



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY COMMITTEE

Friday, February 13, 2026
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
Virtual Only

(DRAFT) MEETING SUMMARY

DECISIONS & ACTIONS

- FARM members approved the December 5th joint meeting summary with several abstentions.
- COG staff will send members an MS Word Version of the Draft Resolution Template for the Local Food Procurement Challenge, along with the new Fact Sheet and Procurement Strategies handout.
- Staff will update the New Member Orientation slide deck to with information on progress made on the strategic framework priorities over the course of 2025.
- FARM Members were asked to complete a survey on meeting priorities for 2026.
- Staff will send meeting invitations for subsequent FARM meetings to members.

WELCOME, MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS, AND COMMITTEE

Councilmember Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Supervisor Laura TeKrony, FARM Vice Chair

Lindsay Smith, Senior Food & Agriculture Planner, COG

Montgomery County Councilmember Andrew Friedson, Chair of the FARM Policy Committee, and Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Member, and FARM Vice Chair, Laura TeKrony introduced themselves and invited new members to do the same.

Council Member Jolene Ivy (Prince George's County), Takis Karantonis (Arlington County Board), and Naomi Herr (City of Laurel) provided introductions. Adrienne Wojciechowski, DC's new Urban Agriculture Director, introduced herself to the group and shared the upcoming, annual [Rooting DC](#) event with members. Together this group described their jurisdictions' food system challenges, and highlighted priorities such as food insecurity, urban agriculture, and the need for innovative solutions to support vulnerable populations.

Returning member Charles Green, now Commissioner of Agriculture for Virginia, provided an update on his new responsibilities, including aligning programs with state priorities like food affordability, energy compatibility with agriculture, workforce development, and addressing gaps left by reduced federal funding for food assistance.

Chair Friedson called for a vote on the December meeting summary. Members voted to approve the summary with several abstentions.

Farm Committee “Mini Orientation”

Lindsay Smith shared the FARM Committee's origins, mission, structure, work groups, and 2025 to 2026 *Strategic Framework*. She explained its role within the Council of Governments (COG), its mission and focus on regional food system coordination. The FARM Committee:

- Operates under the COG Board and coordinates with other COG policy committees.
- Was first established in 2020 to address rising food insecurity and declining farmland in the region.
- Includes both elected officials and subject matter experts.
- Consists of 32 regular members and nine subject matter experts from organizations such as Capital Area Food Bank and Maryland Hunger Solutions, providing a broad base of expertise to inform policy and program development.
- Has two main work groups: the Regional Agricultural Work Group (members are local government and non-profit staff working with farmers) and the DMV Food Council Collaborative (comprising food policy directors, food security coordinators, and major food assistance organizations).

WINTER STORM FERN: REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM IMPACTS AND EMERGENCY COORDINATION

Andrew Friedson, FARM Chair

Eli Russ, Senior Public Safety Planner, Department of Homeland Security and Public Safety, COG

Caroline Howe, Food Policy Director, District of Columbia

Chair Friedson introduced the speakers and acknowledged the impacts of Fern to Montgomery County and the region.

Eli Russ shared how the region works together before and during extreme weather events. COG's regional winter weather coordination program includes regular planning meetings, coordination calls, and information sharing among transportation, emergency management, and public safety agencies to address severe weather impacts.

He reviewed some of the tools used, including geospatial data exchange, to monitor conditions and coordinate responses. Agencies provide updates on road conditions, transit impacts, and mobilization levels during storms.

Caroline Howe presented on the impacts of Fern on the regional food system, highlighting challenges to food access, and lessons learned for future preparedness in the District. A primary food system challenge during the storm was staff inability to reach workplaces due to unclear roads. This affected grocery stores, distributors, and food access points. DC Schools managed to shift menus to avoid food waste, but extended closures in the region posed risks for food-insecure students.

Farmers markets faced operational challenges due to the snow and ice on roads and in plazas. The District prioritized markets with high SNAP redemption rates. Caroline noted that farmers markets are not currently classified as critical infrastructure, highlighting a need for policy change.

