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# Emerging Farmers' Working Group

Legislative Report

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*Thank you to all the Emerging Farmers' Working Group members for your advocacy for those not in the room. Thank you to Lillian Otieno and Tamara Mansun for your steadfast attention to the needs of all emerging farmers in Minnesota. Last but certainly not least, thank you to Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan for always supporting emerging farmers and Minnesota agriculture.*

As requested by Minnesota Statute 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1000 to prepare, including staff time, printing, and mailing expenses.

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## Introduction

*“Because of the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) farmers, women farmers, veteran farmers, and other farmers from historically underrepresented and underserved communities who are contributing their voices and ideas as part of the Emerging Farmers’ Work Group, we are creating an agricultural future where it is easier for all new farmers to take their first steps into the field. It is with a deep appreciation for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for their continued dedication to this important conversation and bringing people’s voices to the table.”*

*-Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan*

In 2021, we experienced another turbulent year, with climate change and fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to affect the agricultural sector and access to food. In addition, it was a very tough year for farmers all over the country, but especially in Minnesota due to a severe drought, worker shortages, and supply chain issues, which all posed a major upset for our farmers. However, the farm economy in agriculture has been and continues to be a foundation for Minnesota’s economy. Since the death of George Floyd, Minnesotans have come together to address food deserts in urban communities and mobile food hubs.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Chief Economist Robert Johansson, in the blog post [America’s Farmers: Resilient Throughout the COVID Pandemic](#), farmers and various communities around the country “managed household budgets at a time when markets – food, commodity, labor, energy – are being jolted by global, national, and regional shutdowns, slowdowns, and overall uncertainty. Those shocks to the U.S. and global economies have affected both the supply and demand for food in the U.S. and the rest of the world, leading to short-term, localized shortages in the U.S., particularly in livestock products like meat, while farmers had to deal with, for example, meat processing and excess milk supplies in other areas.”

Minnesota ranks fifth in the nation in terms of agricultural production, and there are over 430,000 agricultural related jobs in the state. Minnesota has 68,500 farms covering 25.5 million acres. Agriculture also plays a large role in Minnesota’s culture and heritage, and many Minnesotans feel connected to agriculture even if they themselves have no formal role in the industry. However, the agricultural opportunity is not equally available to all Minnesotans.

According to the McKinsey and Company article, [Black farmers in the US: The Opportunity for addressing racial disparities in farming](#), “Today, just 1.4 percent of farmers identify as Black or mixed race compared with about 14 percent 100 years ago. These farmers represent less than 0.5 percent of total U.S. farm sales.”

The history of land ownership in the state has been affected by the Homestead Act (1862), Bonanza Farms (1875), and well documented racial bias in USDA grant and loan programs (*Keepseagle v. Vilsack*, *Pigford v. Glickman*). Limited access to capital and the lack of legal protections like wills that transfer property to the next generation means that communities of color and emerging farmers have been unable to fully participate in the land market.

Emerging farmers continue to grow beyond urban areas and within refugee and immigrant populations in Minnesota despite the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are new pathways and opportunities

for emerging farmers to address disparities regarding land transfer and building generational wealth in historically underserved communities within Minnesota. This is especially encouraging since the average age of a Minnesota farmer is 56 years old and transition/succession planning is critically important for the future of the agricultural sector.

## Who is an Emerging Farmer?

Previous studies at the state and national levels have been done on barriers facing young and beginning farmers, immigrant and refugee farmers, and other specific groups within the farming population. The focus on “emerging” farmers is relatively new. The term reflects the diversity and intersectionality of farmers, and the way that barriers affect multiple communities at the same time ([Appendix A](#)). For example, a young African-American woman interested in farming will likely face several systemic barriers, many of which may be similar—and some different—than an older, non-English speaking male immigrant. Using the term “emerging” farmer helps to frame the conversation around the shared experiences of many communities within the conversation.

The numbers below have not changed since the last agricultural census that was taken in 2017. The next agricultural census is scheduled for November 2022 and hopefully we can have a more accurate count of emerging farmers in Minnesota.

| Race                             | Number of farmers in Minnesota |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| African American/Black           | 39                             |
| American Indian/Alaska Native    | 180                            |
| Asian                            | 399                            |
| Hispanic/Latino                  | 651                            |
| Multiracial                      | 296                            |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 22                             |
| Young                            | 11,520                         |
| White                            | 110,824                        |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>111,760</b>                 |

Source: 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture

“Emerging” refers to something that is starting to exist, or something which is just beginning to be noticed. In this regard, emerging farmers encompasses both those individuals who are entirely new to farming as well as those individuals who have been farming for generations but were outside the scope of traditional state and federal agricultural support programs.

## Emerging Farmers’ Working Group

The Emerging Farmers’ Working Group (EFWG) was initiated by legislative request in 2019 and formally established in law in 2020 (MINN. STAT. 17.055):

*“To advise the commissioner and legislature regarding the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that support emerging farmers in this state,*

*the commissioner must periodically convene a working group consisting, to the extent possible, of persons who are, and organizations that represent, farmers or aspiring farmers who are women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young, and urban, and any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner. No later than January 15 each year, the commissioner must update the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over agriculture regarding the working group's activities and recommendations.”*

Since the Emerging Farmers’ Working Group was created, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) continues to address the needs of emerging farmers throughout the state and giving priority to **women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Native, members of communities of color and LBGTQIA**. However, the definition of an emerging farmer expanded throughout the listening sessions to encompass several historically underserved communities, farming practices, and values.

| Identity   | Practices  | Values  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young</li> <li>• Unrelated to a farmer/no inherited land</li> <li>• Limited capital</li> <li>• Tech savvy</li> <li>• Urban/suburban/rural based</li> <li>• Queer/LBGTQIA</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetables</li> <li>• Regenerative/sustainable practices</li> <li>• Moving toward another kind of production</li> <li>• Direct marketing</li> <li>• Urban agriculture</li> <li>• Indigenous and culturally relevant crops</li> <li>• Specialty crops</li> <li>• Indoor agriculture</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate about farming</li> <li>• Care for the land</li> <li>• Change the system for the better</li> <li>• Solutions based</li> <li>• Food sovereignty &amp; food justice based</li> </ul> |

**Table 1. Selected answers to the question, "Who is an Emerging Farmer" from the 2019 listening sessions (revised).**

While this work centers on the experience of emerging farmers, the recommendations and insights will benefit all farmers in Minnesota. Established farmers have a significant role to play in advocating for, and providing mentorship to, emerging farmers. Equity and justice in the agricultural system improves the overall sector and can create a more robust and resilient economy for all Minnesotans. Land ownership and agricultural professions are a key pathway to building inter-generational wealth, both within family units and within communities. Opening pathways for emerging farmers can also revitalize rural communities and increase economic activities in Greater Minnesota.

