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Getting to know small-scale, BIPOC, and beginning farmers

Lessons learned during a
2022-23 NACD Planning Grant



Farmers talk about their long term goals, barriers, and support needed

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, Washington Conservation District, Minnesota (WCD) received a \$10,000 planning grant from National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to support relationship-building between our organization and Big River Farms, a non-profit organization in Washington County that offers land access and education in organic agriculture for immigrants, refugees, people of color (BIPOC = Black, Indigenous and People of Color), and others who have historically faced discrimination in accessing farmland, markets, education and other farming support.

Complimentary to this effort, WCD staff and leadership also held a series of internal conversations to establish goals and strategies for better supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility as an organization.

Key activities completed as part of the NACD planning grant:

- Attended the Emerging Farmers Conference in Shoreview, MN on November 12, 2022;
- Facilitated an inter-agency workshop for 30 participants on February 16, 2023 that included WCD staff, board members, and organizational partners; and
- Facilitated a workshop on May 6, 2023 at Big River Farms that included a hands-on soil health training and listening session with 20 farmers and 10 staff from BIPOC and immigrant farming groups.

Key lessons learned during this project:

1) Land access is THE major barrier for beginning farmers. Most are looking for relatively small acreage (5-10 acres) and close to the Twin Cities to grow produce and small grains. Due to rising land costs, however, they're forced to move far outside the metro to access farmland. This translates into an increased time burden and expense for gas to travel between the farm and urban markets. There are also cultural challenges for people moving to rural areas where they aren't sure they will fit in and be accepted.

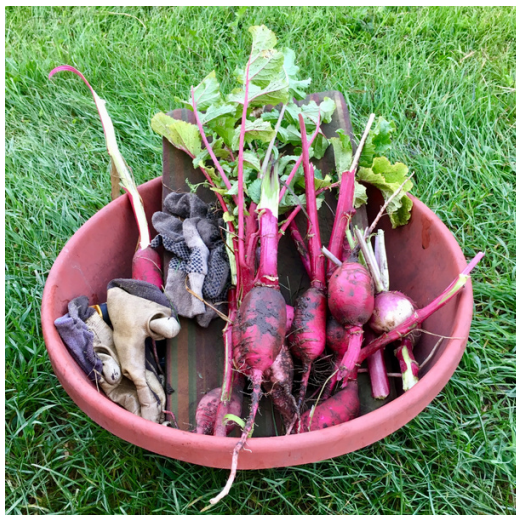
2) There are significant cultural differences between new and established farmers in the region. Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture recorded 612 farms in Washington County, covering 76,148 acres of land. Among people farming the land, 93% identify as white/European, 6% identify as Asian, and 1% represent other races and cultures. Most farmland in the region was homesteaded between 1880 and 1940 by European-American immigrants with Scandinavian and German heritage.

Though the average farm size in Washington County today is 124 acres, 23% of the farms in the county have less than 10 acres of land. Many beginning farmers are coming from southeast Asian, Latino, and African cultures and are seeking relatively small plots of land to farm in community with other people.

A quote from a woman attending the Big River Farms workshop highlights a significant cultural difference worth noting, *“Five of us are sisters in friendship and we work in community with one another. We want to farm together. African farmers want 10 acres to farm between 20 people. Not 70 acres for one person. We only need ½ acre each to grow food plus some room for the kids to play.”*

3) There is a continuum between community gardens and small-scale, commercial farming. A backyard garden or community garden plot is often an entry point to farming and then people scale-up to a larger produce plot and eventually land of their own.

4) Beginning farmers want more support for soil and water testing, improving soil health, learning basic farming skills, sharing equipment, and understanding/accessing government programs.



Background

Organizational profiles

Washington Conservation District has been working with farmers, land owners, and local communities to implement voluntary conservation practices since 1942. Located within the Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota, Washington County includes communities that are urban and fully developed, growing suburbs, and small towns that are still quite rural. Over the past 80 years, WCD has helped hundreds of farmers to implement conservation practices such as grassed waterways, cover crops, sediment basins, and buffer strips; convert cropland to native habitat; and develop conservation plans. In addition, WCD has helped more than 30 farmers and landowners to gain certification through the Minnesota Ag Water Quality program.

WCD is also host to the East Metro Water Resource Education Program (EMWREP), a local government partnership with 30 members that educates and engages the public through workshops, partnerships with non-profit and community groups, and a robust communications program. In 2022, WCD and EMWREP engaged 1039 residents through workshops and site visits and reached 4.3 million people through print and social media.

