

WHAT OUR REGION GROWS

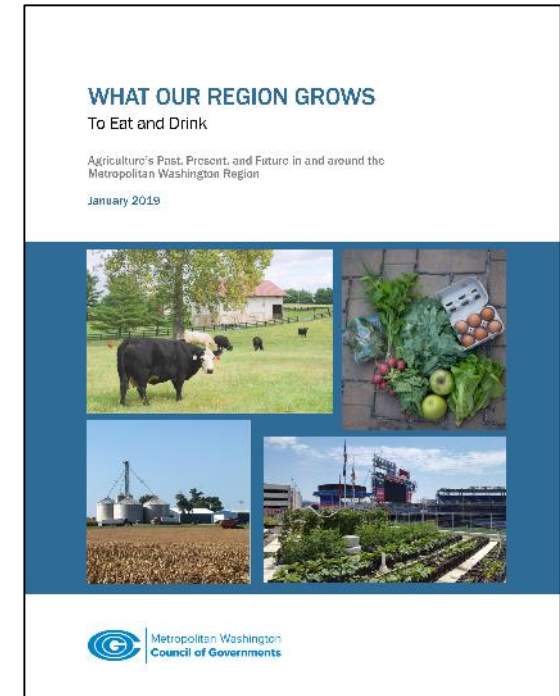
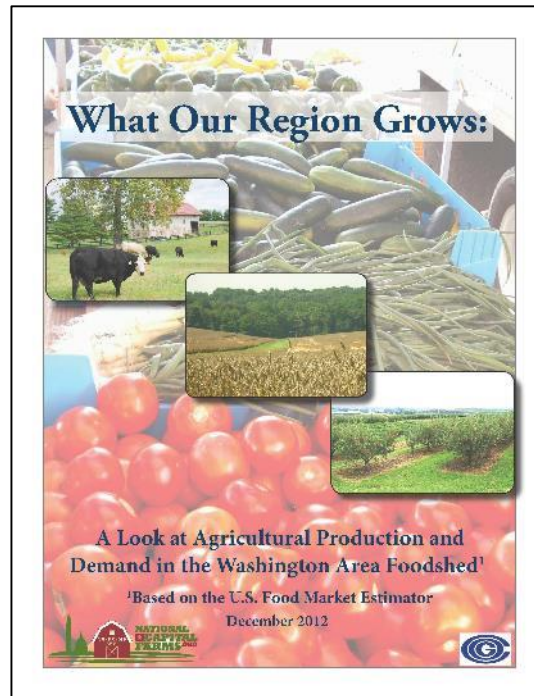
Strengthening Agriculture's Contribution to Metropolitan Washington with Regional Coordination

Lindsay Smith
Regional Food Systems Program

Presentation to Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee
March 15, 2019

Food and Agriculture at COG

- Coordinated a Regional Agricultural Work Group since 2006
- Released first *What Our Region Grows* Report in 2012
- Agriculture 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. Awaiting 2017 Census of Ag data for mid-year update

Report Contents

- Economic impact of agriculture
- Farms, farmers, farmland composition, food production
- Farmland fragmentation, preservation, and soils
- Farmer demographics
- Production and consumption estimates
- Local “Quick Facts,” including urban agriculture
- Industry challenges and opportunities
- Regional recommendations

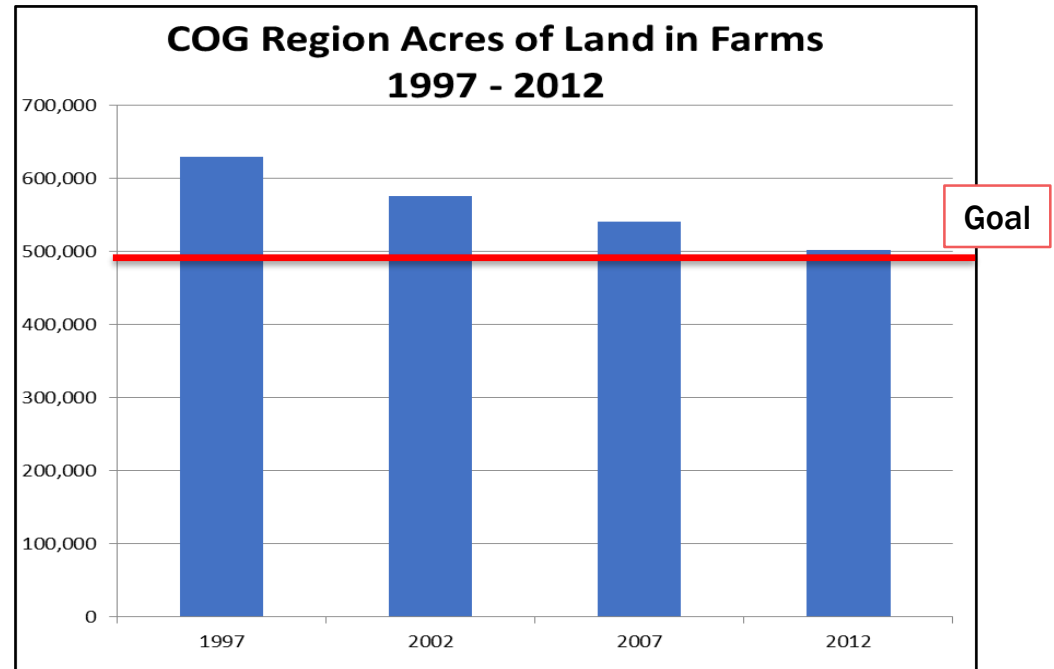


Photo credit: Jackie Arnold/Montgomery County Office of Agriculture

Land in Farms in the COG Region

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

- If past trends continue, 2017 data will show the region's land in farms continues to decline



Farmland: Multiple Benefits



Benefits of Healthy Soils

- Improved water holding capacity
- Sequester carbon and reduce GHG emissions
- Functions as a biological system; habitat for important soil organisms
- Long-term sustainability of agriculture
- Enhance crop quality
- Improve resistance to weeds and pests

Source: COG

Farmland: Multiple Stressors



Record rainfall in 2018 challenged even the best managed soils.

