



# Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Environment & Production Subcommittee

October 27, 2022 1:00pm -2:00pm

1. Welcome
2. Group Discussion
  - A. Recap of E&P Work from 2022
    - I. The FSRC Report was adopted on October 26, 2022, the report includes both recommendations from 2021 and 2022. The report will be released on November 1<sup>st</sup> to the general assembly. We should begin looking at what was done, when considering the path forward for 2023, and development of a strategic plan.
      - Goal One: *Address the food insecurity crisis in the State resulting from the COVID -19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis*
        - Recommendation 1.1: Establish and maintain a statewide food system map incorporating data elements from existing maps to provide a holistic view of existing need, services, and gaps.
        - Recommendation 1.2: Local and state emergency management agencies should review and update emergency response plans to include non-congregate feeding capabilities.
        - Recommendation 1.3: The state should coordinate statewide emergency contracts for widespread non-congregate feeding needs
        - Recommendation 1.4: Establish a Maryland Food and Agriculture Resilience Mechanism (FARM) program at the Maryland Department of Agriculture to provide funding for direct purchase of food by food assistance



organizations from local farmers and provide technical assistance to farmers and food business owners.

- Recommendation 1.5: Fully fund the Office of Resilience and the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council
- Recommendation 1.6: Encourage the State government to integrate social safety net programs to enable better access for Marylanders.
- Recommendation 1.7: Conduct an assessment of existing Federal and State food system grants, programs, and resources and analyze gaps in Maryland's participation in the available opportunities.
- Recommendation 1.8: Evaluate food system metric best practices and collaborate with the State government to better understand existing performance metrics for food system-related spending. If the FSRC is fully funded, this could be undertaken by the Council staff. Otherwise, contractual support will likely be needed to support this project.
- Goal Two: *To develop, on or before November 1, 2021, equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the food system*
  - Recommendation 2.1: Allocate funding to increase the cold storage capacity across the state to meet immediate needs. Complete an assessment of existing cold storage resources in the state to better understand current resources to address gaps in the future.
  - Recommendation 2.2: Expand and modernize use of food benefits, including Maryland Market Money and EBT.
  - Recommendation 2.3: Establish and sustain Regional Agriculture Centers (RACs) in four MD regions (Eastern Shore, Western, North/Central and Southern)
  - Recommendation 2.4: Establish a Distributed Network of Cold Storage for Food System Resiliency



- Recommendation 2.5: Fund the Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste
- Goal Three: *To expand the impact of existing food council organizations*
  - Recommendation 3.1: Established a state -grant funded program for food council start -up, sustainment, and expansion costs.
  - Recommendation 3.2: Establish a requirement and supportive funding for Maryland counties to identify a local food system coordination body, such as a local food council.
- Goal Four: *To develop, on or before November 1, 2021, a strategic plan to increase the production and procurement of Maryland certified food*
  - Recommendation 4.1: Provide incentives to encourage Maryland school systems to purchase Maryland food.
  - Recommendation 4.2: Increase access to and use of technology to create and modify platforms to connect producers directly with consumers.
  - Recommendation 4.3: Diversify opportunities for small- and mid-scale producers.
  - Recommendation 4.4: Support statewide, regional, and local incentives or one-time grant programs to increase the number of food waste sites. Provide complementary technical assistance to local or regional entities to establish private sector or local government food waste programs.
  - Recommendation 4.5: Increase education on source separation of food waste and possibilities for on-farm composting/digestion.
  - Recommendation 4.6: Fund the Maryland Farm to School Grant Pilot
  - Recommendation 4.7: Conduct a Comprehensive Statewide Food Supply Value Chain Studies



- Recommendation 4.8: Expand Technical Assistance to Farmers Market Managers and Organizers
- Recommendation 4.9: Baseline Assessment and Reduction of Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions for Public Food Purchasing

II. E&P Subcommittee Summary: Post the mid-year report, the Environment and Production subcommittee continued meeting every two weeks. During these meetings the subcommittee engaged in a panel discussion, regarding how to extend healthy soil practices to healthy food. While the first report consisted of "shovel ready" recommendations, there are several areas indicated that remained for consideration for the Nov 2022 report. As such the subcommittee began examining several items, including, "Fully Fund the Maryland Healthy Soils Initiative." This item was later revised, to state "Integrate recommendations from the Maryland Healthy Soils Initiative into considerations to Food Resiliency and regenerative agriculture practices", due to the completion of the Maryland Healthy Soils Program Final Report, in January 2022. This prompted the Environment and Production subcommittee to focus on climate changes, and resiliency using regenerative agriculture practices, food hubs, and increasing incentives for production of table crops, while supporting commodity foods.

