



Diversity



Equity



Inclusion

IN AGRICULTURE

*Working Group Report to the
Commissioner of Agriculture*



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Conclusion

01 Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 134 producers in Connecticut who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC) amounting to 1.4% of all Connecticut producers. Yet, 20% of the state's population identify as people of color (US Census Bureau, 2010). Establishing and building a viable farm business is a difficult venture for all and it's even harder for producers who identify as BIPOC; this is largely due to systemic inequities, racial discrimination, and lack of access and connection to agriculture resources, service providers, and land. Acknowledging the disparities, the agency embarked on an effort to engage BIPOC producers and seek their feedback on how the agency and industry service providers could reshape their programming and assistance to be more inclusive and intentional in their support of BIPOC farmers.

"We need to do a better job of supporting diversity and inclusion within all sectors of our economy, including agriculture," Governor Lamont said. "We want this working group to collaborate on the barriers that prevent people from entering this sector and create recommendations for what the state and agriculture service providers can do to better support diversity and inclusion within Connecticut's agricultural community."

Press Releases



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

03/10/2021

Governor Lamont Announces Creation of Working Group To Encourage Racial Diversity and Inclusion in Connecticut Agriculture

(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Ned Lamont today announced that his administration is forming a working group with the goal of increasing diversity, racial equity, and inclusion within Connecticut's agriculture industry. Administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Connecticut Agriculture Working Group](#) will focus on engaging and supporting current and future farmers and those in the industry who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

"We need to do a better job of supporting diversity and inclusion within all sectors of our economy, including agriculture," **Governor Lamont said.** "We want this working group to collaborate on the barriers that prevent people from entering this sector and create recommendations for what the state and agriculture service providers can do to better support diversity and inclusion within Connecticut's

"As Connecticut continues to grow and foster its agricultural infrastructure, it's critical that we create opportunities that allow our Black and Indigenous residents and people of color to become farmers and thrive," **Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz said.** "This starts with embracing and implementing initiatives that promote racial equity and inclusion across food and agriculture. Through the launch of this working group, we can ensure that the agriculture field better represents our entire population and we are better equipped to combat food insecurity in our underserved communities. This working group, under Commissioner Hurlburt's leadership, will serve as a model nationwide that will encourage other states to commit to supporting policies that allow everyone – regardless of their race, age or zip code – to make a healthy difference in other peoples' lives by working in the agriculture sector."

Connecticut Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt said that there are significant barriers and issues of access to enter and remain in agriculture, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and persons of color. While there is deep, meaningful work that is being done by community groups, there is a need for institutional support for current and future individuals of color entering professions throughout the agriculture sector, he explained.

"In agriculture, we usually talk about the diversity of our farm commodities and types of production," **Commissioner Hurlburt said.** "While diversity is easily seen at a farmers' market or in the field, it is not usually represented by those around the table. Through intentional inclusion of BIPOC individuals and organizations and others, we will work to move the needle towards true diversity, equity, and inclusion in Connecticut agriculture. This initiative will ensure that Connecticut agriculture better reflects our population by identifying resource gaps, providing support for businesses to grow, and supplying a connection to markets. I am excited to launch into this endeavor and know we will make a positive difference."

"The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Group is a necessary addition to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture," **Congresswoman Jahana Hayes said.** "Across Connecticut, Black residents, Indigenous residents, and residents of color are working to ensure our agriculture industry is robust, resilient, and a driving force in combatting food insecurity. BIPOC leaders in agriculture deserve to be part of the decision making. This working group will ensure their voices are heard. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee and the chair of the Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations Subcommittee, I look forward to working with the task force on federal legislation to support their crucial work."

The structure of the working groups will be one main working group and five smaller topic subgroups, which will include:

- Access to Capital and Financial Planning
- Access to Secure Land Tenure
- Access to Education and Training
- Access to Resources, Infrastructure, and Business Planning
- Market Access and Diversification

The Department of Agriculture is inviting Connecticut farmers, service providers, nonprofits, educators, and others to participate in the working groups. Nominations must be submitted to the agency by April 4, 2021, and appointments will be identified in mid-April. Nominations are strongly encouraged from individuals of all backgrounds. Working groups will meet monthly, or as determined necessary, for approximately a year and a half. Individuals can express interest in multiple subgroups but will be appointed to only one. To submit a nomination, [click here](#).

Questions can be directed to Cyrena Thibodeau at Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov or Jaime Smith at Jaime.Smith@ct.gov. More information is available at www.ctgrown.gov.

VIEW RELEASE



This report - the culmination of a year and a half of meetings - outlines recommendations that, if implemented, will help to provide dedicated investment and support for current and future producers who identify as BIPOC to thrive in the state.

A total of 21 high-level recommendations and 39 sub recommendations have been identified.

The recommendations have been categorized to reflect the interconnectedness of each recommendation into the following six areas:

1. Success Metrics and Accountability
2. Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Training Initiatives
3. Access to Capital and Technical Assistance
4. Land Access and Municipal Action
5. Outreach and Engagement of BIPOC Producers
6. Marketing to Connecticut Residents

Through the dedication of the DEI Working Group and topic specific subworking groups, this report will help guide changes to the agency and other agriculture industry partners to assist BIPOC producers in accessing and navigating available resources in Connecticut. Ultimately, the goal is to increase the number and viability of BIPOC producers and BIPOC service providers to create a richer agricultural community and greater opportunity for local food in our state.

Key:

All of the recommendations have a time frame for which they are to be accomplished, an identified implementation approach ie: **policy change** or **programmatic change**, and if the recommendations are intended to be implemented by the agency, agricultural industry, or both.