## Learnings from the Emerging Farmers’ Working Group Meetings

The EFWG is intended to provide guidance to the commissioner of agriculture on the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that impact emerging farmers in Minnesota. There are currently seventeen existing advisory groups to the MDA. These advisory groups have varying levels of formality, with some adopting bylaws, elections, and voting procedures and others set up as informal groups that provide ad hoc feedback to programs. Each of these groups is associated with one specific *program area* of the MDA. The Emerging Farmers’ Working Group is the only existing *agency-wide* stakeholder group with the purpose of providing feedback across all divisions of the agency.

This initially presented challenges in establishing workable boundaries between the working group and the MDA. As the EFWG began meeting, a group of internal MDA staff and members of the working group struggled with the purpose and vision of the work group. Some partners saw this working group as a promise of comprehensive rebuilding of MDA policies and programs to address structural inequities, while others saw the group to as a vehicle to get the word out about existing programs and services that the MDA already offers. Without a clear and defined vision, there was a possibility for frustration and alienation.

While other advisory councils had clear directives, the EFWG's scope was large enough that it was difficult to assess where to begin. Simply learning the functions and structures of each MDA division could take a year of study, much less asking for targeted feedback on program and policy design and implementation. Nevertheless, the MDA and its facilitator felt it important for working group members to have an overview of MDA functions, its relationship with other state agencies, and an understanding of the legislative process. This orientation dictated much of the early meetings' agendas and time.

Many of the Emerging Farmers' Working Group members expressed concerns with the lack of clarity around a focus on and support of emerging farmers. They sensed the MDA was more focused on providing presentations by department leaders and other agencies than focusing on the work to improve outcomes for emerging farmers. They described the meeting structure as unsustainable, stifling of important discussions, and replicating a traditional meeting format that does not allow for open dialogue. Members had strongly suggested that the EFWG hold meetings with an open agenda or make space for a "reverse classroom" conversation where leaders/administrators attend meetings to learn from the voices of emerging farmers. In their personal farming networks, they have also learned that other farmers want regular updates on the progress of this work group, spurring ideas for a more public website to post updates.

In early June, the EFWG facilitator gave members the opportunity to voice their perspectives on their participation during the first six months. There were no MDA employees at this listening session. Members expressed concerns over the informational nature of the meetings, the formal and busy structure, and unease surrounding MDA support of future recommendations. The process of the listening session was an open conversation with the use of the Google Jam board app to visually capture comments and recommendations. Below are some quotes from the conversation members had:

*"Informational nature of meetings is also a negative. Having meetings recorded can stifle conversations."*

*"A negative is how much white supremacy is enacted in the meetings – formality, busy agenda, urge to demonstrate doing "work" – I feel like these are functions of white supremacy and it feels particularly suffocating here. This group could be really impactful, but this culture stagnates us. (What is the culture?)"*

*"Presentations should be 10 minutes and our feedback should take-up the bulk of the time – They should be listening to us."*

*"What is the degree of which our recommendations will be supported?"*

At the listening session, members agreed that the meetings should have an outlined agenda that provides a general meeting outline that has an open structure with a primary focus on emerging farmer voices moving

forward. After the listening session, the facilitator met with MDA leadership to share the feedback and the leadership agreed to follow the recommendations for future meetings.

The EFWG has challenged the MDA to work more effectively across internal divisions. As is true for many large institutions, the MDA's stakeholders, policies, practices, outreach, and engagement activities are siloed by division or even within each division by program area. This can lead to difficulty in collaboration and communication within the MDA, often causing frustration by external stakeholders who feel they get different answers from different MDA programs, or that they cannot get a full picture from any one department staffer. The general consensus of the MDA administration and the working group was to build around the guiding principle that people affected by policies and decision-making should be consulted in the creation of that policy and those decisions.

In the context of the Emerging Farmers' Working Group, this meant thinking critically about how to meaningfully establish a group for historically underrepresented communities within the agency that had historically underrepresented these groups. A lack of trust between these communities and the MDA, and more broadly government institutions, made the development and design of the working group vital. Agency staff believe it is important for emerging farmers to feel ownership over this group; that it would not be a group about emerging farmers, but rather, that members of the working group would have agency in the structure and practices of how the group approaches this work. The MDA acknowledges that the voices of emerging farmers have been historically left out of the conversation. Why, how, and by whom these communities have been excluded are all questions worthy of continuous reflection.

The EFWG members understand that their participation is considered high-level and focused on supporting emerging farmers throughout the state. Members are self-directed and encouraged by the MDA to ensure their advocacy is not self-serving, but rather ideas and strategies presented will serve the entire emerging farmer community throughout the state of Minnesota.

## **Snapshot of working group meetings**

### **November 2020**

The EFWG held its inaugural meeting on November 6, 2020. The meeting focused on introducing the purpose and vision of the working group and an opportunity for members to virtually meet one another. The group also created a list of meeting agreements and discussed a structure for the monthly sessions. The bylaws and term limits were explained.

### **December 2020**

The focus of the December meeting was the adoption of a facilitation process. The MDA's data practices manager explained the open meeting law to the group. The director of government relations gave an overview of MDA policies and its structure. EFWG members had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments related to the presentation.