The 2021-26 WCD Comprehensive Plan lists as a guiding principal, “Promote equity and environmental justice by identifying and reducing disparities, providing equitable access to conservation, and improving socio-economic opportunities for under-served and under-represented populations.” Previously, WCD has created numerous educational materials in Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. As part of this grant, WCD was able to improve its relationship with Big River Farms and establish goals and strategies for better supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

Big River Farms is a nonprofit organization that offers land access and education in organic agriculture for immigrants, refugees, people of color, and others who have historically faced discrimination in accessing farmland, markets, education and other farming support. The farm has been in operation since 2005 and is important from both an environmental and cultural perspective.

Big River Farms provides beginning farmers mentorship and guidance in managing their own 1/8 to 6-acre plots of certified organic land at its 150-acre incubator farm in May Township, Washington County, near Marine on St. Croix. Big River Farms teaches and demonstrates organic agricultural practices that build soil health, preserve diverse ecosystems and pollinator habitat, conserve water, and protect quality. The organization also provides market education, training, and support, and provides opportunities for participating farmers to sell their produce at the Big River Farms aggregate farmers market stand and to the Food Groups Local Food for Every Table program.

Located within the Wilder Forest in May Township, Big River Farms, the surrounding forest, and adjacent land owned by Manitou Foundation are part of the largest tract of undeveloped land in Washington County and have been identified by Washington County and the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District as a high priority for permanent land protection.

Within the same watershed as Big River Farms is Square Lake, a high quality lake with exceptional water clarity and a public swimming beach. The nearby Wilder and Manitou forest also contains three of the most pristine shallow lakes in Minnesota – Mays, Clear, and Terrapin – as well as a unique quaking bog. Working with landowners and farm operators to reduce runoff water pollution and utilize conservation farming practices is a high priority for both Washington Conservation District and the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District.

Changes in Farming in Washington County, MN

Because of its close proximity to Minneapolis-St. Paul, Washington County has experienced intense development and suburbanization since the 1990s. Today, Washington County is the fifth most populous county in Minnesota, and its population is expected to grow by 80,000 over the next 20 years.

The vast majority of established farmers in Washington County are European-American and most come from families that began farming between 1880 and 1940. Though there are exceptions, this style of farming is traditionally very male-dominated. There are also a considerable number of landowners in Washington County who rent their land for farming, rather than farming it themselves.

In 2019, WCD conducted a mailed survey of 387 farmers and rural landowners in Chisago, Isanti, Pine and Washington Counties as part of the Lower St. Croix Watershed Plan development process. More than 96% reported owning 10 acres of land, and 60% reported owning more than 40 acres. Of these farmers, 55% are growing row crops, 43% have pasture areas, and 25% are raising livestock. Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture shows that cropland actually covers closer to 76% of the land in Washington County. Currently, we are experiencing a massive turnover in land ownership as older farm families sell their land – usually to be subdivided and developed. A large percentage of the remaining farmland is being used to grow corn and soybeans, in rotation.

Two additional trends can be observed in Washington County. The first is a significant number of urban residents “moving out to the country” to find larger parcels of land for use as hobby farms. There is also a growing interest in smaller-scale, sustainable farming that includes produce and small grains for local markets, backyard chickens and goats, and small orchards. Compared with the established farmers in the region, prospective new farmers tend to be younger, and include more farmers that are female and/or BIPOC.

In 2019, 17.5% of the residents in Washington County identified as people of color. Washington County is projected to become more racially diverse in the next twenty years. Among BIPOC and immigrant farmers, most come from Hmong, African, and Latino cultures.

Scope of Work

Key activities completed as part of the NACD planning grant:

1) Attended the Emerging Farmers Conference in Shoreview, MN on November 12, 2022. This annual conference is hosted by The Food Group, which is the parent organization for Big River Farms. Approximately 400 people attended in 2022.

Angie Hong, EMWREP coordinator at WCD, attended and participated in two sessions that featured small-group conversations. Let's talk about land access was led by Pilar Ingram, Farm Beginnings organizer with the Land Stewardship Project and Katie Kubovcik, owner of Prairie Smoke Gardens and consultant with Big River Farms. There were 50-60 participants. The Farmer issue mini-caucus was led by Zoe Hollomon and Sophia Benrud of the Midwest Farmers of Color Collective and had roughly 50 participants.

2) Facilitated an inter-agency workshop on February 16, 2023 for 30 participants, including WCD staff, board members, and organizational partners. WCD used a portion of its NACD grant funds to contract with Barbara Raye, an equity consultant with the Center for Policy, Planning, and Performance.