Short



Medium



Long



Agency Only



Agency + Industry



Change to Current Program



New Program



Policy Change



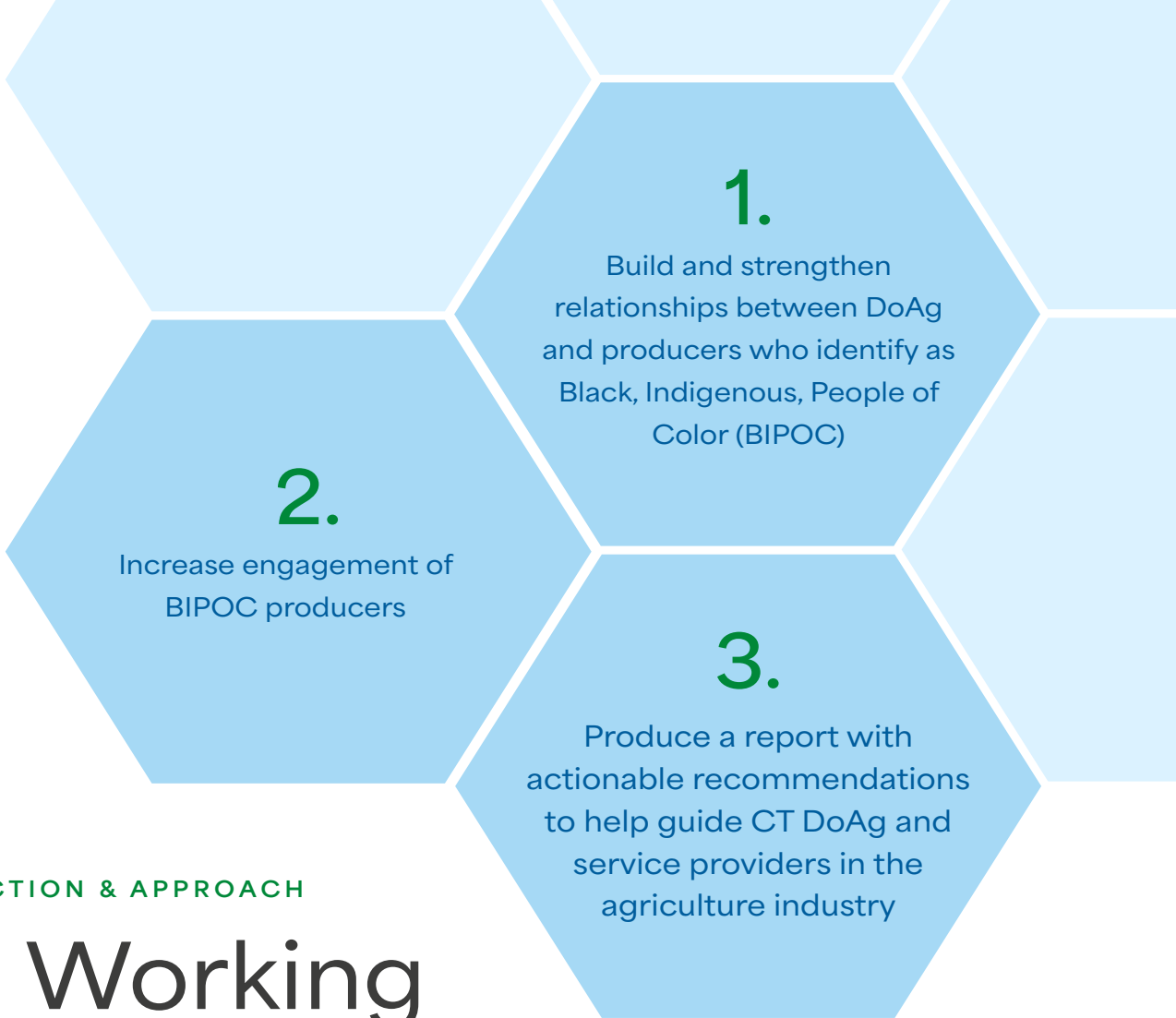
Fiscal Impact



Introduction and Approach

In March of 2021, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) established the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Working Group. The DEI Working Group is a crucial component of an agency-wide effort to engage and support current and future farmers in Connecticut's agriculture industry who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Derrick Bedward of Red,
Gold & Green Produce in Hartford



INTRODUCTION & APPROACH

DEI Working Group Goals

GOALS

Improve existing relationships and build and establish new ones



Engagement with the industry through agency boards, councils and commissions



Produce a strategic report with actionable recommendations to help guide the DoAg and the service providers of CT's agricultural industry



OUTCOMES

Improve agency outreach and communication to the target audience

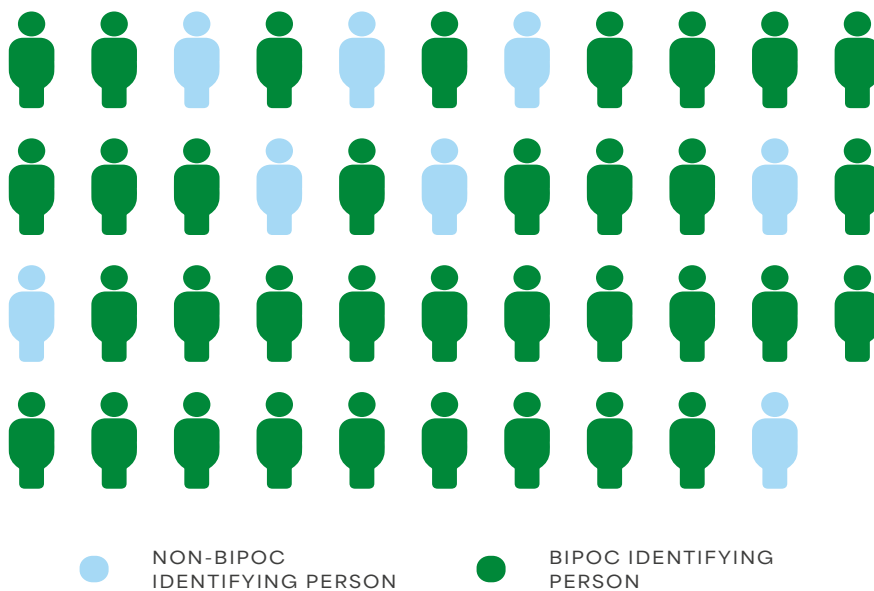
Actively embed racial equity in current and future department programming and policies

