



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner



Connecticut Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group
Access to Secure Land Tenure

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 24, 2022
11:00AM-12:00PM

Was held virtually

Meeting Recording Here: [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Dropbox](#)

Members Present: Chelsea Gazillo, Zania Johnson, Dominick Grant, Latha Swamy, Richard Myers

Members Absent: Ashley Stallworth, Anwar Ahmad, Shawn Sims

Public Present: None

DoAg Staff: Holly Lalime

1. **Welcome and Call to Order-** Meeting was called to order by Latha Swamy at 11:07AM
2. **New Business**
 - a. **Discussing methodology for the group.**

Latha Swamy discussed with the group the goal of putting recommendations together for the core working group by September. She discussed her vision/framework in which to put together these recommendations. Her framework, which is also used for the New Haven Ag. Master plan asks three questions: Where are we at now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there?
 - b. **Discuss recommendations in the Farmland Access Working Group (FLAWG) report that the group would like to build off of.**

Chelsea briefed the group on recommendations from the report that the group should look into more closely.
 - c. **Review of what the Farmland Access Working Group (FLAWG) is focusing on. FLAWG is a subgroup of the Working Lands Alliance.**

Will O'Meara discussed with the group the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board's recommendation to the Department of Agriculture on the Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV). DoAg is not going to take up the issue at this time so the Farmland Access Working Group will be advocating for policy work surrounding OPAV in the legislature through the Working Lands Alliance.

Latha Swamy discussed with the group FLAWG's work on urban working lands and conversations about how to best protect these areas and how to make them more

accessible. There have been discussions with the Connecticut Land Conservation council (CLCC) to create a working lands easement and acquisition program that focuses on urban lands. The group has also looked at alternative land tenure models such as community land trusts, urban forests, parks and school partnerships, and right to farm resolutions/legislation. Latha also discussed her work on the Urban Agriculture Master Plan in New Haven.

The group discussed Connecticut's Right to Farm Legislation [The Right to Farm Law \(ct.gov\)](https://www.ct.gov/agriculture). and concerns about the variability in agricultural related ordinances between towns.

Chelsea Gazillo discussed the work being done by the Working Lands Alliance to bolster funding and improve programming for DoAg's Farmland Restoration grant program.

d. Start identifying key area of focus for the group.

The group discussed a variety of programs for the group to learn more about and consider for recommendations. Some of the programs discussed included a New Jersey land access toolkit, a Vermont BIPOC led land and home access opportunity fund, a Delaware 30-year no interest loan program that works in conjunction with its farmland protection program to offer loans to the \$500,000 for farmers to cover up to 70% of a property development value, and the California FarmLink lending program.

The group also discussed identifying current available funding mechanisms and new funding streams as an area of focus for future meetings.

3. Public Comment- No public comment.

4. Next Steps-

- a. Review existing funding mechanisms and explore new sources of funding.
- b. Identify key priorities for the group to focus on.

5. Adjourn- Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM by Dominick Grant.

Respectfully submitted, Holly Lalime, Env. Analyst, December 21, 2021.