### **January 2021**

The January meeting focused on introducing the Minnesota ethnic councils and how they can be a resource to emerging farmers. The executive director of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans presented an overview of



their work with an emphasis on farming. The meeting shifted focus to a presentation by the MDA Deputy Commissioner Andrea Vaubel and Government Relations Director Peder Kjeseth on the MDA's legislative priorities and an overview of the MDA's budget. After each presentation, EFWG members had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **February 2021**

The February meeting began with a presentation by the executive director of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs. The meeting moved to a presentation by leaders within the MDA's Agricultural Marketing and Development Division, which covered programs such as Minnesota Grown. It also focused on available grants for emerging farmers. The last presentation was by the MDA's equity & inclusion officer who gave an overview of the work of the MDA's Diversity Council. Although limited, after each presentation, EFWG members had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **March 2021**

The March meeting began with a legislative update by Assistant Commissioner Patrice Bailey and included a discussion by members of the EFWG that testified at the House Ag Committee. The executive director of the Council of Minnesotans of African Heritage presented on the work of the council. The senior advisor of strategy and innovation at the MDA then presented on the realities of farm stress related to emerging farmers. The group heard a presentation from the dean of Agriculture Studies at Central Lakes College who is also the executive director of Ag Centric and Agricultural Partnerships. The dean provided an overview of the Farm Business Management Program and presented the idea to have a program available in the metro area. Although limited, after each presentation, EFWG members had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **April 2021**

The April meeting began with a legislative update by current Minnesota Representative 40B Samantha Vang, Chair of the People of Color and Indigenous (POCI) Caucus and Vice Chair of the House Ag Committee. Rep. Vang was joined by former House Ag Committee Chair Jeanne Poppe who represented District 27B. After the update the group heard a presentation on the work of Second Harvest and their support/connection with emerging farmers. The group then had an opportunity to hear from a farm navigator at Renewing the Countryside who discussed the organization and support systems they provide to emerging farmers. And lastly, a Saint Paul Rondo neighborhood community organizer and master gardener discussed the work in the Rondo community to enhance and grow urban agriculture. Although limited, after each presentation, EFWG members had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

## **May 2021**

No meeting was held.

## **June 2021**

The June meeting was set up differently in response to EFWG membership wanting an opportunity to dialogue with MDA leadership. The meeting began with comments from Commissioner Thom Petersen and follow-up conversations.

## **July 2021**

The July meeting began with Commissioner Petersen providing highlights of the legislative session and he then opened a conversation between EFWG membership and MDA leadership. The group also discussed possible roles for the new emerging farmer outreach and engagement coordinator and how to best use the translation services funds.

## **August 2021**

No meeting was held.

## **September 2021**

The September meeting began with Commissioner Petersen conversing with the working group around planning for the 2022 legislative session. The group also discussed the negative impacts of the drought on emerging farmers. Assistant Commissioner Bailey announced that Lillian Otieno will lead MDA's new Emerging Farmer Office and that her title will be Emerging Farmer Outreach and Engagement Coordinator. MDA Tribal Liaison Shannon Kesner discussed work that was taking place at Fond du Lac. The group then discussed the upcoming transition to the second year of the working group, including which members' terms are ending in November and what the application process will look like for interested participants to apply.

## **October 2021**

The October meeting began with staff from the Food and Feed Safety Division, discussing the Statewide Cooperative Partnership. The meeting provided time for outgoing members to share their reflections and recommendations. Government Relations Director Peder Kjeseth gave a legislative update and Ashley Bress from the Agricultural Marketing and Development Division gave an update regarding upcoming grants and loans in 2022. EFWG member Shelly Woods leads the local chapter of Farmers Veteran Organization, and she provided a presentation on the work of the organization.

## **November 2021**

The November meeting began with the introduction of the new members to the EFWG. Commissioner Petersen opened the meeting with a welcome and each member had an opportunity to introduce themselves. Emerging Farmers Outreach & Engagement Coordinator Lillian Otieno discussed the guidelines and expectations for the group members, and what emerging farmers can expect from the new Emerging Farmers Office. Assistant Commissioner Bailey announced the new agriculture license plate will be coming in early 2022. Director of Government Relations Peder Kjeseth gave a legislative update. Department of Employment and Economic Development Assistant Commissioner Anisa Hajimumin discussed a recent project she is working on to looking into state policies and systems that may hinder immigrants and refugees from starting businesses or finding jobs. She and Assistant Commissioner Bailey provided updates on how this impacts emerging farmers.

## **December 2021**

No meeting was held.

## 2021 legislative wins

The Emerging Farmers' Working Group and the MDA achieved major success during the last legislative session. Many of the 2021 legislative requests and successes put forth by the MDA came as recommendations from EFWG members. These included:

- **Emerging Farmers Office and Coordinator:** The function of this office is to focus on advocating and championing the efforts and recommendations of emerging farmers both internally at the MDA and externally. The coordinator will engage with emerging farmers, stakeholders/partners, and report directly to the assistant commissioner. This includes outreach, communication, analysis, and developing a workplan based on the recommendations of the working group. The coordinator will also be the lead public facing figure for the office and the working group.
- **Stipends for working group members:** There is a growing understanding that advisory groups that rely on the time and lived experiences of underrepresented communities should pay those participants for their time and expertise. Like consulting fees for expert input, these payments reflect the value of the person's insights, and shows that the host organization sees the input from these advisors as having value worth investing in. Working group members who choose to receive the payment will be compensated \$40 per meeting. These are not ongoing funds, so future funding sources will need to be developed.
- **Funds for translation:** These funds are specifically designed to support translation services of MDA documents to languages that meet the needs of many of the emerging farmers.
- **Equity bonding bill:** These funds supported the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) and Regenerative Ag Alliance.
- **Increased partnership across agencies to support emerging farmers (DEED, DHS):** The MDA has been working with DEED as a partner in reaching immigrant and refugee emerging farmers, and the Department of Human Services (DHS) on Market Bucks and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- **FarmLink technology upgrade funds:** This will be an upgrade to improving land transfer for farmers and emerging farmers.
- **Farm Transition Team funding:** This is funding for a new advocate to focus on serving emerging farmers.
- **Farm to School funds:** This additional funding will connect schools across Minnesota with local food producers to obtain fresh, healthy food.
- **Farm Safety grants and outreach:** These funds promote farm safety throughout Minnesota and help Minnesota farmers buy, ship, and install eligible safety equipment.
- **Market Bucks:** Market Bucks help SNAP customers stretch their dollars at the farmers' market making healthy food more affordable.