Caroline emphasized the importance of emergency contracts for food provision, pre-positioning food for vulnerable populations, and integrating food system leaders into emergency planning. She also highlighted the need for flexible school meal distribution and improved access during emergencies.

LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT CHALLENGE LAUNCH AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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, Sara Hoverter, and Sydney Daigle introduced the Local Food Procurement Challenge (LFPC) for new members.

Chair Friedson created the LFPC challenge to invite jurisdictions to use their purchasing power to invest in local and regional food systems, supporting farmers, food producers, and vulnerable residents. He reviewed the economic, health, environmental, and preparedness benefits that investing food dollars locally and regionally can support. The initiative is designed to be flexible to meet jurisdictions where they are and to encourage incremental progress.

Sara Hoverter described the Local Food Procurement Community of Practice (CoP) that she will lead. The CoP will:

- **Support peer-to-peer learning** by bringing together jurisdictions that are at different stages of buying local food so they can learn from one another’s experiences and challenges rather than working in isolation.
- **Provide technical assistance to ensure that law and procurement rules are not barriers to buying local and regional food.** The CoP will contract language support, and connections to subject-matter experts such as food hubs and farmer-facing organizations.

She shared that public procurement as a powerful way for governments to align spending with food system values which is especially needed in the current political and funding climate.

Sydney Daigle introduced two new resources that will be sent to FARM members to support joining and participating in the challenge: a fact sheet and menu of procurement strategies to help jurisdictions identify actionable steps they can take to shift food procurement dollars. The materials were developed in response to member questions about the LFPC.

Some next steps to join the Local Food Procurement Challenge:

- **Designate a local food procurement point person** for the jurisdiction to coordinate participation in the challenge.
- **Join the Community of Practice (COP)** for peer learning and technical assistance.
- **Include multiple staff or partners in the COP**, such as representatives from:
 - Schools
 - Procurement offices
 - Staff working on food and ag policy and with strong relationships with local farmers
- **Review and use the forthcoming LFPC fact sheet**
- **Adopt one or more strategies from the menu of procurement strategies**, like:
 - Prioritizing locally grown products for meetings, events, catering, and public giveaways
 - Structuring procurement contracts or RFPs to better accommodate local products
 - Unbundling contracts (e.g., separate contracts for locally grown foods)
 - Using grants, incentives, or scoring rubrics that prioritize local food purchasing

- Supporting food-related programs (e.g., food-as-medicine initiatives) that source local food
- Investing in or encouraging food system infrastructure and supply chain support
- Building public and staff buy-in through education, promotion, and capacity building
- **Pass a resolution (encouraged but not required to start)** to formally commit to increasing local food purchasing.
- **Conduct basic data assessment** of current spending on local foods if your jurisdiction does not have one.
 - The CoP can provide support on this.
- **Start at any level that fits your capacity**

Supervisor Palchik raised a question about working with public schools, encouraging FARM to reach out to *Real Food for Kids* to work together on the challenge.

Sara Hoverter highlighted that K–12 school districts are often the largest food purchasers and that there are clear USDA Child Nutrition Program rules that already allow schools to buy more local food. Schools are a strong and practical entry point for local procurement efforts.

Chair Friedson Montgomery County shared that Montgomery County is starting work on a draft Resolution for the County Council to consider participating. He also shared the Office of Food System Resilience’s recent announcement of an RFP to attract a local food aggregator and distributor to work with County farmers to serve wholesale markets. He invited members to reach out to him with any questions, acknowledging that all communities are different and reiterating the LFPC’s flexibility.

Members discussed other ideas for participating. Staff will follow up on an employee CSA incentive idea. Others voiced support for the LFPC, including FARM Chair emeritus Jon Stehle, who praised Chair Friedson’s leadership. Efforts like the LFPC are what FARM was created to do.

STATE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES

Supervisor Laura TeKrony, FARM Vice Chair

Supervisor TeKrony, Caroline Howe, Julia Gross (MD Hunger Solutions), and others provided updates on relevant state legislative initiatives in VA, DC, and MD. focusing on school meals, farmland preservation, food procurement, and support for food-insecure populations.