The subcommittee began drafting recommendations, by categorizing information into the following: (1) Regional production and identifying areas to concentrate on to increase food resiliency, including supply chain gaps (2) Climate change, regenerative agriculture, and food waste, and (3) Food Hubs, Farmers Market Associations, Internet marketplaces implementation, and processing

Several meeting with subject matter experts including: (1) Engaging in Maryland Agricultural & Resource Based-Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) listening sessions for farmers' market engagement (2) Formation of sub-subcommittees to examine methods of adaptation and climate change and (3) Facilitated discussion with agriculture economists from University of Maryland,



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members of the Soil Health Advisory Committee, and a study by Soil Carbon Partners on regenerative agriculture and soil amendments.

In addition to the recommendations in this report, the committee will look for ways to support new programs, such as the ‘Small Acreage Cover Crop Program to Support Urban Agriculture,’ ‘Healthy Soils Competitive Fund,’ ‘Cover Crop+ Program,’ and ‘Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund. Furthermore, the committee supports the creation of the Task force to make recommendations on the feasibility of returning to State meat processing inspection, as well as efforts underway at MARBIDCO to identify new financial resources to support the enhancement of livestock processing capacity in Maryland. Finally, there is support for the effort at MDA, to enhance the statewide and county level marketing support for farmers and seafood producers, through the new Certified Local Farm Enterprise.

## B. Committee Next Step for 2023 per FSRC Report *(E&P notes are in bold)*

- I. Implement an equity analysis of existing and proposed legislation, Council recommendations, and policies within the food system (We should begin considering equity as we develop recommendations; equity analysis will be completed during the legislative session in January, as council members engage in legislative activity. Additionally the council will continue working with a DEI facilitator to ensure equity is achieved within council functions.)
- II. Implement a systematic analysis to assess gaps within the food system (This links to recommendation 4.7 Conduct Comprehensive Statewide Food Supply Value Chain Studies, which looks at production in the food system, however a systematic analysis is needed for the entire food system)
- III. Establish guidelines and best practices for feeding programs, including: (1) establishing additional requirements and incentives for improved nutrition standards across state-funded and state-managed food programs; (2) increasing and incentivizing client choice programs; conducting focus groups to understand availability of food items versus need, demand, and feasibility; and (3) workshops or seminars (in person or virtual) at community



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- centers, farmers markets, food pantries, schools, etc. on preparing the types of local food available in Maryland.
- IV. Examine potential opportunities to mitigate or prepare for disruption to public food assistance benefits.
  - V. Examine potential areas of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to strengthen and streamline program areas including but not limited to: (1) the eligibility determination process to bring more equity (2) potentially examining income eligibility guidelines (3) incentivize usage of electronic reporting platforms and streamline reporting requirements
  - VI. Improve state carceral food systems, including engaging formerly incarcerated individuals to provide lived experience input. (Waste and inequity concerns can be examined by the committee in 2023)
  - VII. Better define the terms “local” and “regional” for the purposes of state food policy.
  - VIII. Mitigate the carbon footprint of Maryland’s food system and address climate change impacts on farmers, regional and local food systems, and how to plan for adaptation.
  - IX. Investigate opportunities to collaborate regionally, particularly with neighboring states, to better understand external influences on Maryland’s food system resiliency.
  - X. Evaluate the regional and local markets prospects and evaluate who are the buyers in the state, and then create a targeted brand to Maryland primarily and also the regional or national market demand.
  - XI. Support the development of Resilience Hubs to include food assistance mechanisms.
  - XII. Ensure that Maryland’s food and farmworkers have safe and fair working conditions, and explore the labor needs, challenges, and opportunities related to the food system in Maryland.
  - XIII. Create a pilot Farm Conservation Program to mitigate climate change, including determining the climate-friendly agricultural practices should be eligible for funding under the pilot program (such as increasing soil organic matter, prescribed grazing, or commodity transitions), establishing metrics for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions, and then verifying the GHG emission



