

URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PUBLIC MEETING
NOVEMBER 29, 2022 | 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM ET

MEETING MINUTES

The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee (UAIPAC) is established by section 12302 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill), Public Law 115-334, 7 U.S.C. § 6923(b)(1), to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor, and other emerging agriculture production practices; and other aspects of the implementation of that section of the Farm Bill. This Federal advisory committee operates in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the UAIPAC was convened for its third meeting on November 29, 2022, from 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. The meeting was open to the public and held fully virtually via Zoom webinar.

A [Federal Register notice](#) was published on November 4, 2022, providing general information and public participation details for the meeting. Secondary notices were also sent out to the public directly by the agency.

For general information visit: <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/federal-advisory-committee-urban-ag>.

For general inquiries email: UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov.

ACRONYMS

- **DFO** – Designated Federal Officer
- **FSA** – Farm Service Agency
- **NRCS** – Natural Resources and Conservation Service
- **OUAIP** – Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
- **UAIPAC** – Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
- **USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

MEETING AGENDA

Item #	Topic
1.	Opening of Meeting/Roll Call
2.	Opening Remarks from the Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
3.	Addressing Public Comments
4.	Chairperson and Co-Chairperson Election
7.	Deliberations/Recommendations
8.	Closing Remarks

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Federal Advisory Committee Members				
Name	Position Title	Represented Group	Present	Attendance Type
Allison Papp	Member	Financial Entity	✓	In-person
Angie Mason	Chairperson	Related Experience	✓	In-person
Bobby Wilson	Member	Urban Production	✓	In-person
Carl Wallace	Member	Non-Profit	✓	In-person
Jerry Ann Hebron	Member	Urban Production	✓	Virtual
John Erwin	Member	Higher Education	✓	In-person
John Lebeaux	Member	Business/Economic Development	✓	Virtual
Kaben Smallwood	Member	Innovative Production	✓	In-person
Sally Brown	Member	Higher Education	X	N/A
Tara Chadwick	Member	Related Experience	✓	In-person
Viraj Puri	Member	Innovative Production	✓	Virtual
Zachari Curtis	Member	Food Supply Chain	✓	Virtual

USDA Staff	
Name	Position/Title
Brian Guse	Designated Federal Officer
Markus Holliday	Federal Advisory Committee Coordinator

PUBLIC COMMENTS

As stated in the *Federal Register* public meeting notice published on November 4, 2022, public comments were accepted until 11:59 P.M ET on December 13, 2022. Written comments can be viewed here: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/NRCS-2022-0013/comments>. Comments are reviewed and may be considered for further discussion at a future public meeting. Oral comments were not accepted for this meeting.

MEETING MINUTES

1. Opening of Meeting

Markus Holliday (Federal Advisory Committee Coordinator) took attendance.

2. Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Opening Remarks

Brian Guse (DFO) confirmed with Markus Holliday that a quorum existed to proceed with the meeting. He then explained the purpose of the meeting and detailed the priorities of the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee (UAIPAC).

3. Addressing Public Comments

Brian Guse (DFO) addressed how USDA handles public comments and provided instructions for submitting written comments/statements.

Angie Mason (Chairperson) addressed how the Committee handles public comments.

Brian Guse (DFO) addressed a public comment about the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production (OUAIP) grant program changing the timeline for the notification of funding. He confirmed that OUAIP has changed the timeline to

accommodate growers and the change will take effect in January 2023 with the standard sixty days to respond to the notice.

4. Chairperson and Co-Chairperson Election

Brian Guse (DFO) provided an overview of the Committee’s statute and term limits, along with the Chairperson requirements and duties. He also referenced the charter guidelines that a simple majority vote by Committee members is needed to elect a Chairperson.

Angie Mason (Chairperson) led the discussion with the rest of the Committee members and acknowledged the adoption for a new Chairperson election model to include also electing a Co-Chairperson. She expressed her gratitude for her time as the current Chairperson and requested nominations for the next Chairperson and new Co-Chairperson.