## Process, membership, and terms

Membership on the EFWG is a two-year term that begins at the November meeting. According to the bylaws, half of the first members will serve one-year appointments (November 2021). The remainder will serve two-year appointments (November 2022). After the first year, a term will be for two years, and appointees will serve two terms.

At the end of September 2021, the MDA made available its application form on the MDA website to fill the open seats ([Appendix B](#)). The application form was open from September 13, 2021, through September 27, 2021. Outreach efforts included a press release from the MDA, social media posts through the MDA Twitter and Facebook accounts, external partners' newsletters, and many calls with stakeholder groups from both the MDA staff and leadership. The commissioner makes appointments to replace vacating members by October 15 every year. The working group received 41 applications to replace outgoing members. Applications came in from every part of the state, and included a wide range of demographics including age, race, ethnicity, farming practices, professional experience, LGBTQIA identity, and gender.

The applications were reviewed by a committee which included MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen, Deputy Commissioner Andrea Vaubel, Assistant Commissioner Patrice Bailey, Tribal Liaison Shannon Kesner, Emerging Farmer Outreach Coordinator Lillian Otieno, and Mitchell Hamline School of Law Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Michael Birchard. The selection process was designed to ensure geographical, racial, gender, and generational diversity, along with specific targeted populations from the legislative language.

Seventeen applicants were selected for the inaugural Emerging Farmers' Working Group ([Appendix C](#)). Nine members had one-year terms which created openings for up to nine new members. Seven new members were appointed, and two inaugural members reapplied and were selected. The inaugural and second year working group members are listed below.

### **Inaugural year Emerging Farmers' Working Group members**

- Hannah Bernhardt, Pine County
- Gina Aguilar, Hennepin County
- Elizabeth Bryant, Rice County
- Naima Dhore, Ramsey County
- Jessika Greendeer, Washington County
- Janssen Hang, Dakota County
- Denise King, Anoka County
- Lucas Kruse, Blue Earth County
- Erika Legros, Carlton County
- Moses Momanyi, Isanti County
- Hindolo Pokawa, Hennepin County
- Emily Reno, Otter Tail County
- Sai Thao, Dakota County
- Miah Ulysse, Ramsey County
- Michael Walgrave, Rock County
- Kaitlyn Walsh, Carlton County
- Shelly Woods, Sibley County

### **2nd year Emerging Farmers' Working Group members**

- Hannah Bernhardt, Pine County (returning member; second appointment)
- Naima Dhore, Ramsey County (returning member)
- Rebecca Dosch Brown, Hennepin County (new appointment)

- Ben Dossman, Hennepin County, (new appointment)
- Bridget Guiza, Becker County, (new appointment)
- Mark Gutierrez, Ramsey County, (new appointment)
- Janssen Hang, Dakota County (returning member)
- Mohamed Hassan, Olmstead County, (new appointment)
- Kyle Huneke, Goodhue County, (new appointment)
- Denise King, Anoka County (returning member)
- Erika Legros, Carlton County (returning member)
- David Manuel, Beltrami County, (new appointment)
- Murigi Mutiga, Washington County, (new appointment)
- Albert Nyamari, Ramsey County, (new appointment)
- Hindolo Pokawa, Hennepin County (returning member)
- Emily Reno, Otter Tail County (returning member)
- Michael Walgrave, Rock County (returning member)
- Kaitlyn Walsh, Carlton County (returning member)
- Shelly Woods, Sibley County (returning member; second appointment)

Additionally, the MDA has chosen to contract with an external facilitator. The facilitator helps with guiding the discussion, identifying key themes, and bringing all voices into the conversation. The facilitator also assists with setting the agendas, following a structure of the meetings, and responding to feedback from working group members and other stakeholders. The facilitator provides guidance and support to the MDA leadership and EFWG members. The facilitator is currently being paid out of a gift account with donations that were made available from several agricultural groups in the state.

## MDA Division Achievements for Emerging Farmers in 2021

Following are some responses from MDA divisions on questions regarding their activities, engagement, and support of emerging farmers:

**Please detail the actions, accomplishments, or changes you've made in the past year to better serve emerging farmers:**

- Developed a Custom Meat Processing Manual for small custom meat processors
- Developed a Fast Track to E-2 program to increase meat processing capacity
- Provided a training session for Dairy Inspection staff on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion of Latino Workers in Agriculture (guest speaker – Jorge Delgado)
- Reviewed how phone calls and other inquiries are routed with divisions to make sure we are responding as efficiently as we can. These include many inquiries from farmers and new or prospective business owners. We also met with the agency's Diversity Coordinator, to assist in her work updating the MDA's voicemail routing system for the main agency phone number to better assist all callers.
- Offered 7 Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training courses in conjunction with the University of Minnesota Extension, including 2 in Spanish, 1 with a Plain community audience, and the country's first certified Hmong-language course.