Implement X number of recommendations with 1-5 years AND provide a basis for future legislation and efforts by the agriculture industry

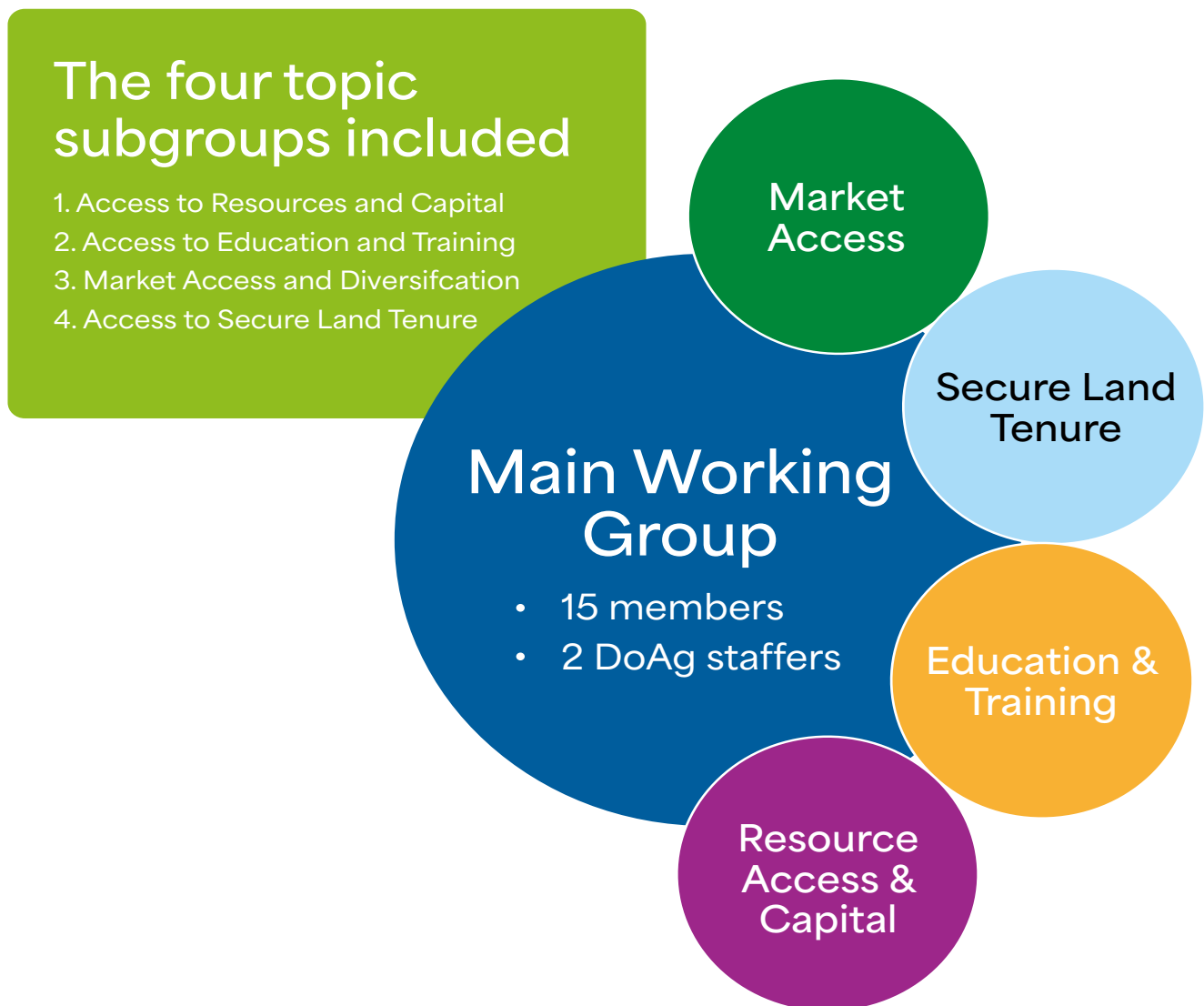
DoAg requested stakeholder nominations for individuals interested in engaging in the process. After receiving over 70 nominations, 43 individuals, 35 of whom identify as BIPOC, were assembled to form the DEI Working Group (DEI WG) and topic specific subgroups.



DEI WG MAKEUP



In order to provide some structure by subject matter, a Main Working Group (MWG) and four subgroups organized by topic were established. At least two members from the MWG served as co-facilitators of each topic specific subgroup. This created a structure of positive, cross-communication between the subgroups.



30+
Green

JOB

02 Focus, Goals & Membership

Main Working Group Members

The overarching goal of the MWG was to receive, deliberate, and compile recommendations from each topic working group to be presented into a cohesive report to the Commissioner of Agriculture.

