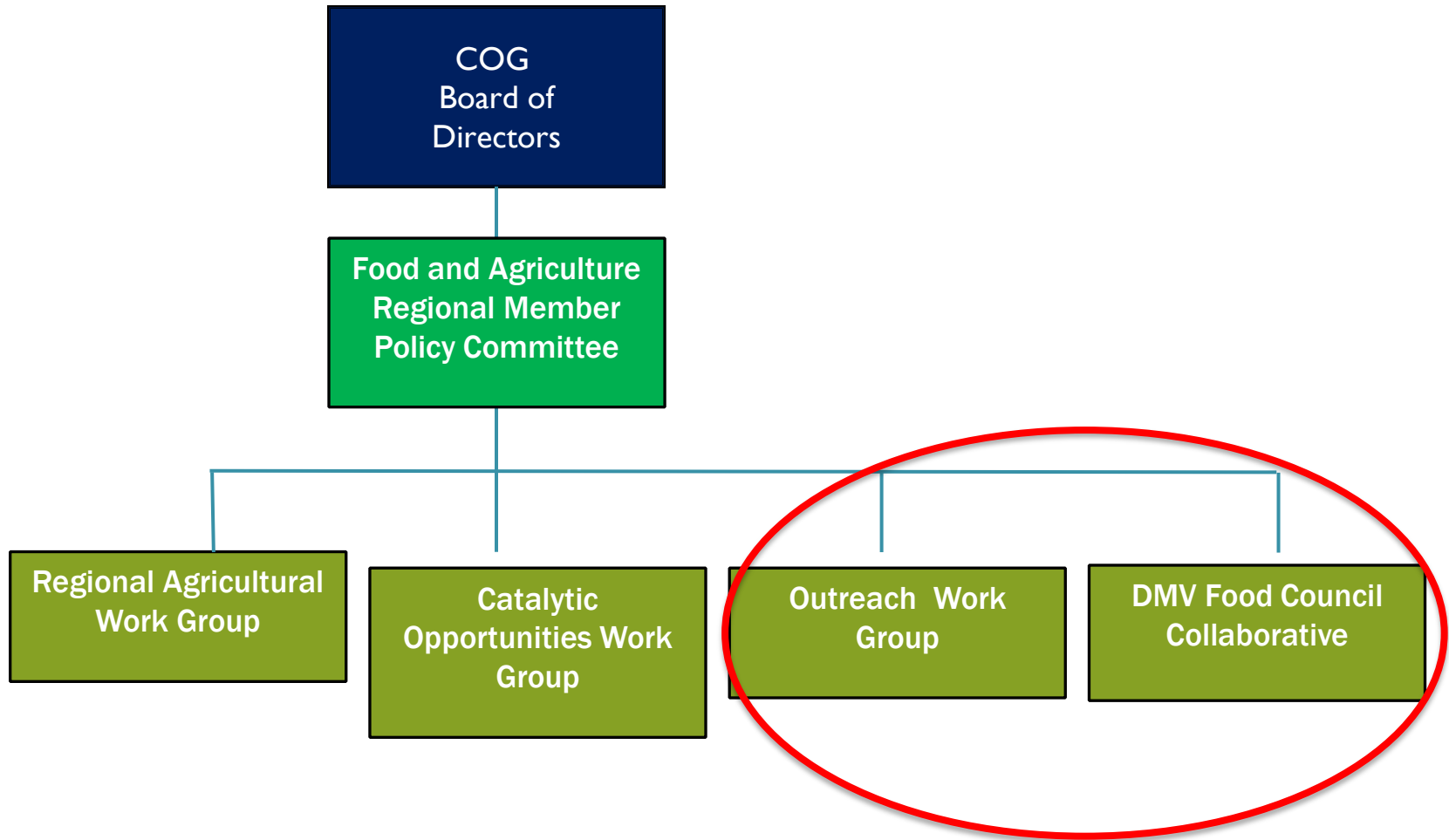
Priorities

- Improving food security in the region
- Supporting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and small farmers
- Focusing FARM's work on farmland preservation, land use regulations, environmental sustainability, *regional food system infrastructure*, and resilience
- Leveraging procurement to support equity and the region's food and farm economy
- Improving and communicating regional food system data and *leading practices*



The FARM at Kelly Miller (Lindsay Smith/COG)

FARM Policy Committee Structure



FARM Takes Positions

- Provides input on food system issues to the COG Board
 - Board adopts legislative priorities annually
- Tracks legislation in the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, at the Council of the District of Columbia
- Provides limited input on state and federal legislation and other actions



February 24, 2022

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro, Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations

RE: Request for Extension of USDA Waiver Authority

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Granger, and Vice Chairman Shelby:

On behalf of the [Food and Regional Agriculture Member \(FARM\) Policy Committee](#) of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), we are writing to ask you to extend U.S. Department of Agriculture's nationwide waiver authority through the 2022-2023 school year.

As the association of local governments in the metropolitan Washington region, COG supports measures that will increase food security in the region. Given the impact of the ongoing public health crisis on families and children, continued flexibility is needed to meet students' nutritional needs.

The food security challenges facing our residents and schools mirror those seen nationally. COVID-19 has exacerbated food insecurity everywhere, and communities of color and households with children have been disproportionately impacted. In the Metropolitan Washington region, our schools' food and nutrition services divisions continue to have to pivot to provide healthy meals safely, all while grappling with supply chain challenges and labor constraints. The flexibility that USDA has provided to states and schools through waivers has been critical to enabling them to respond in innovative ways and ensure that those children experiencing food insecurity have access to quality meals. This needs to continue.

Reducing food insecurity is a central goal of the FARM Committee and one of COG's legislative priorities. We hope that USDA will continue to support schools and other sponsors beyond the end of June as we recover from the pandemic. We must ensure that they can continue to operate as seamlessly as possible to provide meals to students.

Please contact Lindsay Smith, COG's Regional Food Systems Planner, at (202) 962-3309 or lsmith@mwkog.org if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mary Cheh.

Mary Cheh
Chair, FARM Committee
District of Columbia

Handwritten signature of Craig Rice.

Craig Rice
Vice Chair, FARM Committee
Montgomery County, MD

Handwritten signature of Jon Stehle.

Jon Stehle
Vice Chair, FARM Committee
City of Fairfax, VA

2022 Milestones

- Expanded new FARM Committee membership to include all interested COG member jurisdictions.
- Transitioned to COG member support from the new FARM Fund (FY23)
- Supported key pieces of state, federal legislation to increase food security and food system resilience
 - Maryland *Farm to Food Security Act*
 - Virginia Fresh Match
 - School meals
- Board Resolution R50-2022

2022 Milestones

- Released Healthy Food Access Policy Compendium for Metropolitan Washington
- Created two new Work Groups
- Held site visits for FARM Members and Regional Agricultural Work Group



FARM Policy Committee members learn from Linda Lewis, one of the owner operators of the largest table-crop producing farms in Montgomery County, MD as part of the Agricultural Reserve tour. (Lindsay Smith/COG)

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