- Launched a pilot Produce Safety Program mini-grant, using USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds, to support produce growers in implementing on-farm water testing for generic E. coli. Prioritized applications from emerging farmers and farms covered by the Produce Safety Rule.
- Are establishing an MDA photo library featuring newly obtained photography of emerging and local food farmers in Minnesota, to be used in a variety of agency projects.
- Launched the [Statewide Cooperative Partnership for Local and Regional Markets](#), creating a foundation for the development of data-informed programs and services for small and mid-sized farms including emerging farmers and those that sell directly to consumers and/or institutions.
- Completed an eighth year of invasive pest and disease surveillance at community and small market gardens. Due to their proximity to urban areas and the diversity of crops raised, these sites are at high risk for establishment of invasive species. In 2021 we monitored for about 30 invasive insects and pathogens at 60 sites. This work has allowed us to track and keep farmers informed about new invasives found in Minnesota, including brown marmorated stink bug, Swede midge, clubroot and bacterial canker of tomato.
- The MDA hemp program has established relationships with several farmers who have first entered agriculture through hemp production. Although USDA oversight of hemp production means that tribes are responsible for establishing their own hemp programs, the program has maintained relationships with the tribes producing hemp and annually attends the Indigenous Farming Conference hosted by the White Earth Nation.
- All AMDD grant programs have revised their RFPs over the past couple of years to ensure that emerging farmers are prioritized in the evaluation process. We have also increased outreach activities to emerging farmers and organizations that serve emerging farmers. Examples include our Farm to School Grants that prioritized applications that procure, and purchase Minnesota Grown and raised foods from emerging farmers. Similarly, our Urban Ag grant program sets a goal of awarding 50% of the available funds to projects located in or serving communities of color or Native American tribal communities. Oftentimes, these projects are led by or include working with Emerging Farmers.
- Where appropriate, we have started updating position descriptions (PD) to include language about providing assistance to emerging farmers. For example, the PD for the recently hired Ag & Food Systems Planner position includes language about addressing the issues of land acquisition, zoning obstacles, and production/marketing challenges that emerging farmer in the specialty crop areas face.

**What programs, actions, or activities do you have planned for the coming year (calendar 2022) to continue improving the MDA's service to emerging farmers?**

- Revision of the Starting a Small Dairy Processing Plant Manual t – More of a Plain language version.
- Working with the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture on Development of new fact sheets and updating current ones.
- The MDA outreach coordination work group is developing a stakeholder database to improve our ability to stay connected with individuals and organizations with whom we interact or collaborate to conduct outreach.
- AMDD will review the existing farmland protection programs to determine if they can be expanded in a manner that keeps land available at affordable prices in locations that support emerging farmers.
- AMDD's Energy and Environment Section will explore field scale water systems planning that could help emerging farmers mitigate drought/flood fluctuations for diverse specialty crop production.

- AMDD received a substantial grant from USDA to deliver mental health services and outreach throughout Minnesota. This includes funding for a new Farm Advocate that will focus on serving emerging farmers.
- AMDD's Minnesota Grown Program plans to focus on featuring more emerging farmers in the Minnesota Grown member features on social media and in newsletters. The first challenge will be identifying emerging farmers in our membership to build relationships and trust.
- Offer additional Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training courses designed for Latino, Plain, and Hmong produce growers. Explore additional opportunities for continuing education opportunities regarding produce safety for these and additional culturally diverse grower communities in Minnesota.
- Offer an expanded Produce Safety Program mini-grant to support produce growers in implementing on-farm water testing for generic E. coli, along with additional on-farm food safety improvements. Continue prioritizing applications from emerging farmers and farms covered by the Produce Safety Rule and implement improvements to the grant application, as suggested by the Produce Safety Advisory Group.
- Pursue the USDA's Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, which will support the MDA in purchasing domestic food from local and regional producers, targeting purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers, and distributing the food to underserved communities.
- Distribute the baseline survey for the [Statewide Cooperative Partnership for Local and Regional Markets](#), gathering data that supplements the USDA's National Agricultural Statistic Services Agricultural Census with data about emerging farmers and markets not fully represented in the Ag Census, and identifies market trends and opportunities for these farms.
- Several current Specialty Crop Block Grants impact emerging farmers:
  - Indigenous Peoples Task Force: The proposed initiative will advance non-seasonal consumption of nutritionally enriched Sprouts and Microgreens as specialty crops to counter health disparities and co-morbidities in the Native American communities worsened by COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Hmong American Farmers Association: This project focuses on training small-scale, immigrant Hmong farmers on best practice growing methods for ginger and low tunnel day-neutral strawberries, increasing regional availability, and improving farmers' economic returns.
  - The Minnesota Department of Agriculture: Produce Safety Program staff will help produce growers understand the FSMA Produce Safety Rule by offering grower trainings at a reduced cost, and help growers implement on-farm food safety improvements through a mini-grant opportunity. This includes interpretation services and outreach funding. The language interpreters will interpret during trainings into Hmong or an African language for the participants to be able to learn and interact better.
  - The Good Acre: The Good Acre is working to connect BIPOC growers in Minnesota with markets where they have historically been excluded, expanding the diversity of producers represented in these markets and increasing consumer access to high-quality, locally grown produce.
  - Hmong American Farmers Association: This project focuses on developing a bilingual, bicultural post-harvest training program to build the capacity of small-scale, immigrant Hmong and BIPOC farmers to implement best practices, extend produce shelf life, and expand market opportunities.

- The Food Group: Through its Big River Farms training program and organic incubator farm, The Food Group will educate beginning, socially disadvantaged farmers in organic vegetable production, with new curriculum and demonstration plots focused on perennial crops.
- Kilimo Minnesota: This project focuses on training small-scale, immigrant African farmers on farm management and vegetable production skills, which increases regional availability of produce and improves farmers' economic livelihood.

### **What opportunities or initiatives do you think should be explored within MDA to support emerging farmers?**

- Some sort of call line for translation that inspection staff can call into when working with someone who doesn't speak English as their first language.
- Possible translation of key documents that would be utilized by emerging and underserved groups of farmers.
- It would be beneficial to have a resource list of people who are willing to assist emerging farmers with applications. This could be regional or statewide. We've heard from emerging farmers that are interested in a specific grant program. We think they'd be more likely to apply if they had assistance preparing and submitting their application. The MDA cannot offer direct assistance to individual applicants when a grant period is open.

## **Looking to the Future**

As the Emerging Farmers' Working Group enters its second year, it has moved to holding six meetings each year which is in closer alignment with other MDA advisory groups. The MDA continues to commit to providing support and technical assistance to the group along with a contracted facilitator. Moving forward, the group's process will follow the recommendation of working group members to promote active participation, transparency, and sustainability.