Raye helped WCD staff to establish 5-year equity goals and facilitate a half-day workshop for staff, board, and organizational partners. Lead WCD staff and board members for this initiative included Angie Hong, Jay Riggs, Barbara Heitkamp, Becca Oldenburg, Karen Kill, Brett Stolpestad, and Diane Blake.

WCD's new equity goals include:

- 1) Creating a mentorship program and implementing new strategies to diversify our existing work force;
- 2) Incorporating equity into our prioritization processes (for grant applications, restoration work, etc.);
- and 3) Working with organizational partners to develop an urban agriculture program that engages emerging farmers from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds.

During the February workshop, participants identified strategies and potential collaboration opportunities to achieve the 5-year equity goals listed above. The total cost for contract work with Barbara Raye was \$2000, half of which was paid for with NACD grant funds. WCD also used grant funds to provide food and materials for the Feb. 16 workshop.

3) Facilitated a workshop on May 6, 2023 at Big River Farms that included a hands-on soil health training and listening session with 20 farmers and 10 staff from BIPOC and immigrant farming groups.

WCD staff members Angie Hong and Barbara Heitkamp worked with Jennifer Hahn from Minnesota Extension - Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership and Katie Kubovcik from Big River Farms to plan a half-day workshop at Big River Farms that included farmers and staff from Big River Farms, Kilimo Minnesota, Somali American Farmers Institute, and Sudanese Farming Group, LLC.

During the workshop, Hahn conducted a hands-on soil health demo, taught farmers how to conduct a soils test, and answered questions about soil health and soil testing. Farmers were provided with a voucher to complete a free soil health test at the University of Minnesota Soil Testing and Research Analytical Laboratory. The tests measure zinc, copper, iron, manganese, boron, calcium, magnesium, soluble salts, potassium, phosphorus, organic matter, and pH.

After the soil health demonstration, participants divided into two groups and took part in facilitated conversations, led by Hong and Heitkamp.

Farmers talked about their long-term goals, barriers they've encountered, and support they would like to receive from WCD and other entities.

All participants signed an informed consent release and received a \$100 stipend for their participation. WCD also used grant funds to provide food, workshop materials, and interpretation services (Spanish and Hmong). In addition, NACD grant funds were used to provide staff stipends to Big River Farms, Kilimo Minnesota, Somali American Farmers Institute, and Sudanese Farming Group, LLC. to help organize and facilitate the event.



Above: Jennifer Hahn of UMN Extension led a soil health demonstration at the May 6, 2023 workshop at Big River Farms.

Budget

ACTIVITY	NACD GRANT	MATCH
WCD STAFF TIME	26.8HRS = \$2000	155HRS = \$11,564
BIG RIVER FARMS STAFF TIME	\$1500	
STAFF TIME FOR OTHER FARMING ORGS	\$600	
EMERGING FARMERS CONFERENCE	\$187	
EQUITY CONSULTING AND WORKSHOP	\$1445	\$1000
FARMER STIPENDS (20)	\$2000	
INTERPRETATION SERVICES	\$400	
SOIL TEST VOUCHERS (20)	\$1140	
OTHER WORKSHOP EXPENSES	\$732	
TOTAL	\$10,004	\$12,564



Above: Farmers learned about soil health and shared conversation at a May 6, 2023 workshop at Big River Farms in Washington County, MN.

KEY THEMES FROM ALL LISTENING SESSIONS

Four key themes emerged during conversations with immigrant and BIPOC farmers at the Emerging Farmer's Conference in November 2022 and Big River Farms workshop in May 2023. These are summarized below, with example quotes from farmers included.

1) Land access is THE major barrier for beginning farmers.

Most beginning farmers are growing produce and small grains for people to eat, not commodity crops. The markets are in the Twin Cities but land prices are high, so it is hard to buy or lease. Farmers are forced to move farther outside the city, which translates into an increased time burden and expense for gas to travel between the farm and markets. In addition, BIPOC and immigrant farmers are nervous about moving to small towns in rural areas. Will they be accepted as part of the community?

"How do you feel safe moving to a rural community you aren't from? This is a major barrier for me." P, Black farmer from Brooklyn Park. (Emerging Farmer's Conference)

"It is hard to make friends in your 30s especially in a rural area." C, Anishinaabe. (Emerging Farmer's Conference)

"The gas kills you, driving to and from the farm." T, Hmong-American, farming near Cannon Falls. (Big River Farms Workshop)

Most are looking for relatively small acreage (5-10 acres) and close to the Twin Cities or another metro area, such as St. Cloud or Rochester.

