

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE REGIONAL MEMBER (FARM) POLICY COMMITTEE

2025 TO 2026 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Approved xx xx, xxxx

Overview

This document outlines priority objectives for the FARM Committee to pursue over the course of 2025 and 2026. They were identified using a stakeholder-driven process that engaged FARM members.¹ The objectives fall under the following five areas:

1. Identify and promote equity-focused high-impact short and long-term local and regional strategies, investments, and systems to address increasing food insecurity in the region.
2. Increase market visibility and opportunities for diverse farmers and food producers at all scales.
3. Preserve and increase access to new and existing farmland and production spaces for food-producing farmers in the region.
4. Promote environmental sustainability and resilience through the regional food system.
5. Increase engagement and coordination with congressional and state-level elected officials.

FARM's Mission

To support development of long-term regional direction and collaboration toward a more resilient, secure, equitable, connected food and farm economy (food system) across Metropolitan Washington's urban, suburban and rural communities to provide more of the region's food needs.²

We deliver on our mission when:

- Local governments, policymakers, and communities are informed about leading and innovative practices, trends, and legislation to improve food system resilience and equity.
- We communicate with local, state, and federal staff and policymakers about the policies and investments needed to achieve FARM's mission and priorities.
- FARM's priorities are widely embraced as regional priorities, and strategic connections to schools and education are highlighted and further developed.

¹ A description of the process to gather and analyze stakeholder feedback is available to FARM and Work Group members.

² To further this mission, FARM prioritizes:

- Improving food security in the region
- Supporting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and small farmers
- Focusing FARM's work on farmland preservation and access, land use regulations, environmental sustainability, regional food system infrastructure, and resilience
- Leveraging procurement to support equity and the region's food and farm economy
- Improving and communicating regional food system data and leading practices.

1) Identify and promote equity-focused high-impact short and long-term local and regional strategies, investments, and systems to address increasing food insecurity in the region.

- a) By March 2026 FARM's workgroups and COG staff will have identified key national, state, and local agencies and partners developing strategies to maximize the use of federal nutrition benefit programs and to reduce the percentage of SNAP benefit payments that are either overpaid or underpaid (i.e. error rates). The FARM Committee will be provided with education and expertise on:
 - i) Key policy and program issues, options, and decision points for state and local governments.
 - ii) Federal changes needed to support the reduction of SNAP error rates.
- b) By December 2026, the FARM Committee will have increased awareness and preparedness of member jurisdictions to adopt high-impact policies and practices to promote food security.³

2) Increase market visibility and opportunities for diverse farmers and food producers at all scales.

- a) By December 2025, FARM will launch a local food procurement challenge to encourage COG jurisdictions to identify and implement at least one new opportunity that leverages their public purchasing dollars to support local and regional farmers, watermen, and/or other food producers.
- b) By January 2026, FARM will relaunch the National Capital Farms website with public facing local food maps
- c) By March 2026, FARM will identify opportunities for collaboration among state, local governments, and other partners for sharing data (including geospatial data) and reducing redundant requests to farmers.
- d) By May 2026, FARM will leverage the meetings and forums of the Regional Agricultural and DMV Food Council Collaborative Workgroups to identify opportunities, needs, resources, and policies to increase institutional procurement of regionally produced foods.
- e) By June 2026, FARM will identify opportunities for local governments to support marketing and additional procurement from local farms and aggregators of locally produced foods (such as farmers markets and food hubs).
- f) By October 2026, FARM will identify and develop recommendations to encourage development of key human and physical infrastructure to support farmers' and watermen's processing and distribution needs.

³This should include both systemic and direct service interventions that center the needs of the region's most vulnerable residents (e.g. workforce development programs, expanded Child Tax Credit, universal free school meals AND community and home gardening, Food-as-Medicine programs, and group procurement for food distribution efforts).

3) Preserve and increase access to new and existing farmland and production spaces for food-producing farmers in the region.

- a) By October 2026, FARM will identify opportunities for local and state governments to support land access for food-producing farmers, including both ownership and leasing for legacy and new and beginning farmers.
- b) By December 2026, FARM and its working groups will develop and publish recommendations regarding development pressure on farmland and approaches for protecting agricultural producers as part of the next *What Our Region Grows* report.

4) Promote environmental sustainability and resilience through the regional food system.

- a) By December 2026, FARM members will participate in educational opportunities about promising practices and policies that promote sustainability and resilience while benefiting and protecting farmland and the region's food system.

5) Increase engagement and coordination with congressional and state-level elected officials.

- a) By December 2026, FARM will strengthen relationships between the FARM and state-level officials, policymakers, and other collaborators on collective priorities.
- b) By December 2026, FARM will have identified and promoted regional priorities through congressional or state legislative and administrative rule-making processes.