LUIS VEGA	Wepa! Farms
LAUREN LITTLE	Lauren Little Edutainment
VICHETH IM	CT Valley Farms
DOMINICK GRANT	Dirt Capital Partners
LATHA SWAMY	Food System Policy Division (FSPD), City of New Haven
SHAWN JOSEPH	Brass City Harvest, Inc. & Park City Harvest
DEBBIE THOMAS-SIMS	East End NRZ Pop-Up Market & Cafe
DISHAUN HARRIS	Root Life LLC
AZEEM ZAKIR KAREEM (BLESSINGS)	Samad Gardens Initiative
ROBERT CHANG	Echo Farm LLC
ELIZABETH GUERRA & HÉCTOR GERARDO	Seamarron Farmstead, LLC
JOHN FILCHAK	Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments
ANWAR AHMAD	Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative (SNEFCC)
JIFF MARTIN	UConn Extension



Topic Specific Subgroups: Focus and Goals

Each topic-specific subgroup was comprised of 8-14 individuals with two to three co-facilitators who were members of the MWG. Subgroup members were chosen by a combination of individual preference and matching their experience to a given topic. The primary goal of the topic subgroups was to identify actionable recommendations for consideration to the MWG in the specific topic area.

**Area of Focus:
Access to Capital
and Resources**



SUMMARY:The focus of the Capital and Resources subgroup was to develop recommendations to address reducing barriers and increasing access to existing sources of capital. It also focused on identifying funding gaps and resources for the BIPOC producer community.

**CO-CHAIRS:
ELIZABETH GUERRA, SHAWN JOSEPH,
AND DISHAUN HARRIS**

DEBORAH CAVINESS	Bridgeport Opportunities Industrialization Center
SHAWN JOSEPH	Brass City Harvest, Inc. & Park City Harvest
TYMOTHEE ANDERSON	Noah's Dove, Inc. Sojourn Market
HAROLD BLACKWELL	Chestnut Street Consulting LLC
MATTHEW DISCIACCA	Farm Credit East, ACA
KWAKU GRIFFITHS	Double Gee Ent Farm
DR. KRISTEN COOKSEY STOWERS	UConn Allied Health/Rudd Center
ROBERT CHANG	Echo Farm LLC
ELIZABETH GUERRA	Seamarron Farmstead, LLC
SCOTT KEMP	CT Foodshare and Two Acres & A Bull Farm
JEFF MARTIN	UConn Extension
KIMBERLY NORMAN-ROSEDAM	A Taste of The Sun, LLC
DISHAUN HARRIS	Root Life LLC
CHRISTINE KIM	CitySeed (Board co-chair) and aapiNHV (Asian American Pacific Islanders of New Haven, founder)

**Area of Focus:
Access to Secure
Land Tenure**



SUMMARY: The focus of the Access to Secure Land Tenure group was to develop recommendations on improving BIPOC access to farmland, resource for finding farmland, mechanisms that could increase the amount of farmland and infrastructure available for agriculture, and how to reduce barriers for urban growers.

**CO-CHAIRS:
LATHA SWAMY AND DOMINICK GRANT**

RICHARD MYERS	<u>Park City Harvest LLC</u>
ANWAR AHMAD	<u>Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative (SNEFCC)</u>
CHELSEA GAZILLO	<u>Working Lands Alliance – American Farmland Trust</u>
LATHA SWAMY	<u>Food System Policy Division (FSPD), City of New Haven</u>
ZANIA JOHNSON	<u>Micro2life LLC</u>
DOMINICK GRANT	<u>Dirt Capital Partners</u>
SHAWN M. SIMS	<u>CT Department of Revenue Services</u>
ASHLEY STALLWORTH	<u>Wepa! Farms</u>

**Area of Focus:
Access to
Education and
Training**



SUMMARY: The focus on the Education and Training subgroup was to develop recommendations on increasing knowledge of and access to existing programs, expanding the presence of existing program, and propose new programs that would be beneficial specifically to BIPOC and urban growers.

CO-CHAIRS: LAUREN LITTLE AND AZEEM ZAKIR (BLESSINGS) KAREEM

LUIS VEGA	<u>Wepa! Farms</u>
LAUREN LITTLE	<u>Lauren Little Edutainment</u>
XOCHITLAHTZIRI	<u>Gather New Haven</u>
ROBERT PECK	<u>Hemp Milk & Honey and Green Village Initiative</u>
AZEEM ZAKIR (BLESSINGS) KAREEM	<u>Samad Gardens Initiative</u>
TAMIKA MCPHAIL	<u>Minorities 4 Medical Marijuana</u>
ANA LEGRAND	<u>UConn Department of Plant Science & Landscape Architecture</u>
SHURESH GHIMIRE	<u>UConn Extension</u>
HÉCTOR GERARDO	<u>Seamarron Farmstead, LLC</u>
ERICA FEARN	<u>4-H Education Center at Auerfarm</u>
KIMBERLY ACOSTA	<u>Food System Policy Division (FSPD), City of New Haven</u>

**Area of Focus:
Market Access and
Diversification**

SUMMARY: The focus of the Market Access and Diversification subgroup was to develop recommendations which focused on reducing barriers to accessing new market channels, particularly through streamlining requirements and communication.

**CO-CHAIRS:
DEBBIE THOMAS-SIMS AND VICHETH IM**

SHANA SMITH	Formerly of Hartford Food Systems
VICHETH IM	<u>CT Valley Farms</u>
BRANDON BLANK	<u>Urban Acre Coop</u>
TIDA INFAHSAENG	<u>United Way of Western Connecticut</u>
FRANKIE DOUGLASS	<u>CitySeed</u>
MARY CLAIRE WHELAN	<u>New CT Farmer Alliance</u>
DEBBIE THOMAS-SIMS	<u>East End NRZ Pop-Up Market & Cafe</u>
JOHN FILCHAK	<u>Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments</u>
YVONNE RENEE DAVIS	<u>The Prosperity Foundation/KIEDC/Save Our Schools</u>



From L to R :
Sarah Rose Kareem,
Blessings Kareem, Scott
Kemp, Shawn Joseph, U.S.
Rep. Jahana Hayes (CT-5)
at CT FoodShare.



