

Emerging Farmers Working Group

September 10th, 2021

1:00pm Call to Order and Introductions

Com Thom Petersen spoke about the drought in MN. They have had people out speaking with farmers. He stated that traditional crop farmers wouldn't be hit as hard since most would have crop insurance. He shared that livestock farmers and specialty crop farmers are hit the hardest. There may be 0% interest loans available to help. There will be forage shortages, but also hay shortages in areas hit the hardest by the drought. He then opened to hear comments from members.

Michael shared that as new farmers don't have crop insurance. Others shared about the shortages of pasture and hay may result in more stock having to be sold off. Harvesters haven't been available. More farmers have had to depend on off farm income during this time.

Com Thom Petersen also shared that the next legislative session will be policy focused. This is where they could help make the loans easier with MDA. This session is the time to also act for supplemental income to make investments in things like meat processing, restart cop crop grants, and other things that could be asked for.

Com Petersen also talked about the special session coming in October that will convene to discuss using the funds available from the ARPA Covid funds. There is a portal available to add comments to on the use of this money. Some ideas were suggested to use the money for mental health issues of farmers, digital marketing. Adding MN equal to processing, collaboration with neighborhoods to grow urban farms. He also stated that they have over 300,00 applicants for \$2 million in funding.

Shannon Kesner from MDA also spoke about the visit to the Gitigaaning/ Fond du Lac farm visit on August 28th. She shared that there are over 30 producers that grow. They utilize the land growing heirloom vegetables and use indigenous farming methods. There are many first-time producers. The farm uses solar power to provide power to the commercial kitchen. There was also tour of the greenhouse which supplies 50 to 75 pounds of produce to the school.

Michael shared who have been serving one-year terms and two-year terms on the board. There are 9 opening that need to be filled. Those that served only one-year terms were encouraged to apply for another term. All future terms will be for two years. The MDA website will open on Monday September 13th for applications to be submitted for open positions. Members were asked to share the openings with others to apply. Someone asked if there was an age requirement for serving on the board. No one knew the answer for certain so that will be checked on and shared with the group.

Anyone wishing to help plan the next meeting were encouraged to contact Tamara Mansun at her email tamara.mansun@state.mn.us

The idea of an in-person meeting was postponed because of current covid issues.

Kajsa opened the group up for comments in the audience. Rosie asked if the MDA was using the evaluations of roadblocks that the USDA is using. Com Petersen stated that the MDA already using these and will continue to use them to improve the issues.

A question was asked about the FSA debt relief for bipoc farmers that was part of the last covid relief bill. Com Thom Petersen said that the issue has had many challenges and that there is a current lawsuit that have been filed. He stated that when Secretary Vilsack was visiting he discussed this topic and solutions that may be available. Texas filed a lawsuit and got an injunction that halted the program. There is currently no idea when the issues with this will get resolved.

Andrea closed the meeting.