Big River Farms is one of several organizations in the state that acts as an "incubator farm." The intention is to provide land access, a community of support, and training for 3-5 years to help new farmers get started. However, in many cases there is nowhere for the farmers to go once they graduate from the program due to limited land availability and prices.

2) There are significant cultural differences between new and established farmers in the region.

Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture recorded 612 farms in Washington County, covering 76,148 acres of land. Among people farming the land, 93% identify as white/European, 6% identify as Asian, and 1% represent other races and cultures. Most farmland in the region was homesteaded between 1880 and 1940 by European-American immigrants with Scandinavian and German heritage.

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There are also a considerable number of landowners in Washington County who rent their land for farming, rather than farming it themselves.

“I rent the land. They raise crops.” (2019 Lower St. Croix survey)

“All our land is rented.” (2019 Lower St. Croix survey)

“I simply rent my land as I live in California. The current farmer is doing a better job than the previous (I’ve been told...)” (2019 Lower St. Croix survey)

“Sorry, I live in NY, this tract has been in my family for 100 years. I till 30 +/- acres (my cousin does) so not sure how to answer these.” (2019 Lower St. Croix survey)

Though the average farm size in Washington County today is 124 acres, 23% of the farms in the county have less than 10 acres of land. Many beginning farmers are coming from southeast Asian, Latino, and African cultures and the farmers interviewed during our Big River Farms event overwhelmingly expressed a desire to access smaller plots of land, 5-10 acres, for growing produce, small grains for human consumption, and small livestock.

European-American farmers are usually coming from a tradition of private land ownership and management, whereas many of the farmers from Indigenous (Dakota and Ojibwe), Hmong, and African cultures are coming from a tradition of collective land stewardship.

During conversations at the Emerging Farmer's Conference and Big River Farms workshop, participants (from all races and cultures) often expressed frustration that American systems (land ownership, financial lending, and governmental farm assistance) do not support their farming goals.

"Five of us are sisters in friendship and we work in community with one another. We want to farm together. African farmers want 10 acres to farm between 20 people. Not 70 acres for one person. We only need ½ acre each to grow food plus some room for the kids to play." LV, Swahili. Farming in south metro. (Big River Farms workshop)

"Traditional banking and land ownership in the US doesn't work that way. The legal system only allows there to be one landowner, not multiple people." MM, originally from Kenya. (Big River Farms workshop) ¹

"We want to grow food to sustain the land and serve our families and community." (Big River Farms workshop)

"It depends who you are talking to and who makes the determination. They don't take you seriously and it makes it harder to get assistance. Some places you are accepted and others not. You have to prove yourself and work overtime." FT – African immigrant farming in central Minnesota (Emerging Farmer's Conference) ²

"As a tribal member it is challenging to straddle two worlds. The idea of land ownership and access is strange and doesn't align with Indigenous land stewardship. You can't access federal programs when farming on tribal lands. Municipalities and counties can, but not tribes." – CW, Anishinaabe. Farming land on the Fond Du Lac Indian Reservation (Emerging Farmer's Conference)

"I don't want to buy land. Why would I buy something back that has already been stolen?" AK, Anishinaabe. Farming land on the Fond Du Lac Indian Reservation (Emerging Farmer's Conference)

[1] It is worth noting that communal living farming arrangements such as LLCs, joint tenancy, and tenants in common are viable strategies that have been implemented in other locations.

[2] Note that Tribes and Tribal lands actually are eligible for federal programs. They receive special funding with a higher payment rate and are offered practices that aren't available to other producers.

“I would like to move toward a communal living system with multiple families living together and farming the same land.” A, European-American. (Emerging Farmer’s Conference)

“It requires a whole system change. The current one is not set up for people of color to succeed.” Black. (Emerging Farmer’s Conference)

“How do you develop a community farming model so it is less of an individual venture?” M, European-American. (Emerging Farmer’s Conference)

Numerous people at both events talked about their emotional connections with the land and brought up themes related to healing and restoration.

“We come from a war-torn country and we farm here to find peace and healing with the land.” (Big River Farms workshop)

“I used to be homeless. Now, out of gratitude to the land and my community, I share the food the we grow with everyone.” (Emerging Farmer’s Conference)

“We do a lot of work to heal the land, but we don’t always get credit for that.” (Emerging Farmer’s Conference)

3) There is often a continuum between community gardens and small-scale, commercial farming.