03

Recommendations



RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO:

Success Metrics and Accountability to DEI Principles

These recommendations focus on creating accountability and transparency around engagement and funding priorities of BIPOC producers within agency programming.

Subgroups **Access to Capital and Resources** and **Market Access and Diversification** contributed to this list of recommendations.



Recommendation Summary

1.1 Establish Agency Goals for BIPOC Producer Inclusion and Tracking of Associated Data

1.2 Improve BIPOC Representation on Agency Boards, Councils, Commissions

1.3 Increase DEI Trainings for Agency Staff

1.4 Implement a Non-Discrimination Clause for CT Grown logo Usage

1.1 Establish Agency Goals for BIPOC Producer Inclusion and Tracking of Associated Data



Establish measurable goals and a quantitative and qualitative data gathering system to demonstrate the equitable delivery of services and programs for BIPOC producer usage and participation in programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.

1.1.1 - Establish goals for each agency program, with guidance from stakeholders/clients, and publish publicly in a location of the agency's choosing.

1.1.2 - Establish an agency funding goal to be allocated to BIPOC producers and BIPOC led organizations. Further, data should be released on agency website on the number of awards/amount allocated to BIPOC producers and BIPOC led organizations.

1.1.3 - All agency programs, including permits and licensing, should ask applicants to report race/ethnicity. DoAg should release the data, in aggregate by program, permit, and license, annually.

1.1.4 - Collect qualitative data on programming about perceptions, ability to access, and satisfaction via surveys, testimonials, short interviews, feedback sessions, and/or focus groups where farmers are compensated for their time and valuable input.

1.2 Improve Diversity of Representation on Agency Boards, Councils, Commissions



Ensure that there is increased diversity on each agency administered board, council, commission such that at least 10% of the members identify as BIPOC, or if unable to meet that, from another protected class.

1.3 Increase DEI Trainings for Agency Staff



Through engagement with CT Department of Administrative Services, work to improve frequency and type of DEI trainings for agency staff to be more than once annually and include speakers and engagement-type trainings.

1.4 Establish a non-discrimination clause to be associated with usage of the CT Grown logo to work to rectify and prevent instances of price discrimination and unfair treatment.



The agency will develop and make known to all producers the CT Grown logo has non-discrimination language associated with it and its usage.



RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO:

Increasing Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Training Initiatives

These recommendations focus on increasing support to initiatives to build and uplift BIPOC producers' and communities' success in agriculture.

Subgroups Access to Education and Training and Access to Resources and Capital contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendation Summary

2.1 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Producer Trainings

2.2 Support the establishment of a BIPOC-owned farm-based training center(s) which can contribute to the success and growth of the BIPOC farmer community.

2.3 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Agricultural Career Development

2.4 Develop and strengthen programming, in partnership with agricultural education organizations like University of Connecticut Extension, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4H, and others, for BIPOC youth to increase exposure to agriculture and agriculture as a career path.

2.5 Work with stakeholders to organize an annual or biannual conference (virtual or in person) on anti-racist work in Connecticut agriculture.

2.1 Improve funding and resources to support BIPOC producer training



Provide grant funding for the formation of programs for training, mentoring, apprenticeship programs, farmer circles, trips to conferences/stipends etc. for BIPOC producers.

2.1.1 - Put in place priority consideration for programs and projects that support BIPOC producer trainings.

2.1.2 - For an organization proposing a BIPOC apprenticeship program:

- i. Tie the program to established standards and core competencies.
- ii. Provide a stipend to BIPOC apprentices to provide additional income above what is made with their farm work.
- iii. Strong consideration should be given to match new farmers with experienced farmers which may spur the possibility of a farm succession in the future.
- iv. DoAg to provide support to verify the mentors for experience, range of learning opportunities, safety, and mentoring experience.

2.2 Support the establishment of a BIPOC-owned farm-based training center(s) which can contribute to the success and growth of the BIPOC farmer community.



This farm/education center could offer training in farming practices as well as food enterprises and other adjacent food/farm/health skills.

2.3 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Agricultural Career Development



Provide funding for training and mentorship for BIPOC specialists to become service providers for BIPOC farmers in production practices, natural resource management, navigating requirements for marketing, etc.

2.3.1 - Offer training to existing non-agricultural BIPOC service providers such as business consultants, accountants, etc. to gain exposure to agriculture so they are able to provide basic technical assistance in their area of expertise.

2.3.2 - Prioritize BIPOC led organizations to receive this training to facilitate knowledge dissemination to the community.

2.4 - Develop and strengthen programming, in partnership with agricultural education organizations like University of Connecticut Extension, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4H, and others, for BIPOC youth to increase exposure to agriculture and agriculture as a career path.



2.4.1- Increase outreach and creation of pathways into farming with youth organizations.

2.4.2 - Support efforts to bring agricultural programming to urban youth in urban environments to diversify existing programs and structures such as 4H and FFA.

2.4.3 - Encourage and support placement of vocational agriculture schools/programs in urban areas.

2.5 - Work with stakeholders to organize an annual or biannual conference (virtual or in person) on anti-racist work in Connecticut agriculture.



This should be developed within a year and include updates on progress towards the recommendations bringing together stakeholders for networking and disseminating resources to interested communities. It will serve to coordinate efforts around the state and obtain feedback on ongoing programs, connect with organizations already doing the work to elevate and support them.

