



Emerging Farmers Working Group

November 18, 2022, Virtual / TEAMS Meeting. 1pm – 3pm

Attending Members: Murugi Mutiga-Waititu, Kyle Huneke, Shelly Woods, Hannah Bernhardt, **Jane Matayo Windsperger, Celeste Verhelst, Nikki Crowe, Alexandra Diemer, Ngozi Akubuike, Lisa Schutz, Ian Oundo, Caliton Ntahompagaze**. Assistant Commissioner Patrice Bailey, Facilitator Michael Birchard, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator for the Emerging Farmer Office; Lillian Otieno and Admin Tamara Mansun. Absent: Ben Dossman, Mark Gutierrez.

1:00 pm, Welcome *New Members: Michael Birchard and Patrice Bailey

Open Meeting Rules & Data Practice Law: MDA Deputy General Counsel Chris McNulty

[Ch. 13D MN Statutes](#). Established and funded by the MN State Legislature, the EFWG is a government entity and must comply with requests from the public for government data in accordance with the Data Practices Act (Minn.Stat. § 13.02, subd. 7). Compliance promotes government accountability and protects privacy rights.

Open Meeting Law § 13D.01 applies to the EFWG. All meetings & materials must be open & available to the public. The “quorum” rule applies when the *majority of a group convenes (*8 or more people in the case of the EFWG) to receive information, discuss & make decisions relating to official business.

Down Payment Assistance Grant Program: MDA Finance & Budget - Jenny Heck

On November 10, 2022, the Governor’ Office announced the availability of a new Grant for Land Access. The MDA’s Rural Finance Authority (RFA) is offering matching funds up to \$15,000 for qualified farmers to purchase their first farm. Informational webinars are scheduled December 6, at 2pm and December 15 at 6pm. Applications open January 4, 2023. The MDA extends gratitude & thanks to the members of the Emerging Farmers Working group for proposing this grant and for your input in crafting the language. Learn more at: [Down Payment Assistance Grant Program | Minnesota Department of Agriculture \(state.mn.us\)](#) Contact jenny.heck@state.mn.us or call# 651-201-6004

Emerging Farmer Office: Outreach and Engagement Coordinator Lillian Otieno

Lillian outlined the history and the focus areas of the newly established Emerging Farmer Office. This office has been established as a liaison between farmers and all MDA divisions. The office is your landing space to access resources, to address equity in policies and programs, to listen, engage and learn from other emerging farmers and to advocate for emerging farmers while collaborating with other Minnesota state agencies including the Governor’s Office and the Minnesota State Legislature.

Communicate with the Emerging Farmer Office:

Emerging Farmer’s Working Group Meeting. October 14, 2022

- Emerging Farmer Working Group: Six open, virtual meetings a year
- Bookmark the MDA dedicated webpage: [Emerging Farmers Working Group | Minnesota Department of Agriculture \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.mda.state.mn.us/emerging-farmers-working-group)
- Emerging Farmer electronic newsletter is published four times a year
- Email correspondence: Contact us at MDA.Emerging.Farmers@state.mn.us
- Call the Helpline: 651-201-6200

Legislative Update: Deputy Commissioner Andrea Vaubel

The state-wide election held on November 8 resulted in Governor Walz and his administration holding office for the next four years. MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen was asked to stay on in his position by the Governor and Commissioner Petersen has retained his executive staff at the MDA. St. Cloud Senator Aric Putnam has been appointed Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. The MDA Commissioner's Office is awaiting the Governor's review of the ag budget and will report back to this group in January.

Introduction to Farm Business Management Program: Narayan Dhakal and Erik Heimark with Central Lakes College

Farm Business Management programs are designed to provide education to farm owners and operators in businesses large or small, learn effective business & financial management skills to maintain their growth and competitive edge in their respective markets.

Erik is a Farm Business Management Instructor with Central Lakes College who works with specialty crop farmers, producers, and direct marketers, teaching financial planning and record management.

Serving the seven-county Metro area is FBM instructor Narayan Dhakal. Narayan's focus is on urban agriculture encompassing individuals and will bring a wealth of knowledge to new populations.

[Farm Business Management & Beginning Farmer Resources - AgCentric](#)

[Deans and Instructors - AgCentric](#)

Local Food Purchase Assistance Program: Alex Cortes

The goal of the LFPA program is to purchase local food from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers and distribute this food to underserved communities throughout the state. The MDA has published a draft application for the MN Local Food Purchase Assistance program and is looking for feedback.

The draft application outlines the proposed requirements and application process for this program and funding. Feedback shared during this process will inform the final application process for this program, which is expected to be released in winter 2023. Find the [complete draft and information about how to provide feedback](#) on the MDA website. There will be several virtual input sessions and an online form available through December 12, 2022. Thank you for your continued support of this program.

Announcements:

The AG Census: [USDA - National Agricultural Statistics Service - Census of Agriculture](#)

Emerging Farmer's Working Group Meeting. October 14, 2022

Public Comment:

No comments were spoken or written.

3:00 pm. Meeting Adjourned.