

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE DURING COVID-19

High-Level Observations on Metropolitan Washington's Food System

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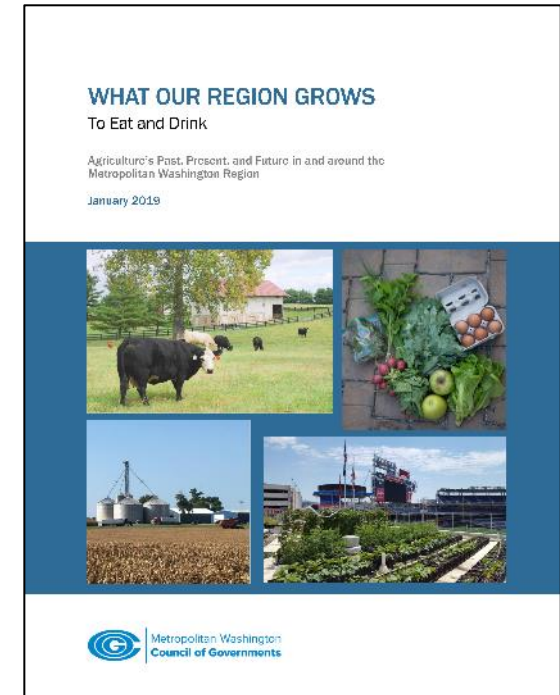
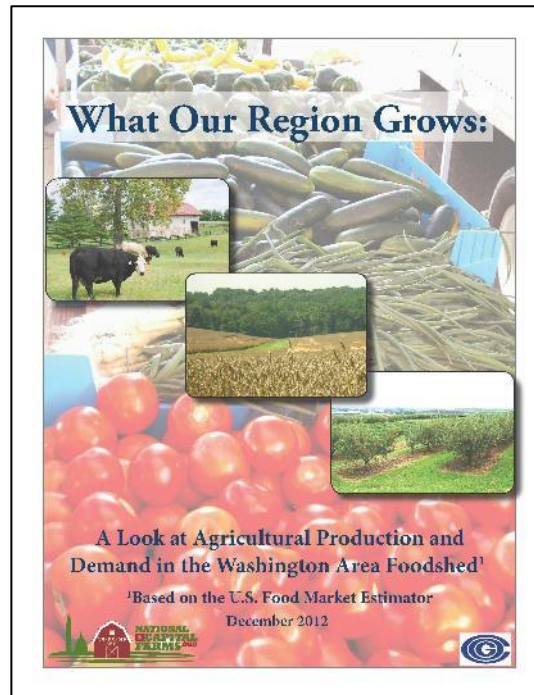
July 20, 2020

Background: Food and Agriculture at COG

Coordinated a
Regional Agricultural
Work Group since
2006

- Released *What Our Region Grows* in 2012

Ag Program
reinvigorated into
broader Regional
Food Systems
Program in 2016



What Our Region Grows 2012 (left) includes 2007 Census of Ag data.

Updated 2019 report (right) with 2012 Census of Ag data and more recent locally collected data.

Agriculture's Economic Impact

Washington, D.C.

\$5.47 billion total value added economic impact

Production, Distribution, Grocery, Restaurants, & Support Industries ¹

Maryland (COG Localities)

\$2.9 billion in economic impact

Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, & Support Industries ²

Virginia (COG Localities)