2.5.1 - Include a session on youth engagement focused on creating opportunities in CT to reach and retain youth in agriculture, in particular in BIPOC communities.

2.5.2 - Include a session on BIPOC leadership in agriculture training to build diversity in leadership in agricultural commodity groups and agricultural organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO:

Access to Capital and Technical Assistance

These recommendations focus on increasing access to agency grant programs, identifying priorities most relevant to BIPOC farmers, boosting access to technical assistance, and

removing barriers that impede access.

Subgroup Access to Capital and Resources contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendation Summary

3.1 Improve Access to Grants

3.2 Improve Access to Technical Assistance



Robert Peck from
Hemp Milk & Honey
and Green Village
Initiative

3.1 Improve Access to Grants

3.1.1 - All grant review panels should have representation of a diverse group of farmers in terms of scale, sector, BIPOC farmers and BIPOC led organizations and urban farmers to ensure DoAg is properly serving the BIPOC community.



3.1.2 - Work to improve the agency's reimbursement and matching requirement flexibility, through administrative and legislative revisions, so that at least 50% of any grant funds are available up front to initiate projects similar to some USDA programs for farmers that are categorized as 'socially disadvantaged'.



3.1.3 - Provide support for completion of crop plans as a requirement in grant applications and focus on matching awardees who don't have a business plan or want to improve theirs with a technical advisor to develop one during the lifetime of the grant.



3.1.4 - Eliminate limits to funding levels that are tied to farming experience, i.e. aspiring farmers should be eligible for the same amounts of grant assistance as existing farmers.



3.1.5 - Prioritize funding for micro-grants for very early-stage producers (0-3 years) to enable BIPOC farmers to diversify and strengthen their business. If funds are not available from the agency for this purpose, support agency partners in securing funds for this purpose.



3.1.6 - Prioritize funding for equipment (e.g. walk-behind tractors) and processing/storage facilities (e.g. walk-in cooler) that can be shared among farmers through an organization or shared equipment library. If funds are not available from the agency for this purpose, support agency partners in securing funds for this purpose. Consider adding this priority to the Farm Viability Grant Program and the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program. Be sure to prioritize not just the purchase of equipment or infrastructure for shared use, but also their long-term sustainability.



3.1.7 - Adopt new practices for grant programs to ensure all assistance serves those with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and persons lacking computers or internet access.



3.2 Improve Access to Technical Assistance



Create a new program that will provide BIPOC farmers with funds to access professional consulting (when existing free options have been exhausted) in business planning, financial management services, legal entity formation, and related business planning/management/optimization services. This new program may take the shape of an accelerator/turnkey/microgrant fund. Whatever programmatic model works, we would like BIPOC farmers to be able to access this opportunity easily without a cumbersome grant application process, to be able to choose which consultants they get to work with, and we want BIPOC farmers not to wait an unreasonable amount of time to get these services.

3.2.1 -

Provide financial support to external BIPOC-led community-based organization(s) to compile and maintain a list of consultants for BIPOC farmers, review farmer applications for funds to access consultants, disperse funds to BIPOC farmers, and report impacts to the agency.

3.2.3 -

Prioritize funding for training programs targeting BIPOC individuals that are aspiring to become agriculture service providers and already have the skills and trust from communities of color but could use more training and exposure to agriculture.

3.2.2 -

Assemble and maintain a list of vetted professional consultants that are trusted and experienced working with communities of color or who identify as BIPOC that can provide business and technical assistance services to BIPOC farmers; engage these professionals on a state contract or on retainer to provide consulting services. Be sure to engage a mix of new and established service providers along with a mechanism for newer business, particularly new service providers of color, to be added to the list.

3.2.4 -

Prioritize activities, in partnership with UConn Extension, New CT Farmers Alliance, and others, that will lead to the success of shared equipment libraries and shared farm infrastructure projects. This includes a) increasing access to knowledge, expertise, and other professional services needed to successfully launch and manage a shared equipment library or cooperative managed infrastructure; and b) assisting with the marketing and promotion of the availability of shared equipment and infrastructure through the agency's website and ongoing outreach and engagement with BIPOC producers.



Lauren Little working with students at Mary Hooker Magnet School.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO:

Land Access & Municipal Action

These recommendations focus on increasing access to farmland parcels and growing spaces while considering current programs and opportunities in Connecticut while also being aware of unique production arrangements that may

be available but not currently exist in Connecticut.

Subgroups Access to [Secure Land Tenure](#) and Access to [Capital and Resources](#) contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

4.1 Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers

4.2 Pursue an expanded policy around Connecticut's PA 490 law so that this classification can be applied to urban parcels.

4.3 Commission a report on cooperative land trusts and other models of cooperative ownership/incubators models and how they could function in Connecticut with a focus on urban and suburban areas.

4.4 Work with Municipalities to Increase Land Access

4.1 Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers



Create a new program within DoAg, using \$10 million in bond funds to complement the already established Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Grant Program, for the acquisition and use of lands for BIPOC producers to enable the utilization of parcels that are vacant, small, not prime soils, in urban environments as well as other locations. This program could be called the Farmland Purchase Assistance and Restoration Funding.

4.1.1 - Create a unique set of scoring criteria for this program, that is not based on prime and important soils, for the restoration of vacant lots in urban/suburban settings that creates opportunities specifically for BIPOC farm development.

4.1.2 - Establish an oversight board consisting of at least five individuals and not less than 60 percent BIPOC individuals or organizations to review applications for both the acquisition of lands and the use of such land.

4.1.3 - In addition to acquisition of land, the program expands upon the Farmland Restoration Grant Program and provide funds for soil enhancement, access roads, fencing, water access, mulch/compost, removing invasive plants, soil testing, signage, cultivation tools and related steps to make a particular parcel ready for production.