VA: Laura TeKrony reported on the Farm Committee's support for SB4 and HB96, which aims to provide universal free school meals. She also discussed efforts to acquire Oak Hill as a state park for farmland preservation and new farmer land access in Loudoun County. Additional priorities included housing and data center regulation. She also mentioned agrivoltaics legislation to support accessory solar on rural land as part ongoing efforts to balance agricultural preservation with renewable energy development.

DC: Caroline Howe highlighted the DC Food Policy Council Procurement Amendment Act, which would require reporting on local procurement and support for workforce development. She also described recent wins for cottage food producers who can now sell wholesale to restaurants and supermarkets.

MD: Julia Gross described advocacy for the CEP supplement bill to support school meal programs, a provision in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to protect education funding for CEP schools, and a new bill to establish a state SNAP program for humanitarian immigrants affected by federal cuts.

Meeting participants provided other updates and resources in the Meeting Chat. They can be found at the end of the meeting summary.

COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Supervisor Laura TeKrony, FARM Vice Chair

Laura TeKrony and Lindsay Smith reviewed the upcoming 2026 meeting schedule, discussed the strategic framework guiding committee priorities, and encouraged member input on future meeting topics and activities.

FARM member feedback is being collected [in this short survey](#).

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 am.

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, Montgomery County Council (alternate)

Carrol McBryde, Town of Bladensburg

Marilyn Blount, Town of Bladensburg (alternate)

Jolene Ivey, Prince George's County

Takis Karantonis, Arlington County

Jessica Landsman, City of Takoma Park

Denise Mitchell, City of College Park

Dalia Palchik, Fairfax County

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

Naomi Herr, City of Laurel

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)

Megan Milliken, Chesapeake Bay Funders Network

Julia Raymond, DC Office of Planning/DC Food Policy Council (alternate)

Katie Stevens, Frederick County Office of Agriculture

Chris VanVlack, Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District

Jon Stehle (emeritus member)

SPEAKERS

Eli Russ, Senior Public Safety Planner, Department of Homeland Security and Public Safety (DHSPS), COG

** Additional meeting speaker*

PARTICIPANTS

Adrienne Wojciechowski
Akanksha Sinha
Alexis | Safe Space Strategies
Annika La Fave
Annmarie Hart-Bookbinder
Beth Sastre
Brian Alexander
Cindy Gibson
Craig Rice
E Fatimah Hasan
Elisa Solomon
Elizabeth Borst
Erin Michelle Duru
Gillian Kimura
Grace Leatherman
Jesse Lupo
John W. Sheridan
Kashaf Momin
Katherine Braga
Kathy Johnson
Kim Rush Lynch
Laura Jeske
Lorien MacAuley
Mandilyn Beck
Mary Charlton
Max Broad
Melissa Jensen

Alisa Brooks
Amy Zerante
Annarose Kennedy
Michelle Caruso
Molly Meehan
Jesse Pearlmutter
Morgan Standley
Nancy K Nunn
Piper Kohlenberger
Piper Phillips Caswell
Rebecca Tucker
Robin McClave
Samuel Wilson
Stacey Evers
Stephanie Hopkins
Sydney Garner
Truphena Choti
Warren Hansen
Willie Woode

COG

Christine Howard
Lindsay Smith*
Steve Bieber
Sushanth Gupta
Sydney Daigle*

MEETING CHAT RESOURCES

December meeting materials including notes on the Local Food Procurement Challenge Launch:
<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2025/12/5/food-and-agriculture-regional-member-farm-policy-committee/>

Local Food Procurement Challenge Resources

- Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) offered to provide Sara Hoverter its 2025 Farm to School Planning Report from Montgomery County authored in collaboration with MCPS.
 - Sara's email: sara.hoverter at georgetown.edu
- Lorien MacAuley, PhD, MCFC: "As one sort of "low-hanging fruit" option for local procurement - we came up with a local caterer's list, since it may be easier for offices to choose a local caterer for the many events we all host. Many caterers will use more local ingredients if you

request them, which immediately builds Farm-to-Restaurant connections. Here is the list from MoCo, as an example:

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rROGDz0UUTdggV4ScsH10q214Dvve8N/view?usp=sharing>
- Direct link to the Local Food Procurement Challenge draft Resolution template:
 - <https://www.mwcog.org/file.aspx?&A=uqRPNX6mmLHVTrqK5H7TiWHwey6uPxOZMw88o4t%2f2KM%3d>
- Link to the Montgomery County Local Food Aggregator NOFO:
 - <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/ogm/Resources/Files/NOFOs/FY26-Food-Aggregation-Grant-Program-NOFO-S...>
 - Press Release:
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MDMONTGOMERY/bulletins/407606b>
- Howe, Caroline (OP): “We’ve also had some great success engaging HR around paired agency CSA pickups — and connected with food waste outreach! I think that could all be a step towards leveraging your government dollars by building those relationships!”

State Legislative Updates

- Raymond, Julia (OP): More details about DC's Procurement Amendment Act here: <https://dcfoodpolicy.org/2026/01/20/action-alert-food-policy-council-procurement-amendment-act-of-2...>
- Annika La Fave -MDEM-: Specifically for Maryland, the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC) provides a public food systems legislation tracker here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Vqun5AL-FJAQfMmEFrukSI825niCXri/edit?gid=447740639#gid=447...> (updated daily)
- Lorien MacAuley, PhD; MoCo Food Council: Our food council's list from MD General Assembly.
 - [HB0704/SB0586](#) Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program.
 - [SB0461](#) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program - Eligibility
 - [HB0072](#) Natural Resources - Edible Forests and Foraging Program.
 - [SB0371/HB0395](#) Water Pollution Control - Discharge Permits - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations.
 - [HB0429](#) On-Farm Organics and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Programs.
 - [HB0547](#) Income Tax - Subtraction Modification - Enhanced Agricultural Management Equipment.
 - [HB0272](#) Food Establishments - Lavatory Requirement and On-Farm Food Service Facility License (Chair, Health Committee).
 - [SB0387](#) Food Retailers - Dynamic Pricing, Surveillance Data, and Collective Bargaining Agreements (Protection From Predatory Pricing Act).
 - [HB0359](#) Property Tax Credit - Urban Agricultural Property - Alterations.
 - [SB0284](#) Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2026.
In the Senate, First Reading, Budget and Taxation
- Akanksha Sinha
 - We are supporting HB704 and SB586 in Maryland towards the expansion of CEP; the bill asks for \$10 million to support CEP. MD Hunger Solutions (thanks Julia!) put together a great toolkit for testimony, so we are submitting testimony and gathering quotes from our school partners who have CEP!

- Annika La Fave -MDEM-
 - Here's the MD Session Dates:
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/Other/2026rs-Session-dates.pdf>
 - Crossover is 3/23
- Akanksha Sinha: We are also following SB4 in MGA, which prevents the weakening of the Johnson Amendment, to ensure that nonprofit, religious, philanthropic organizations remain prohibited from endorsing or opposing candidates for elected office. There are some efforts to weaken it by the current presidential administration.
- Stephanie Hopkins: There is a budget amendment in Virginia to create a similar SNAP program for people who have lost snap due to immigration status through July 2026.
 - [329#1s \(DSS\) State Funded Food Assistance Program. SB30 - Member Request](#)
- Chris Van Vlack: This one from our western Loudoun delegate was unfortunately tabled...deals with the increasing groundwater issues in western Loudoun/northern Fauquier. Encouraged more monitoring with the potential to have a groundwater management area established.
 - [HB501 - 2026 Regular Session | LIS](#)

FARM Member Survey on 2026 Meeting Topics

[FARM Policy Committee 2026 Meeting Topics – Fill out form.](#)

Announcements

E Fatimah Hasan: Just FYI, UCFA has a conference scheduled in March, feel free to at least join us on Friday, March 6! [CONFERENCE OVERVIEW](#)

Julia Raymond: ...the Community Gardens Mini Grant in PG County for anyone in the County who is interested: <https://cbtrust.org/grants/prince-georges-county-community-gardens/>