\$2.23 billion in economic impact

Agriculture & Forestry ³



Grape harvest at a Loudoun County vineyard and winery in 2017. Lindsay Smith/COG

¹ Findings from DC Food Economy Study

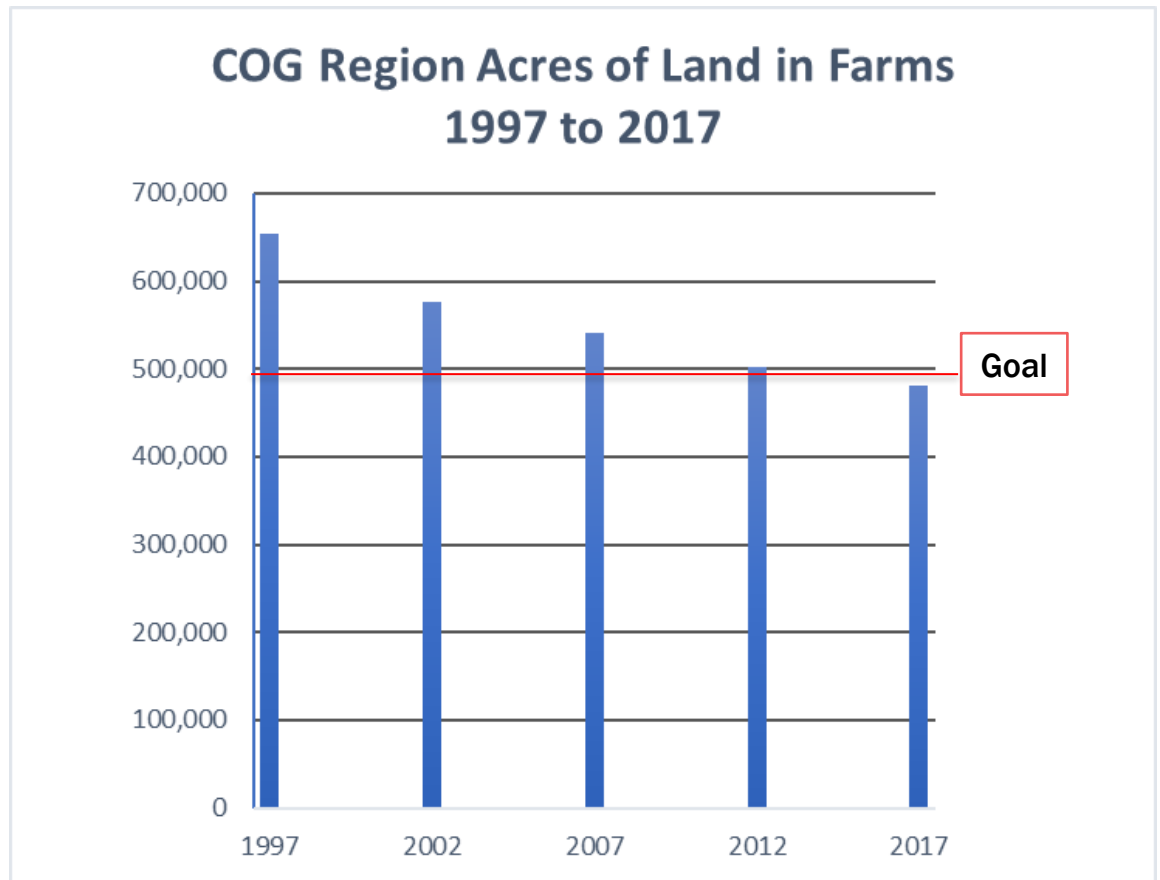
² Economic Impact of Select Resource Based Industries in Maryland

³ The Economic Impact of Virginia's Agricultural and Forest Industries

Land in Farms: COG Region

**Region Forward:
Maintain more
than 497,500
acres of land in
farms**

2017 Census of
Ag data: **480,281**
acres for the COG
Region



Regional Trends Prior to Covid-19

- Declining number of farmers, farms, land in farms
- Lower production levels and dairy is in crisis
- Grain dominates production
- Growth in on-farm craft beverage, agritourism, urban agriculture
- Declining agricultural support services
- Increasing interest in healthy soils for carbon sequestration



Food and Agriculture During Covid-19

Agriculture: Impacts vary significantly by sector

- New appreciation for local

Food Insecurity increased dramatically, concerns about additional growth

- Lack of access is key driver

Some examples of local/regional investments to support systemic approaches and resiliency include:

- Montgomery County, District of Columbia, others
- World Central Kitchen
- MAFRAC
- Future Harvest



Above: The Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience & Access Coalition (MAFRAC). MAFRAC “has formed around the collective goals of keeping people fed, farmers growing, and food businesses operating and maintaining our regional food system for many years to come.”

Regional Food Systems Program in COVID-19

Weekly/Biweekly regional calls with local leaders to share food security and food assistance issues, needs

Monitoring food supply chain

Supporting next steps of Ag Task Force

- Proposed Food and Agriculture Ad- Hoc Committee



How Can Local Leaders Help?

Use an equity lens and support leaders of color

Support food banks and food pantries with financial contributions, volunteer services.

- Remember providers serving especially vulnerable populations (i.e. Latinx immigrants)
- Make other connections to the regional food economy when possible (i.e. farmers, food hubs, restaurants)



Washington City Paper: The Food Issue. Darrow Montgomery/Washington City Paper

How Can Local Leaders Help?

Support stronger safety net programs (i.e. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP) and local food policy changes

- DC, MD, and VA Hunger Solutions, local food policy councils are key advocates to learn from and support

Invest in coordination of food assistance, technical assistance and other services to rural and urban farmers, food entrepreneurs, etc.



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

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