4.1.4 - Allow such lands to also be used for shared community garden spaces/community farms, demonstration/education purposes including outdoor classroom spaces, and shared pavilions for selling products.

4.2 Pursue an expanded policy around Connecticut's PA 490 law so that this classification can be applied to urban parcels.



4.3 Commission a report on cooperative land trusts and other models of cooperative ownership/incubators models and how they could function in Connecticut with a focus on urban and suburban areas.



4.4

Work with Municipalities to Increase Land Access



Explore pathways for how foreclosed public properties, such as schools and malls, could be transferred to a land bank and then funding could be accessed to remediate that land or shared infrastructure and utilize it for outdoor or indoor agriculture production and/or processing.

4.4.1 - Recommend the required municipal Plan of Conservation and Development include an urban agriculture master plan if they have a population over a certain amount.

4.4.2-Take an active role in educating town planners and public officials on options to sell agricultural land.





RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO:

Outreach and Engagement of BIPOC Producers

These recommendations focus on improving outreach to and engagement with BIPOC producers and communities including

creating clearer, multimedia resources. All four subgroups contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendation:

5.1 Improve Community Engagement to Shape Agency Programs

5.2 Solicit public feedback during the development of grant guidance documents and publicly post comments

5.3 Improve Producer Tools & Guides Published by The Agency

5.4 Improve Marketing of Agency Programs and Resources

5.5 Develop the digital hub in 5.4 into physical hubs in partnership with local community groups already doing the work that can serve as conduit/gateway for getting information to BIPOC urban farmers.

5.6 Support and establish a dedicated marketing program to conduct outreach to BIPOC farmers and farmworkers.

5.1 Improve Community Engagement to Shape Agency Programs



Conduct a community needs assessment to inform a broad, equity-oriented community outreach strategy specific for agriculture. Develop methods to be able to continually collect community feedback.

5.1.1 - For the community needs assessment, focus on where farmers receive their information and what specifically do BIPOC farmers, farmers with disabilities, LGBTQ+ farmers need? What do communities identify as barriers that need to be worked on to facilitate greater communication?

5.1.2 - Include an evaluation component of processes for starting/growing agricultural enterprises and accessing new markets (e.g. farmers' markets, business taxes). Where are the inefficiencies in the system? Are there opportunities to standardize and simplify processes?

5.2 Solicit public feedback during the development of grant guidance documents and publicly post comments.



5.3 Improve Producer Tools & Guides Published by the Agency



Create and disseminate multilingual resources guides, videos, and graphic guides (checklist, flow chart) to help farmers at multiple stages clearly understand the processes and requirements to gain access to various markets. For example, how to get plugged into markets, simple business guides, how to become a certified farmer, certifications and insurance needed, marketing tips, food safety best practices, and how to get into value-added production.

5.3.1 - Within materials, indicate other programs that may offer complementary funding assistance such as USDA programs to cover cost of a grant project before reimbursement.

5.3.2 - Improve language equity across all newsletters and resources.

5.3.3 - Host info sessions led by BIPOC individuals on dedicated topics related to accessing markets, creating value added markets, etc.

5.4 Improve Marketing of Agency Programs and Resources



Develop a digital information hub (a one stop shop) about all agricultural programs available to BIPOC farmers with information in different formats (e.g video and audio, graphics) to facilitating organization and publicity of resources available for BIPOC farmers. To be implemented within a year once a host organization is identified.

5.4.1- Allow event organizers and any other persons providing educational outreach to BIPOC producers to utilize the site to disseminate information.

5.4.2 - Recommend working with a BIPOC organization to co-host the site to help prevent gate-keeping to resources.

5.5 Develop the digital hub in 5.4 into physical hubs in partnership with local community groups already doing the work that can serve as conduit/gateway for getting information to BIPOC urban farmers.



5.6 Support and establish a dedicated marketing program to conduct outreach to BIPOC farmers and farmworkers.



5.6.1 - This program should be used to engage existing BIPOC farmers and community organizations to ensure that they are aware of available marketing resources and opportunities.

5.6.2 - DoAg should facilitate the creation of a BIPOC marketing and development board to carry out marketing in a manner that will be the most beneficial to existing BIPOC farmers and to bring in new BIPOC producers who could apply for these programs and enter agricultural careers.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO:

Marketing to Connecticut Residents

These recommendations focus on increasing awareness of BIPOC farmers in DoAg marketing to Connecticut residents and in DoAg administered nutrition assistance

programs. Subgroup **Market Access and Diversification** contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

6.1 Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing

6.2 Increase BIPOC Participation in Agency Administered Nutrition Assistance Programs

6.1 Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing



Highlight and promote BIPOC farmers and other BIPOC individuals in agriculture, share stories and highlight diverse crops that are grown by BIPOC farmers to reinforce cultural awareness and diversity of the industry.

6.2 Improve Marketing of Agency Administered Nutrition Assistance Programs



Increase targeted outreach to BIPOC producers for participation in and benefit acceptance of Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior FMNP at authorized farmers' markets and farm stands along with other nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP and doubling options through creating more grassroots campaigns.



04

Summary Timeline

Latha Swamy and Kimberly Acosta

SUMMARY TIMELINE

Short Term Recommendations

1-2 Years

1.1 Establish Agency Goals for BIPOC Producer Inclusion and Tracking of Associated Data

Establish measurable goals and a quantitative and qualitative data gathering system to demonstrate the equitable delivery of services and programs for BIPOC producer usage and participation in programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.

1.4 Improve BIPOC Representation on Agency Boards, Councils, Commissions

No later than October 2024, ensure that at least 10% of the members on each Agency administered board, council, commission identify as BIPOC.