All votes are recorded in the chart below. Based on a simple majority vote, Angie Mason is re-elected as Chairperson for one additional year (through January 2024) and Tara Chadwick is elected as Co-Chairperson (January 2023 – January 2024).

Committee Member	Chairperson Vote	Co-chairperson Vote
John Erwin	Angie Mason	Kaben Smallwood
Carl Wallace	Angie Mason	Kaben Smallwood
Bobby Wilson	Zachari Curtis	Tara Chadwick
Tara Chadwick	Zachari Curtis	X
Kaben Smallwood	Angie Mason	Tara Chadwick
Allison Paap	Angie Mason	Kaben Smallwood
Angie Mason	X	Kaben Smallwood
Zachari Curtis	Zachari Curtis	Tara Chadwick
John Lebeaux	Angie Mason	Tara Chadwick
Jerry Ann Hebron	Angie Mason	Tara Chadwick
Sally Brown	X	X
Viraj Puri	X	X

5. Deliberations/Recommendations

Angie Mason (Chairperson) provided an overview of how the three subcommittees were formed, the subcommittee deliberation process, and the responsibility of the subcommittees to provide recommendations that require further deliberation by the full committee.

Proposed Recommendation #1

Create a public/online database that would serve as the centralized point for a comprehensive updated list of programs for funding support available to urban farmers and innovative producers.

Presented By: Subcommittee #1

Charge: USDA Policies, Initiatives, and Outreach

Subcommittee Lead: John Lebeaux

Subcommittee Members: Sally Brown, Jerry Ann Hebron, Viraj Puri, Angie Mason, Allison Paap, Zachari Curtis

Angie Mason (Chairperson) presented the first recommendation and added that the goal is to dismantle regulatory hurdles and provide resources to state, city, and town municipalities.

John Lebeaux (Member) stated that both committee members and inference from public comments have identified regulatory hurdles at state and municipal government levels as a barrier to urban agriculture. He added that it is important to make the public aware of the services and current Federal programs are not easy to access. He also highlighted the importance of one central location or database to access farming support and how foundational the subcommittee believes it is to the development of urban agriculture.

Tara Chadwick (Member) commented that the recommendation from subcommittee #1 (Create a Public/Online Database) and the first recommendation from subcommittee #3 (Improve Information Access) are similar and motioned for the Committee to combine the recommendations. She added that the subcommittee #3 recommendation is to create a

comprehensive USDA agency website that uses clear and concise images and multilingual text to convey all resources (technical, financial, etc.) that are available to existing and potential urban farmers and innovative communities across all USDA agencies (SNAP, Forest Service, NRCS, FSA, etc.).

Bobby Wilson (Member) commented on the challenges people of color face when attempting to get farm or microloans. He added that he waited two and a half years to receive debt relief funding from the USDA and the problem a lot of small farmers across the country face is racism. He also added that he does not believe the recommendations will make a difference if the bigger problem is not addressed.

John Erwin (Member) added his support for combining the two recommendations and restated the importance of having a centralized location for farmers and believes the USDA should have the most comprehensive site with up-to-date information.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) motions to take the two independent recommendations, combine the language, and come back with a formal recommendation.

Bobby Wilson (Member) requests the listening audience to reflect and send suggestions to improve the recommendation, so the formal recommendation forwarded to Secretary Vilsack has an opportunity to be acknowledged and make change. He added that the access will benefit people in the community that do not have power and privilege.

Tara Chadwick (Member) commented that to add parts of the two independent recommendations, the public write in with case studies, so the formal recommendation has the data to support it. She added that before the development of the access recommendation, the Committee identified that there are major gaps in accessing comprehensive and clear information. She further commented on the myriad of agencies that work independently of each other and proposed that there should be tiers and categories of the types of assistance available, along with agency regulation that evaluates the type of farm, so people understand what category they operate within. She

concluded by remarking that for transparency, the funding process and selection should be added to the USDA website.

