



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY COMMITTEE

Friday, December 5, 2025
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Virtual Only

(DRAFT) MEETING SUMMARY

DECISIONS & ACTIONS

- FARM members approved the September 12th joint meeting summary.
- FARM members approved the 2025-2026 Strategic Framework.
- FARM members reviewed and accepted the draft legislative priorities for 2026; no objections or major concerns were raised.
- FARM Local Food Procurement Challenge was officially launched; jurisdictions are encouraged to pass a resolution, designate a point person, and participate in the community of practice.
- Staff will circulate the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center's Earned Income Tax Credit report, event recording, and strategy playbook to members.
- Members were encouraged to complete a survey to help prioritize 2026 meeting topics: [FARM Policy Committee 2026 Meeting Topics – Fill out form](#)
- Staff will coordinate with members who have not registered for the December 16th Regional Aggregation and Distribution Summit to ensure their participation if possible.
- Akanksha Sinha (Manna Food Center) will circulate information and seek collaboration on upcoming SNAP data privacy legislation in Maryland.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS, AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Councilmember Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Supervisor Laura TeKrony, FARM Vice Chair

Chair Andrew Friedson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He welcomed members and guests and acknowledged the snowy weather and virtual format. New FARM members Cat Oakar, Executive Director, FRESHFARM, and Katherine Braga, Manager, Office of Food Security, Prince George's County Department of Social Services, introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds and priorities.

Vice Chair TeKrony led the committee in reviewing and approving the September 12th joint HSPC/FARM meeting summary and FARM's proposed 2025-2026 Strategic Framework. Both were reviewed with no comments or questions and approved by acclamation.

Chair Friedson presented suggested changes to COG's food and farm legislative priorities for 2026, highlighting condensed recommendations and inviting comments from farm members, with no major concerns raised.

LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT CHALLENGE

Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Sara Pollock Hoverter, Director, Center for Community Health Innovation, O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, Georgetown University Law Center

Sydney Daigle, Regional Food Systems Consultant, FARM Policy Committee

Chair Friedson introduced FARM's Local Food Procurement Challenge, emphasizing regional collaboration to increase local and regional food purchasing by public institutions. He outlined the steps for jurisdictions to join the challenge: passing a customizable resolution, designating a local food investment point person, engaging in the community of practice, and reporting progress. COG staff will support jurisdictions throughout the process

Sarah Hoverter described the community of practice as a space for jurisdictions and partners to share best practices, contract language, vendor connections, and technical assistance. She offered legal expertise and encouraged organizations like FRESHFARM to participate and support newer members.

Sydney Daigle clarified the definitions of 'local' and 'regional' for the challenge, specifying DC, Maryland, and Virginia as local, and including contiguous states as regional. A tiered approach to sourcing was discussed to prioritize proximity and flexibility based on jurisdictional needs.

Members discussed the importance of including school boards, food service directors, and institutional purchasers in the challenge and community of practice. The committee agreed to facilitate peer groups within the community of practice to address specific procurement challenges and share best practices.

REMARKS FROM VIRGINIA'S NEXT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Clark Mercer, Executive Director, COG

Katie Frazier, Secretary-elect of Agriculture and Forestry for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Clark Mercer, COG's Executive Director, introduced Katie Frazier, Virginia's Secretary-Elect of Agriculture and Forestry. Secretary-Elect Frazier described her career in agricultural advocacy, including roles with the Virginia Agribusiness Council and Farm Credit of the Virginias, and her personal connection to the Shenandoah Valley. She highlighted the new administration's focus on growing and protecting ag and forestry interests, supporting producers of all sizes, and enhancing food access and education about local food production. She expressed enthusiasm for learning more about FARM's Local Food Procurement Challenge and collaborating with regional partners, including agencies and organizations involved in food access and local food systems.

STATE TAX POLICY OPTIONS FOR SUPPORTING LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Brooke Lierman, Comptroller of Maryland

Aravind Boddupalli, Senior Research Associate, Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center

Brooke Lierman, Maryland Comptroller, and Aravind Boddupalli, Senior Research Associate at the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, presented findings on increasing uptake of the Maryland Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), discussing outreach strategies, barriers to access, and recommendations for state and local leaders, with emphasis on trusted messengers and cross-agency collaboration.

Comptroller Lierman explained the importance of the EITC as an anti-poverty tool, noting that about 100,000 eligible Marylanders did not claim the credit in the previous tax year. The Comptroller's office launched the 'Earned It' campaign and saw an 8% increase in filers claiming the EITC.

Aravind Boddupalli described the three-phase research approach used for the Urban Institute's *Helping Maryland Connect Underserved Residents to Crucial State Tax Credits* report: stakeholder interviews, tax data analysis, and focus groups in six Maryland counties, targeting populations such as nontraditional caregivers, immigrants, and rural residents.

The research identified awareness gaps about the state's EITC, the importance of trusted government and nonprofit messengers, and the need for multimodal outreach. Barriers included a lack of in-person tax filing support, cultural sensitivity, and concerns about privacy and fraud.

The report recommends seven strategies to increase uptake of the EITC:

- building trust through partnerships,
- diverse media outreach,
- increasing free tax preparation options,
- cross-agency collaboration,
- education for adults and children,
- preventing tax fraud,
- and ongoing evaluation with community input.