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- reductions achieved for the agricultural practices funded in the pilot program.
- XIV. Understand the extent of the need for additional enforcement and technical assistance around existing state environmental protection laws for agriculture, including water pollution control permits, nutrient management plans, and the phosphorus management tool.
  - XV. Understand if there is a need for incentives, decreased policy barriers, or technical assistance for food waste composting, manure composting, anaerobic digestion, biochar, and other organics reutilization, and how these carbon-based fertilizers could be incorporated into nutrient management plans or other programs to provide incentives for increasing organic matter in soil, such as outcome-based payments to farmers for implementing effective healthy soils/carbon sequestration practices by measuring organic carbon or organic matter.
  - XVI. Support a statewide food waste reduction campaign and determine how new and existing efforts are integrated and what new initiatives that might bridge efforts across the food waste landscape.
  - XVII. Promote climate-resilient agriculture in Maryland through data-driven, demonstration projects at the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Stations located throughout the state (operated by the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources) for collecting quantifiable data and creating Extension and outreach materials that help farmers adapt to climate change and enable climate change adaptation and mitigation (through carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emission reduction) policy development.
  - XVIII. Determine how to best support the development of Food Resilience Hubs, including food assistance mechanisms, what is needed for long-term viability of food hubs, integration with cold chain infrastructure, and development of community distribution channels to connect local farmers with local consumers.
  - XIX. Investigate how to create or leverage opportunities to collaborate regionally, particularly with neighboring states, to better



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understand external influences on Maryland's food system resiliency.

- XX. Understand barriers to small producers expanding, including contradictory regulations (zoning barriers), economies of scale for equipment (shared resources and joint services), and risks associated with non-commodity/non-traditional crops, and legislative initiatives to overcome these barriers. Additional barriers could include access to land, access to seasonal workers at small farms, as well as access to affordable housing for workers, including zoning and easement barriers for housing
- XXI. Explore opportunities for connecting affordable housing efforts with food access efforts by evaluating national best practices. Affordable housing, fair and safe working conditions, and food security are inextricably linked issues, with thousands of Maryland households choosing between nutritious food and rent. While ensuring that wraparound services are being provided to those in need of housing assistance, there are other innovative methods of providing food insecure individuals agency over food choices. Some specific examples of some national best practices include: 1) Combined Application Projects, 2) Elderly Simplified Application Project (already in place in Maryland), 3) Standard Medical Deduction, 4) Elderly and Disabled Recertification Interview Waiver, 4) Continued expansions /waiver requests regarding Broad Based Categorical Eligibility, and 5) Equity in the Food system.
- XXII. Establish a pilot program with a handful of Area Aging Agencies in Maryland, facilitated by the Department of Aging, to increase procurement of fresh, local produce through grants and technical assistance.
- XXIII. Replicate the Baltimore City Urban Grocery Fund throughout the state of MD to retain our most "critical grocery store" locations, i.e., those locations that if closed would create a healthy food priority area, previously known as a food desert). Replicate the Baltimore City Urban Grocery Improvement Fund throughout the state of MD, which provides 50% matching funds (up to \$25,000 per location) to complete capital improvements to "critical grocery stores" that may include exterior and interior improvements.





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## C. Current work from Committee Members

- I. Dr. Stephanie Lansing – University of Maryland is working with Maryland Department of Agriculture on a statewide assessment of manure based, and animal food waste based current technologies for waste reduction, which includes understanding considerations for climate change impacts, and economic impact. Lastly, another study undertaken involves characterization of all food waste starting at landfills, which waste is sorted and quantified to determine how much is food waste, what can be reused, and what can be used as biofuel.
- II. Chloe Waterman – Senior Program Manager for Climate Friendly Food Program at Friends of the Earth, and volunteer co-chair of the PG County Food Equity Council. At Friends of the Earth, Chloe leads the domestic policy work that aims at transitioning away from chemical intensive monocropping and factory farming, towards a regenerative food system that is mostly plants and a sustainable amount of pastured livestock production. Other work includes examining both the supply and demand with school food at the federal level, with the goal to shift state, local, and federal procurement purchasing dollars to create a food system through shared values in food purchasing. In terms of supply, examining how the State and Federal government can decrease the harm of industry livestock to communities of color, and low-income communities that are affected by environmental injustice impacts. Furthermore, ongoing digester work includes examining the inflation reduction act, considering how funding under the inflation reduction act is being used for conservation, and how this can achieve desired outcomes. Finally with PG County work is focused on coordinating a campaign for food and jail, looking at carceral food systems.
- III. Devora Kimelman -Block – Agriculture Policy Specialist for Waterkeepers Chesapeake, current focus is on development of a film regarding regenerative urban farming to be shown during the legislative session on the week of January 16<sup>th</sup>, to bring the farm to the legislators. The goal is to promote recommendations like the



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RAC recommendation, and other concerns/issues to the legislators. Maryland farmers will be present during the showing, and legislators will be invited to take an in-person tour. Next, solar work is ongoing, the IRA has invested funding, we are examining more regulations for solar companies to prevent farm land from being overtaken, and advocating for dual-purpose land usage. A webinar will be offered in December with legislators, farmers, and solar companies.