For many people attending the Big River Farms workshop, a backyard garden or community garden plot was their entry point to farming. They started small and then scaled-up in size to a 0.5-6 acre plot at Big River Farms. Some people further along in the journey have moved on to buy or lease land for farming, either on their own or in partnership with other farmers. People spoke about the challenges inherent in leasing land.

“At community farms, you never know if you’re staying at the same place from year to year.” (Big River Farms workshop)

“Do you want to test the soil when you might not be there the next year? How much do you want to invest in improving soil health?” (Big River Farms workshop)

“We’re still trying to figure out the scale of farming that we are most suited to.” (Big River Farms workshop)

4) They want more support for soil and water testing, improving soil health, basic farming skills, sharing equipment, and understanding/accessing government programs.

Soil testing: The standard, low-cost soil test offered through UMN Extension only measures nutrients, not contaminants. This is a big concern for people farming urban plots and along roadways, especially when they are growing produce. Minnesota Department of Health offers testing for soil contaminants, but those are highly specialized and expensive. There is also an online resource people can use to look up a parcel and learn if there are known contaminants.

After UMN Extension Educator Jennifer Hahn discussed soil testing at the Big River Farms workshop, numerous people asked for additional resources to help test their soil and ensure it is safe for growing food.

“Many churches are offering their properties to be used for community gardens, but is the soil safe? Who can we work with to test it and find out?” (Big River Farms workshop)

Water testing: Farmers at the Big River Farms workshop had numerous questions about water quality, including how to test water used for irrigation, whether their soil is impacted by contamination from nearby lakes and rivers (example = farming near the Mississippi River), and which types of hoses and containers are safe to use for produce and livestock.

Improving soil health: Hahn's soil health lesson and demonstration at the Big River Farms workshop elicited dozens of questions from the group. People were very interested in educational opportunities related to improving soil health and grants to support soil health practices, such as cover crops.

Basic farming skills and sharing equipment: People who are just beginning have a multitude of questions and aren't always sure where to look for support. Big River Farms offers classes to its members, and UMN Extension offers programming as well. But people expressed a desire to have a “one-stop shop” where they can find info on farming and support programs, all in one place. Farmers also said they were interested in sharing equipment such as a smaller no-till drill.

“Share the full breadth of available resources, not just those available through the government.” (Emerging Farmer's Conference)

“Make resources SUPER accessible and have everything in one place.” (Emerging Farmer's Conference)

Understanding/accessing government programs: Farmers attending the Big River Farms workshop noted how confusing it can be to navigate the different government programs. Some programs have acreage minimums. Others have restrictions based on geographic location. There are also times when the cost-share and grant programs conflict with local zoning restrictions.

“It would help if there was a ‘checklist’ for beginning farmers with a list of organizations and rules we need to know about.” (Big River Farms workshop)

“Sometimes there are grants to do something but it’s prohibited by the city or township. So you get money to do something, only to learn you can’t actually do it in your location.” (Big River Farms workshop)

“Teach us how to apply for grants. It’s not enough to have a grant and programs if people don’t know how to apply. Some applications are only online and that is a problem too.” (Big River Farms workshop)

“There should be a go-between to help farmers like myself navigate funding, farm aid, and other support.” (Emerging Farmer’s Conference)



Above: Big River Farms offers land access and education in organic agriculture for immigrants, refugees, people of color, and others who have historically faced discrimination in accessing farmland, markets, education and other farming support. Due to rising land prices, many beginning farmers struggle to find land to buy or lease in the Twin Cities metro area.

Recommendations

WCD offers the following suggestions for next steps and possible ways that our organization and other partners could adapt to better support beginning farmers in Washington County, particularly those who are immigrants or BIPOC.

Washington Conservation District

WCD is the local resource and direct connection to farmers and producers in Washington County to provide technical assistance, financial assistance, resources, and connections with farm programs and organizations.

The following recommendations could help the WCD to better connect farmers with available resources and support.

1) Institutionalize relationships with nonprofits such as Land Stewardship Project, Big River Farms, and other entities that are already working with beginning farmers. As an example, WCD has had a relationship with the farm at Wilder Forest (formerly Land Stewardship Project, now Big River Farms) as far back as the 1980s, but has had to continually renew this relationship due to staff turnover at both organizations.

It is worth noting how hard it was to establish a working relationship with Big River Farms during this planning grant. There were a number of staff changes at Big River Farms during the year and we had a very hard time connecting with staff and gaining support for programming.

