

DoAg DEI Working Groups
Summary Report end of 2021

Access to Education & Training: Led by Lauren Little and Blessing

Met: August 11 and September 22, November 17, December 15

Areas of discussion: 1) lots of available resources and educational opportunities such as from UConn Extension that many beginning and BIPOC farmers are unaware of and don't know where to go to easily find that information 2) education on leasing land and where/how to find startup capital resources- credit is challenge for private sources. 3) Farmer to farmer trainings are very effective. Utilizing BIPOC farmers in reaching the appropriate audience would be more effective 4) creating a central and localized hubs for learning different aspects of business, marketing, training, networking, etc. – how can this be incorporated into existing structures/organizations? 5) How can existing programs be utilized, modified, and disseminated to reach the BIPOC community? 6) need for education on regenerative ag and climate smart practices to be more widespread and accessible 7) meeting between the group and resource providers

Gaps identified: language barriers, lack of educational resources for farm workers to advance to owning or renting their own land. Limited resources for those with learning or physical disabilities. Resources should be in multiple formats to cover these gaps. There is a lack of BIPOC representation in educators. Those doing the work of education, outreach, and organization need to be paid a reasonable wage for their work.

Potential recommendations that have surfaced: Ag Report in multiple languages (at least Spanish). Videos are a good way to reach people- creation of a YouTube channel was mention. Pay people from the community for outreach and implementation to spread information to BIPOC community

Concerns brought up: Need for a two-way relationship to be built between the Agency and BIPOC producers/community (not be extractive and predatory), how to hold the agency accountable, white led non- profit farms being used against the community as a vehicle for gentrification, need for this to not be a top-down approach- keep community engaged in carrying out recommendations

Currently working on: 1) Creating a list of groups and institutions who are BIPOC led and are good to help disseminate resources 2) Working on turning ideas discussed into recommendations.

Summary Points: Information Hub, language equity, resources in alternative forms, farmer to farmer mentorship and compensation for their time, and creating a long-term group to continue the work.

Next scheduled meeting: January 19, 2022

***Access to Capital & Financial Planning:** Led by Shawn Joseph (and formerly Khadijah Mohammed)

Met: August 17 and September 27

Areas of discussion: August 17 was into meeting and September 17 meeting brought loss of several members including one of the co-facilitators. Proposed combining in with another group and it was agreed. First joint meeting with Resources, Infrastructure, Business Planning group was their October 8 meeting.

***Access to Resources and Capital:** Led by Elizabeth Guerra, Dishaun Harris, and Shawn Joseph

Met: August 6, October 8, November 12, December 10

Areas of discussion: 1) How to measure success and need to establish a baseline for programs 2) Create a survey to broader BIPOC ag community 3) DoAg grant accessibility and outreach 4) use DoAg for help with federal grants/loans 5) inclusion of all involved in ag, not just farmers 6) Deep dive into evaluating transition grant as well as viability and how it can be made more accessible to BIPOC and new and beginning farmers

Notes from breakout groups:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LAa1H9WE_WNKJpQqMH8NVQp5A-dhXMiM_V2TdBCSrJQ/edit?usp=sharing

Potential recommendations that have surfaced: Collect data on BIPOC producer usage/participation in programs, make available data on BIPOC grant applicants. Create a cooperative of large equipment that could be shared across the state (check in with Solid Ground and RC&D efforts).

Concerns brought up: Some of these programs [primarily referring to grants] are not adequate enough for any beginning farmer. It just shouldn't be this hard for farmers to feed people. Are we expecting farm businesses to build a business off from grants? The needs for resources and infrastructure vary between the small rural farmers, larger farms, and urban ag producers. Don't want the Ag service agencies to think that BIPOC farmers are only urban farmers. Don't want to get siloed-thinking about BIPOC farming = Urban Farming

In 2022 meetings: propose a new program for DoAg for new and beginning producers with an emphasis on BIPOC producers

Next scheduled meeting: January 14, 2022

Access to Secure Land Tenure: Led by Latha Swamy and Dominick Grant

Met: September 20, October 18, November 15, December 20

Areas of discussion: AFT Farmland Access Report, NY DEI's report. Components that can be used and built upon? Gave members an overview of the different land access working groups in the state and what the discussions were. Need for this group to determine what their focus is.

BIPOC set aside in grants

Important to be explicit about urban agriculture in recommendations

Need to include benchmarks of success

Lots of desire to work on policy in this group. Kayleigh, DoAg's legislative liaison, came to talk to this group

Potential recommendations that have surfaced:

Right to farm in urban environments

Urban land Acquisition and easement program

Buy, Protect, Sell

Next scheduled meeting: January 17, 2022 **MLK day- reschedule?

Market Access and Diversification: Led by Vicheth Im and Deborah Sims

Met: August 9, September 16, October 21, December 2

Areas of discussion: Creation of a toolkit, restrictions to certified farmers statues. Food hub for BIPOC farmers, meat at farmer's market, processing opportunities, diverse customer base is present. Low WIC redemption rates- need to bridge the gap between who is getting the checks to distribute and market (in terms of communication/outreach). Farmer exemptions for processing, commercial kitchen space. How weather and season impacts quality of product and customer perception. Wholesale markets and Farm to School/ECE as outlets for further conversation.

Potential recommendations that have surfaced: Campaigns and marketing now are down too high up and not actually reaching people. Grassroots driven. Trustworthy people who know and go into the community to spread resources and be messengers

1. WIC/FMNP coupons outreach recommendations
2. Create process Resources (steps to take) to get to markets, to get insurance. Include home gardeners who may be looking to get into larger scale farming (many BIPOC individuals)
3. DEI Trainings and non-discrimination clause to be able to use the CT Grown logo. Multiple instances of price discrimination

Concerns that have been brought up: Discrimination amongst farmers- DoAg needs to model and set a tone of valuing equality

Next scheduled meeting: TBD