- IV. Grace Leatherman – Executive Director for Future Harvest, current projects are geared towards training farmers (e.g. The Beginner Training Program which includes three levels, and the Pick-Your-Own-Consultant program which provides funds to farmers to identify specific issues with their farm, or marketing practices). The Agriculture Leadership Development Initiative is a program which assists farmers of color and veterans in discussion of inequities, farmer training, leadership, and the agriculture system. There is a conference coming up in January <https://futureharvest.org/events/annual-conference/2023-conference/>. Lastly, current food system work includes grant work (e.g. Future Harvest is participating in applying for the USDA Land Access Grant with two separate groups).
- V. Jenny Freeman – A member of the Montgomery Food council, and runs a nonprofit in Montgomery County which connects families experiencing food insecurity with local farmers (identified an interest in connecting local farmers with the overall food system).
- VI. Jeremy Criss - Director for the Office of Agriculture in Montgomery County, current work is focused on developing a pilot program which will examine if farming under solar panels in the Mid-Atlantic region is possible (e.g. can concerns related to hydrophobic soil due to lack of exposure to moisture be resolved?). Other Identified challenges involve determining the cost of tracking mounted solar panels. There are several bills under consideration in the county council that are related to climate change initiatives, and an on farm composting training hub is under development with the University of Maryland Master Gardeners, the training will be located at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood. There will be a hosted



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composting workshop at the Agricultural History Farm Park in March (specific date TBD).

- VII. Lee Babcock – Steering Committee member with Frederick County Food Council, the main initiative for the council is the new online farmers market referred to in the report ( Frederick Fresh Online ). Recently a new pilot with Door Dash's nonprofit arm has allowed Frederick Fresh Online to schedule free food delivery (this service is only available to 501C3 organizations involved with food distribution). As an incentive Door Dash will provide a \$10 payment per delivery to participating drivers.
- VIII. Lindsay Smith – Support Regional Food Systems Planner for Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, currently the council is working on two possible overlapping projects (1) the catalytic opportunity work group is examining the intersection of food procurement and small -scale farmers (specifically barriers and challenges associated), (2) USDA funding awarded for the establishment of a regional food policy council community of practice, which one work group from MW COG was accepted to participate.
- IX. Philip Bogdonoff – active participant with Climate Action Coffee, there are three work groups (Pollinators, Takoma Stormwater Solutions, and Community Food Forest) which collectively questions candidates regarding food security, food forest, and climate related issues, in order to raise awareness and commitment. Other efforts involve the Montgomery Food Council in preparing for the Nov 2rd A Virtual Community Symposium: Food System Strategies to Address Climate Change . Once the State report is released and after the symposium there are plans to strategize how to set priorities. As a board member of Biodiversity for a Livable Climate, there are planned events ( Redesigning Our Communities for Life After Fossil Fuels ) with Richard Heinburg (next event scheduled on November 12<sup>th</sup> ). Finally, please see the following report Simon Michaux's work about Metals and Minerals limits to scaling to build renewables & related infrastructure - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KLRpTfG5dzADbkxwpLxTnBvHD9bu04TleifBoiubAi8/edit#>



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- I. Stacey Kubofcik – Senior Program Manager for MARBICO, the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Program will be open November 18<sup>th</sup> for the next round. There is a \$1,000 matching grant for cold storage available until October 31<sup>st</sup>, this is a 50% matching grant for farmers with at least \$1,000 of sales. There is a partnership with Future Harvest in the land access grant application, determining which program can aid urban farmers in accessing land with additional funding. Lastly, MARIBCO is planning to apply for a USDA grant for meat processing in order to set up a grant fund. Please visit <https://northeast.sare.org/grants/get-a-grant/farmer-grant-program/> for the Farmer Grant Program with Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE).
  - II. Sydney Daigle – PG County Food Equity Council coordinates with a network of local food pantries to promote local procurement, for example providing cold storage. As well as convening farmers' markets to address barriers and challenges (e.g. assisting with permitting concerns, and regulation/reform work at the local level). A food recovery program (food waste efforts) is growing, the council serves as a coordinating group using Food Rescue US software. There are plans to look at composting regulation at the local level. Finally, examining barriers of farmers in PG, work is undertaken to promote urban agriculture, including PG County Urban Incubator Program on Park and Planning land, as well as work with zoning regulations that affect urban farmers.
  - III. Nancy Nunn - Hughes Center Holds Convening Of Climate Researchers
3. Next steps and adjourn
- Creating synergy and development of a strategize plan to fill gaps at the local and state level