2.5 - Work with stakeholders to organize an annual or biannual conference (virtual or in person) on anti-racist work in Connecticut agriculture.

This should be developed within a year and include updates on progress towards the recommendations bringing together stakeholders for networking and disseminating resources to interested communities. It will serve to coordinate efforts around the state and obtain feedback on ongoing programs, connect with organizations already doing the work to elevate and support them.

3.1 Improve Access to Grants

3.1.1 - All grant review panels should have representation of a diverse group of farmers in terms of scale, sector, BIPOC farmers and BIPOC led organizations and urban farmers to ensure DoAg is properly serving the BIPOC community.

3.1.6 - Eliminate limits to funding levels that are tied to farming experience, i.e. aspiring farmers should be eligible for the same amounts of grant assistance as existing farmers.

3.1.9 - Prioritize funding for equipment (e.g. walk-behind tractors) and processing/storage facilities (e.g. walk-in cooler) that can be shared among farmers through an organization or shared equipment library. If funds are not available from the agency for this purpose, support agency partners in securing funds for this purpose. Consider adding this priority to the Farm Viability Grant Program and the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program. Be sure to prioritize not just the purchase of equipment or infrastructure for shared use, but also their long-term sustainability.

4.3 Commission a report on cooperative land trusts and other models of cooperative ownership/incubators models and how they could function in Connecticut with a focus on urban and suburban areas.

5.1 Improve Community Engagement to Shape Agency Programs

Conduct a community needs assessment to inform a broad, equity-oriented community outreach strategy specific for agriculture. Develop methods to be able to continually collect community feedback.

5.2 - Solicit public feedback during the development of grant guidance documents and publicly post comments

5.3 Improve Producer Tools & Guides Published by the Agency

Create and disseminate multilingual resources guides, videos, and graphic guides (checklist, flow chart) to help farmers at multiple stages clearly understand the processes and requirements to gain access to various markets. For example, how to get plugged into markets, simple business guides, how to become a certified farmer, certifications and insurance needed, marketing tips, food safety best practices, and how to get into value-added production

6.1 Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing

Highlight and promote BIPOC farmers and other BIPOC individuals in agriculture, share stories and highlight diverse crops that are grown by BIPOC farmers to reinforce cultural awareness and diversity of the industry

Medium Term Recommendations

3-5 Years

1.5 - Increase DEI Trainings for Agency Staff

Through engagement with CT Department of Administrative Services, work to improve frequency and type of DEI trainings for agency staff to be more than once annually and include speakers and engagement-type trainings.

1.4 - Establish a non-discrimination clause to be associated with usage of the CT Grown logo to work to rectify and prevent instances of price discrimination and unfair treatment.

The agency will develop and make known to all producers the CT Grown logo has non-discrimination language associated with it and its usage.

2.1 Improve funding and resources to support BIPOC producer training

Provide grant funding for the formation of programs for training, mentoring, apprenticeship programs, farmer circles, trips to conferences/stipends etc. for BIPOC producers.

2.3 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Agricultural Career Development

Provide funding for training and mentorship for BIPOC specialists to become service providers for BIPOC farmers in production practices, natural resource management, navigating requirements for marketing, etc.

2.4 Develop and strengthen programming, in partnership with University of Connecticut Extension, for BIPOC youth to increase exposure to agriculture and agriculture as a career path.

Long Term Recommendations

5-7 Years

2.2 Support the establishment of a BIPOC-owned farm-based training center(s) which can contribute to the success and growth of the BIPOC farmer community.

This farm/education center could offer training in farming practices as well as food enterprises and other adjacent food/farm/health skills.

3.2 - Improve Access to Technical Assistance

Create a new program that will provide BIPOC farmers with funds to access professional consulting (when existing free options have been exhausted) in business planning, financial management services, legal entity formation, and related business planning/management/optimization services. This new program may take the shape of an accelerator/turnkey/microgrant fund. Whatever programmatic model works, we would like BIPOC farmers to be able to access this opportunity easily without a cumbersome grant application process, to be able to choose which consultants they get to work with, and we want BIPOC farmers not to wait an unreasonable amount of time to get these services.

4.1 Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers

Create a new program within DoAg, using \$10 million in bond funds to complement the already established Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Grant Program, for the acquisition and use of lands for BIPOC producers to enable the utilization of parcels that are vacant, small, not prime soils, in urban environments as well as other locations. This program could be called the Farmland Purchase Assistance and Restoration Funding.

4.2 Pursue an expanded policy around education of Connecticut's PA 490 law so that it's agricultural classification can be applied to urban parcels.

5.5 - Develop the digital hub in 5.4 into physical hubs in partnership with local community groups already doing the work that can serve as conduit/gateway for getting information to BIPOC urban farmers.



05
Conclusion

The DEI WG has proposed 21 high-level and 39 sub recommendations for agency and broader Connecticut agricultural community to consider and work to implement.

These recommendations represent an extensive effort undertaken by the working group members and a commitment to listen and improve by DoAg. The agency has outlined a suggested timeline for implementation with guidance from the working group members and work will begin immediately.

To ensure accountability, the department will annually release an update on its progress towards achieving the recommendations listed in the report as well as any other applicable changes made or pursued. Additionally, the working group has made several recommendations that focus on creating greater transparency and accountability in agency programming.

Though the working group has concluded its efforts, the effort and process will continue and DoAg remains committed to engaging BIPOC producers, organizations, and fellow service providers to collectively work together to support, strengthen, and enhance agricultural opportunities for the BIPOC population in Connecticut.

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[DEI WORKING GROUP WEBSITE](#)

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