The MDA and the EFWG will continue to advocate for:

- **Farm Business Management program in the metro:** The MDA began initial talks with Inver Hills Community College, but as leadership at the college changed, conversations have stalled. The MDA is committed to advancing this conversation with a Minnesota State institution in the metro area.
- **Develop a one-stop shop for emerging farmers at the MDA:** It would focus on resources for emerging farmers, which includes training resources, grants and funding opportunities, and other materials ([Appendix D](#)). One model is the Starting a Food Business Roadmap, hosted by the MDA and developed in partnership with community organizations and businesses.
- **Focus on farmland access:** Dedicate further attention to the history of land ownership and farming in Minnesota. University research on the cultural and social history of agriculture in the state would provide context for emerging farmers and the communities in which they live.
- **Expand the Farm Advocates program to the metro**
- **Focus on infrastructure for emerging farmers/local & regional markets**
- **Additional items to be determined after conversations with key stakeholders**



## **New Agriculture Specialized License Plate**

In August 2021, Governor Tim Walz announced during Farmfest that there will be an agriculture-focused Minnesota Special License Plate available in early 2022. The MDA worked closely with FFA and 4-H to design this first of its kind license plate in Minnesota. The plate promotes “agriculture for all”.

## Appendix A. Barriers for Emerging Farmers

### Themes

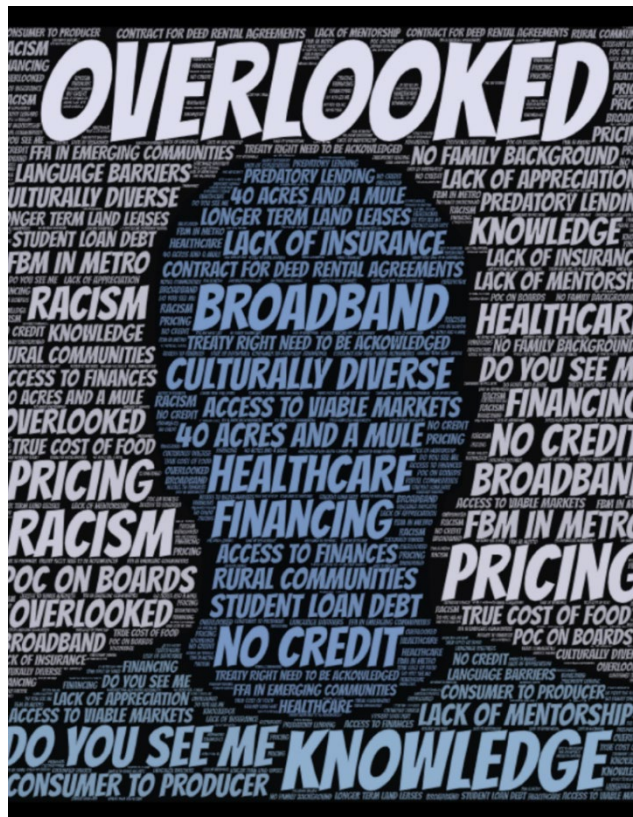
At the statewide 2019 listening sessions and during the 2020 Emerging Farmers' Working Group meetings, several themes arose as emerging farmers shared the barriers and difficulties for them to become successful in agriculture.

### Definition of an emerging farmer

- young
- person of color
- career change
- farm worker to farm owner
- no family ties to farming
- conscious decision to farm
- anyone who wants to be a farmer
- urban farmer
- culturally diverse
- Somali/ halal
- new immigrant farmer
- grows specialty crops, crops from another country
- trying to change the status quo

### Barriers

- money
- knowledge gap
- access to viable markets
- access to finances, facilities
- pricing
- true cost of food
- navigating financial & technical assistance
- lack of training programs
- language barriers
- economies of scale
- blending of traditional and new practices
- lack of insurance
- finding resources
- machines
- no room for error or risk
- lack of training programs
- business training and record keeping
- lack of appreciation



- navigating the transition to farming
- having another job in addition to farming
- beginning farmer tax credit is too limiting
- agriculture classifications are too limiting to new farming structures
- infrastructure is expensive- drilling a well costs 15k
- healthcare
- student loan debt
- networks and community are limited in rural setting
- information availability

- lack of mentorship
- no family background
- lack of equipment
- capital gains tax

### Racism

- rural communities need to be more open to changing demographics

- meetings need to be intentional about who is invited to table
- treaty rights must be acknowledged
- cross-cultural mentorships
- churches and civic groups have role
- more minorities in leadership positions
- young farmers, POC on boards and in leadership positions
- safety for farmers of color, and women
- culturally diverse crops
- community dinners to bridge gaps
- address perception in communities of color that land is too expensive, showcase success stories of POC landowners
- targeted outreach into communities of immigrants, POC
- more POC instructors

## Facilities

- make organic certification more accessible
- partnerships and space sharing
- HAFA, WEI, The Good Acre
- aid food hubs in work
- work with cities to rezone for agricultural uses
- community co-op solutions
- shared equipment, employee sharing, facility sharing
- shared slaughter, mobile slaughter, halal markets
- curing stations, cold storage, delivery assistance
- educating local governments, agencies about local food needs
- co-op everything
- contract for deed rental agreements
- support SWCD's buying shared equipment
- facilitate greenhouse use expansion

## Financing

- need something similar to SCORE for emerging farmers
- funding to attend conferences
- farm business education for all emerging farmers
- increase awareness of financing opportunities
- targeted campaigns, translated materials
- financial literacy training
- templates for certain documents
- simplifying process to access resources
- central shop, road map

- explore VC partnerships
- credit score barriers
- ag business planning funding
- loan guarantee programs
- religiously sensitive borrowing options
- tax increment financing
- banking hub, info hub specific to emerging farmers

## Legal

- tax increment financing
- food production subsidies like corn/soy
- increase incentives for co-op land use
- land trusts specific to ag
- more education on legal coop models
- anticorporate farm law
- purchase and development rights
- longer term land leases

## Various

- rural internet
- childcare at conferences
- coordinating various conferences
- research into quantifying monetary benefits of small farms on a rural community
- increased focus on seed saving
- new process for introduction of accepted crops/practices
- MDA facilitated meetups
- connect successful grant recipients to those seeking grants
- state mandated funds for ag education
- FFA in emerging and immigrant communities
- renewed back to the land movement
- interfaith/intercultural collaborative programs
- collaboration with native communities
- create central resource hub
- scholarships for nontraditional education
- RFA could grant riskier loans
- build and support incubator, accelerator programs like LSP, SFA
- most growers' associations don't reach emerging farmers
- work and learn models for school credit
- lack of accredited programs, degrees
- navigators to connect farmers to ed opportunities

## Appendix B: Emerging Farmer Working Group Application 2021

The MDA is committed to establishing this working group in a way that is responsive to the communities it hopes to serve. We want the group to be a collaborative and inclusive space for Emerging Farmers that is created by Emerging Farmers and led by Emerging Farmers.