*Photo credit:
The Farm at
Sunnyside*

Agriculture's Economic Impact

Washington, D.C.

\$5.47 billion in economic impact
Production, Distribution, Grocery,
Restaurants, & Support Industries ¹

Maryland

\$2.9 billion in economic impact
Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, &
Support Industries ²

Virginia

\$2.23 billion in economic impact
Agriculture & Forestry ³



Photo credit: Richard Sullivan/Walsh Family Wine

Notes

¹ Preliminary 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

Regional Trends

- 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



Local Experiences Example

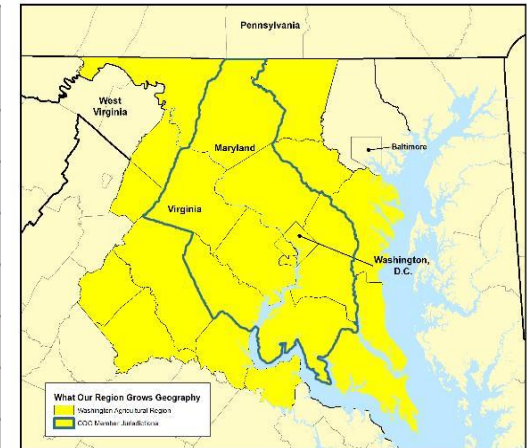
LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA					
	<p>\$37.1 M Ag Sales</p> <p>\$751 M Economic Impact</p>		<p>Farms: 1,396 Farmers: 2,328 Farmland: 134,792 acres</p>		<p>Ag Assessed Acres: 167,673 Preserved Farm Acres: 57,549 Farmland Value/Acre: \$11,977</p>
	<p>13 Farmers Markets 15 CSAs</p>		<p>Community Gardens: 2 School Gardens: 4</p>		<p>27 Breweries 40 Wineries 1 Distilleries 1 Cideries</p>

Every county in COG region, and the District of Columbia, has a page in report with agriculture “quick facts”

Declining Regional Food Production

2012 Food Production and Demand Comparison

Food Product	Production (acres or animals)	Demand (acres or animals)	Percent Demand Fulfilled	Surplus/Deficit (acres or animals)
Apples	1,778	18,655	10%	-16,877
Blueberries	56	3,101	2%	-3,045
Strawberries	34	12,896	0%	-12,862
Beans	2,323	11,365	20%	-9,042
Potatoes	181	28,533	1%	-28,352
Pumpkins	588	3,167	19%	-2,579
Squash	91	3,404	3%	-3,313
Sweet Corn	1,346	24,106	6%	-22,760
Tomatoes	444	35,615	1%	-35,171
Wheat	63,079	238,021	27%	-174,942
Corn	169,121	36,564	463%	132,557
Beef	119,166	722,321	16%	-603,155
Chicken	65,357	74,169,582	0%	-74,104,225
Pork	36,966	1,905,264	2%	-1,868,298
Dairy	44,041	235,067	19%	-191,026



What Our Region Grows report geography.

The Region's Food and Ag Future?

What kind of agricultural future do we want?

Currently, a lack of *regional* planning and coordination for:

- Food jobs/workforce
- Food security
- Environmental benefits of agriculture
- Quality of life
- Access to local food

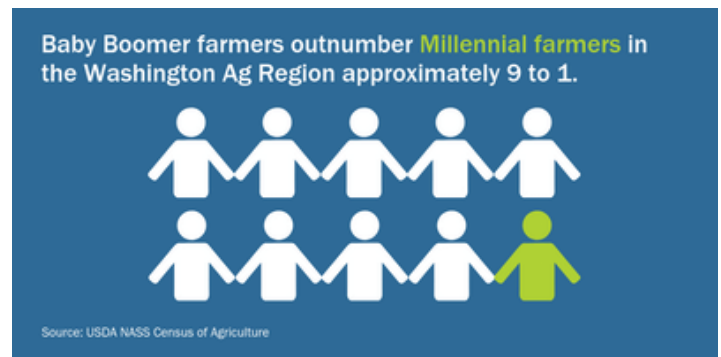


Photo Credit: (Top) Tyler Grigsby/ Tyler Grigsby Photography

Report Recommendations

- Strategic Plan for Agriculture
- Regional Committee on Food and Ag
- Regional forums on Farm Viability, Land Preservation, etc.
- Local investment in Ag
- Policy Improvements
- Regional collaboration on infrastructure



Above and Left: Squash planting through harvest and storage at Shlagel Farms in Charles County, a diversified fruit and vegetable farm growing for retail and wholesale markets. (Karl Shlagel/Shlagel Farms)

CBPC Action Item Request

Create Time-Limited, Advisory Task Force to:

- Advise on key questions to assess regional capacity to implement report recommendations
- Provide guidance on key regional leaders to interview with the evaluation framework



Photo Credits: (Above) Niraj Ray/Cultivate the City
(Below): Yankey Farms

Proposed Task Force Scope

COG is seeking 5 to 7 CBPC Members to:

- Participate in two meetings to share their perspective on the evaluation framework questions and interviewees.
- Provide feedback on a draft summary that will be presented at the May CBPC meeting.

A refined evaluation will then be used to interview regional leaders for a short report on regional capacity to implement recommendations in *What Our Region Grows*.

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