Chair Friedson noted Montgomery County's Working Families Income Supplement, which matches a portion of the EITC, and emphasized the need for awareness and support to maximize the impact of these programs.

MEMBER DISCUSSION: SHUTDOWN UPDATE & OTHER 2025 TAKEAWAYS

Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Laura TeKrony, FARM Vice Chair

Lindsay Smith, Senior Food & Agriculture Planner, COG

Members provided updates on recent federal data sharing requests affecting SNAP administrative funding, state-level responses, and upcoming legislative efforts to protect SNAP data privacy, with additional perspectives from Capital Area Food Bank and local jurisdictions:

- LaMonika Jones, MD & DC Hunger Solutions, explained the administration's recent requests for SNAP client data, the refusal of states like Maryland and DC to comply, and the resulting halt to administrative funding. A court injunction currently protects noncompliant states, and SNAP benefits themselves are not affected.
- Caroline Howe, DC Office of Food Policy, reported that DC was able to issue full SNAP benefits on time during the federal shutdown, using local funds, and highlighted the need for improved emergency preparedness and data sharing across the region.

- Akanksha Sinha, Manna Food Center, announced upcoming efforts to draft and circulate legislation focused on SNAP data privacy and protection, inviting collaboration from organizations and elected officials.
- Joe Liu, Capital Area Food Bank, noted that while food assistance demand is stabilizing, recovery from the shutdown will take time, and concerns remain about future federal government shutdowns and their impact on food security.
- Chair Friedson described Montgomery County's \$7.75 million emergency package, including direct food assistance, support for nonprofit providers, and rapid rehousing funds, as a response to increased food insecurity and homelessness during the shutdown.

Vice Chair TeKrony and Lindsay Smith reviewed the committee's activities for 2025, including meetings on avian flu, food waste, HR1 impacts, joint policy sessions, and farm tours, highlighting the committee's engagement with regional food system issues. Lindsay Smith announced the upcoming second annual Aggregation and Distribution Summit on December 16th, with registration at capacity and a survey for members to prioritize issues for next year.

ADJOURN

Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Chair Friedson adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

FARM MEMBERS

Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair, Montgomery County Council*
 Laura TeKrony, FARM Vice Chair, Loudoun County*
 Yesy Amaya, City of Manassas Park
 Tara Clemons Johnson (alternate)
 Marybeth Connelly, City of Falls Church
 Megan Milliken, Chesapeake Bay Funders Network
 Jacinta Greene, City of Alexandria
 Jessica Landsman, City of Takoma Park
 Rodney Lusk, Fairfax County (alternate)
 Denise Mitchell, City of College Park
 Dalia Palchik, Fairfax County
 Katherine Braga, Prince George's County Office of Food Security
 Heather Bruskin, Montgomery County Office of Food System Resilience
 Caron Gremont, FRESHFARM (Alternate)
 Charles Green, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 Julia Gross, MD Hunger Solutions
 Sara Hoverter, Georgetown University Law, O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law*
 Caroline Howe, DC Office of Planning/DC Food Policy Council
 Rachel Jones, Maryland Department of Agriculture
 Joe Liu, Capital Area Food Bank (Alternate)
 Cat Oakar, FRESHFARM
 Jon Stehle (emeritus member)
 Chris VanVlack, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District

SPEAKERS

Brooke Lierman, Comptroller of Maryland

Aravind Boddupalli, Senior Research Associate, Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center

Katie Frazier, Secretary-elect of Agriculture and Forestry for the Commonwealth of Virginia

* Additional meeting speaker

PARTICIPANTS

Akanksha Sinha

Alex Cordova

Alisa Brooks

Brian Alexander

Annarose Kennedy

Annika La Fave

Amanda Cather

Ashley Sharp

Caitlin Grady

Carmen Angel

Chris Blosser

Cindy Gibson

Corey Welcher

Dalila Boclin

Dana Melby

Daniela Ochoa Gonzalez

David Noto

David Plummer

Deb Dramby

Emily Lacey

Emily Landsman

Erika Huddleston

Fumi Agbola

Harumi N ReisReilly

Heidi Hertz

Jennifer Freeman

Jennifer Montgomery

Jesse Pearlmuter

Joseph Peralta

Julia Raymond

Karen Fedor

Kashaf Momin

Kim Rush Lynch

LaMonika Jones

Lauren DeSimone

Lily Duran

Lorien MacAuley

Luanda Fiscella

Mary Charlton

Melissa Jensen

Michelle Caruso

Molly Meehan

Morgan Standley

Nancy K Nunn

Natalia Salazar Lahera

Philip Bogdonoff

Piper Phillips Caswell

Pride Anya Ebile

Rabia Tanweer

Rob Schnabel

Robin McClave

Stacey Evers

Stephanie Hopkins

Stephanie Lansing

Steven Jones

Stuart Vermaak

Timothy Enright

Truphena Choti

Warren Hansen

Willie Woode

COG

Christine Howard

Clark Mercer*

Izam Izzadeen

Lindsay Smith

Lisa Ragain

Sam Kenney

Steve Bieber

Sydney Daigle*