
**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY
COMMITTEE****MEETING SUMMARY (DRAFT)****AUGUST 12, 2022**

All presentations from the meeting, and the approved June meeting summary, can be found at: <https://www.mwcog.org/events/2022/8/12/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS:

- Short Term
 - FARM members approved the June meeting summary with a quorum.
 - The FARM Outreach Work Group recommended reaching out to USDA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office to invite them to speak at the October meeting.
 - FARM discussed recent declines in SNAP enrollment, including as it impacts children.
 - Staff was asked to share this article from The Baltimore Banner for a more detailed explanation of a complex issue:
<https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/politics-power/state-government/snap-enrollment-drops-sharply-in-maryland-some-say-staffing-shortages-policy-shifts-partially-to-blame-GASIOF5PR5G4HHT4ZHUXERHV4U/>
 - Policymakers were urged to check-in with their local Departments of Social Services to inquire how the SNAP recertification process is proceeding in their jurisdictions.
 - Following Crystal FitzSimon's presentation, FARM determined it will send a letter to the region's senators with a request that they support the *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act* (H.R. 8450). This is expected to be voted on by the House when it is back in session.
 - Although HR 8450 (Childhood Nutrition Reauthorization) does not include universal school meals for all, it would expand access to free meals to greater numbers of students than are currently eligible.
 - FARM approved changes to its Bylaws with one friendly amendment to change proposed language on terms for Executive Committee members.
 - FARM approved the FY23 draft Work Program.
 - Some members offered several comments which have been used to make some minor changes to the document.
 - Action on the FY24 Level of Effort document was postponed. Staff will follow-up with the Executive Committee to clarify how they would like staff to collect feedback on a

document like this in the future.

- Medium Term
 - There was discussion on different ways jurisdictions could consider expanding access to free school meals in the absence of federal action to do so. FARM may want to revisit this at future meetings given its priority for free school meals for all.
 - During discussion of the FY23 draft Work Program, it was recommended that FARM think about how it could encourage more holistic responses to food insecurity. This would be in line with efforts in the region to offer food assistance as part of a broader package of wrap around support and services.
 - Several recommendations were shared for improving communication about farmers markets and among market managers.

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND MEETING SUMMARY APPROVAL

District of Columbia Councilmember Mary Cheh, FARM Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:07 am.

FARM members approved the June draft meeting summary with a quorum.

WORK GROUP UPDATES

Catalytic Opportunities

- Libby Garvey and Zachari Curtis shared a draft Charter with the rest of the Work Group to guide inquiry into to increasing equitable opportunity in procurement and in the local food economy for farmers with a history of race-based social disadvantage in the region. The Work Group is planning to examine barriers and opportunities for Black farmers as a starting point.

Food Policy Directors Work Group

- Heather Bruskin shared several updates from a recent of the food policy directors, food security coordinators, and food assistance providers bi-monthly check-in.
- Major issues discussed can be found in the Agenda Items presentation at the link above.
- An issue of concern and discussion among FARM members was the drop in SNAP enrollment, largely thought to be due to the recertification process rather than a drop in need.

Regional Agricultural Work Group

- Provided by Brian LeCouteur, founder of the Regional Agricultural Work Group at COG.
- The Ag Work Group met virtually and in-person in June.
- They heard from Prince George's County Soil Conservation District and other partners supporting farmers, the County's ag economy and the food system initiatives.
- They also heard a presentation from Heber Brown, III, the founder of the Black Church Food Security Network based in Baltimore. This organization is growing quickly and working with

more congregations - including in Prince George's County. It helps Black churches use their assets to establish gardens on their land, host small farmers markets after church service, and to buy wholesale from Black farmers.

- Ag Work Group members and guests also visited The Urban Farm Incubator in central Prince George's, as well as the nearby Forested in Bowie, MD.
- We are making progress on the redesign of the National Capital Farms website to showcase agriculture and farming in Metropolitan Washington.
- COG's consultant for the project shared a survey with the Ag Work Group.
- They are using results to host a workshop with members next week to build consensus on top priorities for a new site.