Additionally, it was hard for WCD staff to plug into existing events and activities at Big River Farms because they were usually held on weekends during our busy season.

Moving forward, WCD should also strive to establish relationships with other nonprofit organizations that are working with small-scale and emerging farmers in the region.

2) Provide small-scale farmers with support to implement soil health and conservation practices, such as erosion control, cover crops, and pollinator prairie strips. This could happen at current farm sites, such as Big River Farms, Dream of Wild Health, privately-owned farms, or at future sites.

3) Consider working with Washington County or a nonprofit to develop models for leasing/selling land to small-scale farmers. These models should take into account the strong desire of many immigrant and BIPOC farmers to farm in community with other people on small plots of land. WCD could provide support to develop conservation-minded whole farm designs for these locations.

4) Share info about grant programs, water testing, and educational programs. Create and distribute flyers directly to BIPOC and immigrant farming groups.



Washington County

Counties play an important role in land-use decision making, long-term comprehensive planning, and implementing programs to permanently protect agricultural lands and natural habitat. They also own and manage large tracts of land within parks, in road and trail corridors, and surrounding county-owned buildings.

The following recommendations could help Washington County to better support small-scale farmers and underserved populations, as well as ensure long-term food security for all county residents.

1) Collaborate with partners to better connect resources and programming between community gardens and farming. The county currently supports community gardens through its SHIP programming (State Health Improvement Program). Since these gardens are often an entry point for beginning farmers, the county should work with cities, nonprofits such as Big River Farms, UMN Extension and Master Gardeners, and other entities such as NRCS to better connect resources and programming for community gardens, urban farming, and small-scale (3-5 acres) rural farming.

2) Consider allocating county-owned land for small-scale, organic food production, with an emphasis on supporting underserved populations, such as BIPOC and immigrant farmers. This could include county park land, currently leased for farming, as well as county-owned tax forfeit land.

3) Consider establishing agricultural easements to protect high quality farmland in Washington County. This would help to promote food security and ensure that farmland is available to grow food for the metro population into the future.

Protected farmland should be transitioned from row crops to sustainable food production in order to reduce environmental impacts. WCD can work with the county to identify priority locations for farmland protection and natural resources restoration, and can also help to develop conservation-minded farm plans.

Minnesota Extension

University of Minnesota Extension conducts scientific research and delivers practical education to support farmers across the state in successfully growing produce, crops, and livestock with fewer impacts to natural resources.

The following recommendations could help Minnesota Extension to improve their support for small-scale and urban farmers.

1) Provide additional information to farmers about soil testing options available through Minnesota Department of Health.

Work with state and local government partners to develop cost-share or financial assistance to reduce the cost of testing for soil contaminants. Create and distribute flyers directly to BIPOC and immigrant farmers and farming groups.

2) Work with local field offices, SWCDs, and nonprofit organizations such as Big River Farms to promote classes offered through Extension's "Small Farm Start-up School."

Create and distribute flyers directly to BIPOC and immigrant farming groups and offer in-person classes with translation services as an option for people with limited access to computers or limited English language skills.

3) Work to develop stronger connections between the community gardening programs offered by Master Gardeners and the agricultural education programs offered through Extension.


Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

NRCS offers conservation programs and financial support to farmers to implement practices that protect soil health, water, habitat, and natural resources. In recent years, NRCS has established equity as an organizational priority.

The following recommendations could help NRCS to better connect with farmers from underserved communities.

1) Work collaboratively with SWCDs, Minnesota Extension, and nonprofit organizations such as Big River Farms to identify new farmers and underserved communities in each county. Create and distribute flyers directly to BIPOC and immigrant farmers and farming groups.

2) Provide information and support to help reduce perceived barriers, such as small-scale farmers who might incorrectly believe that support programs are only available to large farms.



Everyone (WCD, County, Extension, NRCS, others)

Conversations with farmers attending the Emerging Farmers' Conference and Big River Farms workshop highlighted the need for public, nonprofit, and private partners to better support new farmers, especially those from underserved communities.

The following recommendations provide suggestions for next steps.

1) Convene regional groups to collaborate and provide better support for beginning farmers, especially those from BIPOC and immigrant farming groups.

2) Work together to compile available resources – both nonprofit and governmental - and make them more accessible. Make paper and PDF copies available as well for easier sharing on locations other than just websites. Create and distribute flyers directly to BIPOC and immigrant farmers and farming groups.

For more information about this project, contact:

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