Meetings for the 2021-2022 Emerging Farmers' Working Group are scheduled from 1:00-3:00 p.m. on October 8, 2021; November 12, 2021; February 11, 2022; April 8, 2022; August 12, 2022; and October 14, 2022.

First name

Last name

Phone number

County

Email address

Would you like to be added to the Emerging Farmers email listserv to receive updates related to emerging farmers (e.g., new programs, funding opportunities)? [Yes / No]

What is your preferred language? *(Note: we are still exploring the technology available for interpretation/translation during online meetings.)*

The Emerging Farmers' Working Group was established in the 2020 legislative session (Chapter 89 Section 2 [17.055]) with the following language:

*"To advise the commissioner and legislature regarding the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that support emerging farmers in this state, the commissioner must periodically convene a working group consisting, to the extent possible, of persons who are, and organizations that represent, farmers or aspiring farmers who are women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young, and urban, and any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner."*

Do you identify as any of the following (Check all that apply):

- Woman
- Veteran
- Person with a disability
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Member of a community of color
- Student
- Urban
- Other

Do you consider yourself (Check all that apply):

- A farmer/producer/grower
- An aspiring farmer/producer/grower
- A member or staff person of an organization that supports emerging farmers
- Other

Please answer the following questions.

1. Why do you want to be a part of the Emerging Farmers' Working Group? (maximum 1,000 characters)
2. What experiences and/or skills would you bring to the work of the Emerging Farmers' Working Group? (maximum 1,000 characters) *These experiences and/or skills may include agriculture (rural), agriculture (urban), governance, food systems, public policy, community engagement/organizing, social justice advocacy, management, communications, understanding of historically marginalized communities, etc.*

Is there anything else you'd like to share with us? (maximum 1,000 characters)

*Privacy Notice: The MDA is collecting this information to assess applicants' suitability and qualifications to serve on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Emerging Farmers' Working Group. The information applicants provide will be used by MDA staff to select members of the Working Group. Your decision to complete this application is voluntary and you are under no legal obligation to provide any of the requested information. However, only applicants that fully complete the application will be considered for a position on the Working Group.*

*Some data provided in this application is classified by Minnesota law as private data. Private data on individuals is legally accessible only to MDA staff that require access as part of a valid work assignment, the individual that is the subject of the data, any party legally authorized by the data subject or in a valid court order or federal subpoena, and those parties authorized by Minnesota or federal law, including the State Auditor, Legislative Auditor, Minnesota Management and Budget, and in some cases law enforcement agencies and the Office of the Attorney General.*

## Appendix C: Emerging Farmers' Working Group Members

[November 10, 2021, Press Release](#)

### Emerging Farmers' Working Group Members Announced

Next meeting to be held November 12, 2021

St. Paul, MN: Eleven Minnesotans joined or were reappointed to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) [Emerging Farmers' Working Group](#) this month.

"The Emerging Farmers' Working Group's first year laid a strong foundation for efforts to build the agricultural industry of the future, by bringing all voices and ideas to the table," Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan said. "I'm thankful to the returning and new members who are committing to move this important conversation forward. I'm so excited about this work."

A total of 41 people applied for 11, two-year positions in the 19-member advisory group. New and reappointed working group members include:

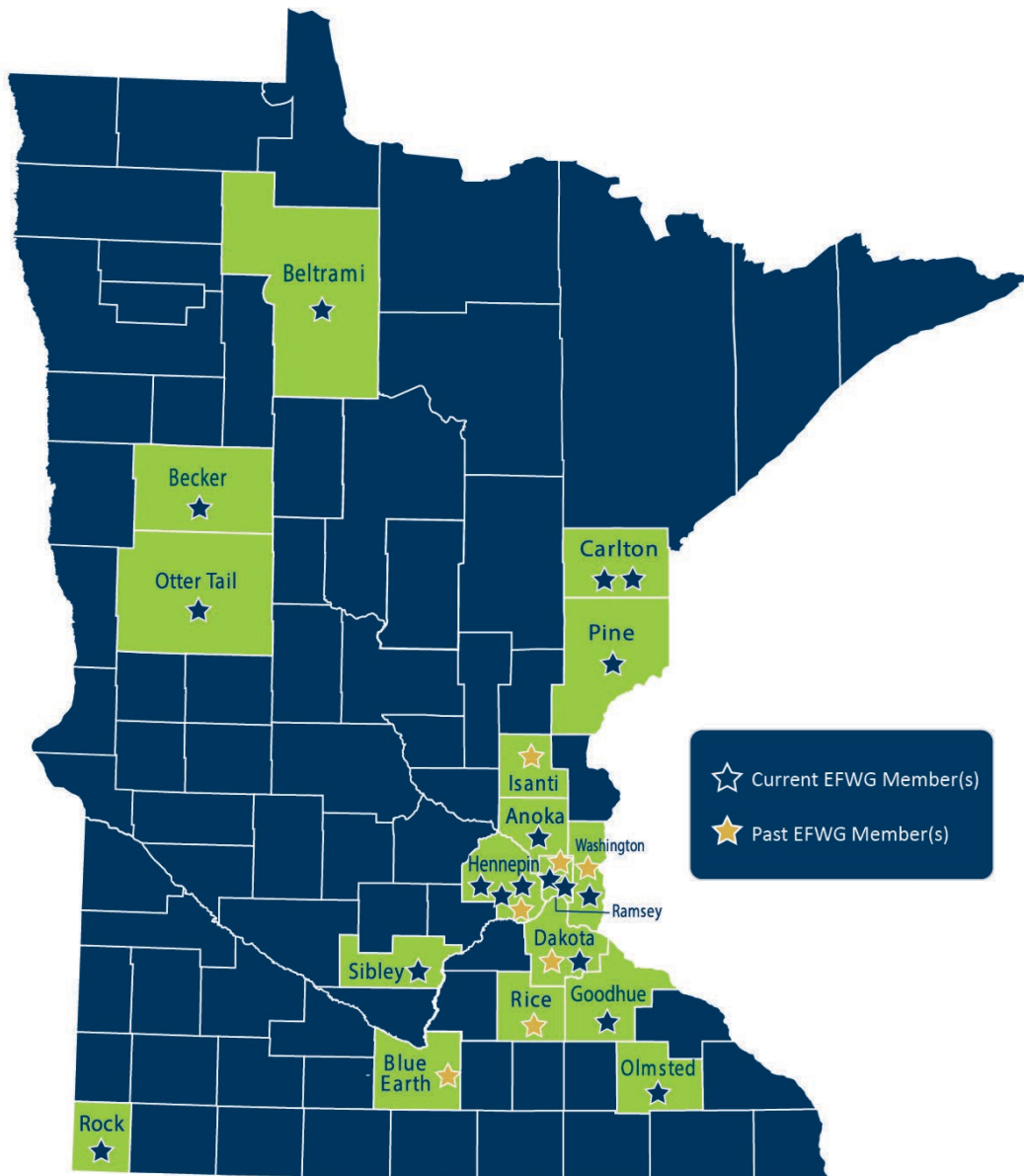
- Hannah Bernhardt, Pine County, reappointed
- Rebecca Dosch Brown, Hennepin County, new appointment
- Ben Dossman, Hennepin County, new appointment
- Bridget Guiza, Becker County, new appointment
- Mark Gutierrez, Ramsey County, new appointment
- Mohamed Hassan, Olmstead County, new appointment
- Kyle Huneke, Goodhue County, new appointment
- David Manuel, Beltrami County, new appointment
- Murigi Mutiga, Washington County, new appointment
- Albert Nyamari, Ramsey County, new appointment
- Shelly Woods, Sibley County, reappointed

Group members entering the second year of their two-year terms include:

- Naima Dhore, Ramsey County
- Janssen Hang, Dakota County
- Denise King, Anoka County
- Erika Legros, Carlton County
- Hindolo Pokawa, Hennepin County
- Emily Reno, Otter Tail County
- Michael Walgrave, Rock County
- Kaitlyn Walsh, Carlton County

The group's purpose is to advise the MDA and Minnesota Legislature on ways to advance the success and sustainability of farmers who traditionally face barriers to the resources necessary to build profitable agricultural businesses. Emerging Farmers are defined as women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian/Alaskan Native, communities of color, young, and urban farmers.

## Map of current and past Emerging Farmers' Working Group members



Thank you to retiring EFWG members:

- Gina Aguilar, Hennepin County
- Elizabeth Bryant, Rice County
- Jessika Greendeer, Washington County
- Lucas Kruse, Blue Earth County
- Moses Momanyi, Isanti County
- Sai Thao, Dakota County
- Miah Ulysse, Ramsey County

## Appendix D: Existing Resources for Emerging Farmers

These resources were gathered from the 2019 Listening Session surveys and are not a comprehensive list of resources available.

### Federal

- USDA American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance
- USDA Small and Mid-Sized Farmer Resources
- USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Loan
- USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)-Outreach Programs, Pandemic Assistance, FSA Veterans in Agriculture
- USDA Local and Regional Food Sector Toolkits and Handbooks
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- USDA New Farmers Website
- USDA Rural Development
- USDA FSA Stakeholder Tool Kit
- USDA Urban Agriculture Tool Kit

### State

- Aggie Bond Beginning Farmer Loan Program
- Beginning Farmer Tax Credit
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Dual-Training Pipeline (MN Department of Labor and Industry)
- MDA FarmLink (MDA-website is getting an upgrade)
- Farm to School (MN Department of Education)
- Farm to School (MN Department of Health)
- MDA Grants
- MDA Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program
- Farm Business Management Scholarships
- Livestock Investment Grant
- MDA New Markets Program
- Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant
- AGRI Urban Agriculture Grant
- Value-Added Grant
- Minnesota Grown
- Pilot Microloan
- Starting a Food Business Roadmap
- Workplace Safety Consultation (MN Department of Labor and Industry)

### Non-Government Resources

- Agua Gorda Cooperative
- AURI



- Big River Farms
- Black Family Land Trust
- Blue Zones
- Carpenter Nature Center
- Clean Energy Resource Teams
- Compeer Financial Emerging Markets, Local Food & Non-Traditional Ag
- Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship
- Dream of Wild Health
- Driftless Grown
- Emerging Farmers Conference
- Farm at the Arb
- Farm Commons
- Farmer Veteran Coalition
- Farmers' Legal Action Group
- Farmland Access Hub
- Food Animal Concerns Trust
- Grow and Farmer Fund
- Hmong American Farmers Association
- Hmong American Partnership
- Holistic Management
- Iroquois Valley Farmland REIT
- Lake Superior College Eco-Entrepreneurship Program
- Land Access Workshops
- Land Stewardship Project
- Local Food Advisory Committee (MISA)
- Main Street Project (Northfield)
- Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group
- Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) Sustag Newsletter
- Minnesota Organic & Sustainable Education Service
- Minnesota State Horticultural Society
- Minnesota Dairy Initiative
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Farmers Union-New Leader Academy
- Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence
- Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Services (MOSES)
- National Center for Appropriate Technology-ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program
- National Farmers Union-Beginning Farmer Institute
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust
- Northern Growers & Markets Conference
- No-Till Growers