Outreach Work Group

- Michael J Wilson shared that the Work Group has had two calls since the June FARM Committee meeting: one with staff in Virginia Representative Bobby Scott's office, and another with staff on the Education & Labor Committee that he chairs.
- Work Group knows the invitation was considered but learned this Monday that the Representative would be in session today.
- We were asked to stay in touch about future opportunities to speak to FARM.
- We then asked Crystal FitzSimons if she could provide some information on this important bill and I'm glad she will be able to do that in a few minutes.
- Our next task is to reach out to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Director for USDA to request a meeting with her office.

HEALTHY MEALS, HEALTHY KIDS ACT AND CHILDHOOD NUTRITION

Crystal FitzSimons, Director of School and Out-of-School Time Programs, Food Research and Action Center (FRAC's) provided an overview of some of H.R. 8450, the [Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act](#). She provided other federal updates on school meals for the summer.

FARM members had several questions, including on other ways to expand access to school meals at the state or local level. Ms. FitzSimon's shared examples from other states. Her full presentation can be found on the meeting website.

FY23 FARM PRIORITIES AND WORK PROGRAM, FY24 LEVEL OF EFFORT FARM POLICY COMMITTEE BYLAWS

COG staff briefly reviewed the revised Work Plan and Budget for FY23 document. FARM members provided feedback, including on a few requested formatting changes.

The Approved Work Program and Budget can be found at:

<https://www.mwcog.org/committees/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

Steve Bieber talked about the schedule for reviewing future Level of Effort (LOE) documents, budgets and the work program going forward now that FARM is a permanent policy committee.

The Chair recommended postponing action on the FY24 LOE. Staff will follow-up with the Executive Committee to clarify how they would like staff to collect feedback this in the future.

FARM Members considered proposed changes to the FARM Policy Committee Bylaws. They approved them with one friendly amendment to change proposed language on terms for Executive Committee members.

COG STAFF AND FARM MEMBER COMMITTEE UPDATES

Several updates were shared including on the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health – sometime in September – and the upcoming tour of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve.

REVIEW ACTION ITEMS AND ADJOURN

The next regularly scheduled FARM Policy Committee meeting is Friday, October 14th at 11:00 am.

Chair Cheh adjourned the meeting.

ATTENDANCE:

Mary Cheh, Chair, District of Columbia
Craig Rice, Vice Chair, Montgomery County
Carroll McBryde, Town of Bladensburg
Kate Kennedy, City of College Park
Libby Garvey, Arlington County
Penny Gross, Fairfax County
Kenny Boddy, Prince William County
Ruben Collins, III, Charles County (alternate)
Maria Mackie, City of College Park (alternate)
Tom Ross, City of Fairfax (alternate)
Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Food Council
Cassie Shirk, Maryland Department of Agriculture
Zachari Curtis, MAFRAC Advisory Board
Meredith Ledlie Johnson, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Selena Mendy Singleton, Montgomery County Council (alternate)
Hugo Mogollon, FRESHFARM
Victoria Treski, Bainum Family Foundation
Michael J Wilson, Maryland Hunger Solutions
Julia Gross, Maryland Hunger Solutions (alternate)
Ariel Ardura, Office of Councilmember Cheh

Ramona Carroll, Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services
Philip Sambol, Oasis Community Partners and Good Food Markets
Max Broad, DC Voters for Animals
Julia Groenfeldt, Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI), Prince George's Food Equity Council (PGCFEC)
Heaven Jordan, IPHI and PGCFEC
Kim Rush Lynch, Prince George's Soil Conservation District
Elizabeth Borst, Virginia Community Food Connections and Virginia Fresh Match
Jennifer Freeman, Community FarmShare

Cristina Berthelot, Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
Sara Beckwith, DC Department of Health
Jessica Conjour, UMD Extension, SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator, Charles County
Harrison Palmer, NRCS-CD, Upper Marlboro, MD
Bridget Warren, Prince George's County Office of Food Security
Larry Shaefer, Schaefer Global Management, LLC
Fatimah Hassan, M-NCPPC/Prince George's County Planning Department
Lori Sikra, Catholic Charities St. Lucy Food Project
Maryam Taysir, Emerson Hunger Fellow
Isabella Dresser, Emerson Hunger Fellow
Laura Jeske, Capital Area Food Bank
Two call-in participants

Speakers

Crystal FitzSimons, Food Research and Action Center

COG Staff

Steve Bieber
Tom Gates
Christine Howard
Brian LeCouteur
Lindsay Smith
Asante Pearson, Extern