John Erwin (Member) asked USDA staff about OUAIP website language options and accessibility.

Brian Guse (DFO) responded that the USDA is producing some documents in multiple languages.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) repeated the motion to combine recommendations from subcommittee #1 and subcommittee #3 and include today's discussion, including comments and recommendations received from listeners.

Angie Mason (Chairperson) took a vote to adopt the motion (motion was adopted).

Recommendation #2:

Conduct a review of Farm Service Agency (FSA) Microloan Programs to determine overall utilization, program effectiveness, and typical timelines required from inquiry to funding.

Presented By: Subcommittee #1

Charge: USDA Policies, Initiatives, and Outreach

Subcommittee Lead: John Lebeaux

Subcommittee Members: Sally Brown, Jerry Ann Hebron, Viraj Puri, Angie Mason, Allison Paap, Zachari Curtis

Angie Mason (Chairperson) presented the second recommendation.

Allison Paap (Member) commented that subcommittee #1 framed their discussion and recommendation around issues with access to technical assistance, access to land, and access to capital. She added that a topic frequently visited by subcommittee #1 was

access to capital, existing programs in place, and the application process for FSA loans. Allison included that FSA is aware of the lengthy application process and attempted to expedite the method by creating a new loan product – the microloan. She stated the microloan program was intended to improve access to new and beginning farmers, but the program seems to be underutilized. Allison proposed that a formal review of the microloan program be conducted to determine what the utilization rate is, what the timelines are, and other metrics that would help track the number of general inquiries, completed applications, the number of approvals, and the timeline from inquiry to funding.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) commented that the committee investigated the microloan because it provides an avenue for beginning farmers, and the way it does that is by excluding production data that a lot of other FSA loans require. He recommends the Committee review the amount of the loans to see if it is sufficient to help generate a small-scale farm, but also review the maximum loan amount and identify how that would affect urban agriculture and innovative producers.

Zachari Curtis (Member) added that she completed a search on the topic and located data-based reports that confirmed barriers still exist. She continued by stating that she wanted to ensure the committee used their time to research the thresholds, including how many people received microloans versus how many applied, and is the product underutilized. She concluded by expressing that there should be more specifics to the recommendation.

Allison Paap (Member) confirmed that the idea behind the recommendation is to gain a deeper understanding behind the data of loan applications in general. She said that the recommendation is meant to see the loan data on incomplete, missing or denied applications to identify what metrics are not being met, if technical requirements are acting as barriers, and why the FSA direct lending program is challenging to applicants.

Zachari Curtis (Member) remarked that reports already in existence should be combined and reviewed to make a more pointed recommendation based on that data.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) commented about the committee investigating microloans to see how many businesses are producing due to the microloan. He added that tying the microloan metrics to farms and farmers success would be a way to incentivize people to use USDA direct lending programs. He also explained that the recommendation should address what are businesses accomplishing with the microloans and are the loans sufficient to generate the returns the USDA is seeking.

Bobby Wilson (Member) stated his concern is discrimination, and the people that enter USDA offices but are delayed by the process and withdraw their applications. He added that the trials and tribulations he encountered trying to get a USDA loan are due to discrimination and systematic racism. He also commented about the service center locations and the employees placed in those service centers, and their unwillingness to assist people of color. He concluded by saying if the committee does not address the discrimination and racism at the local level, then the committee will not be able to address the more fundamental problems.

Zachari Curtis (Member) commented that there is a documented overarching problem with the distribution of capital in USDA's history and that recommendations should include references to equity. She added that the microloan was designed - in a way - to lower barriers to urban farming and farmers who may have problems accessing capital. She recommended adding equity oversight to capital distribution and that the committee propose a course of action that would bring progress to capital distribution, and how the USDA approaches lending overall. She suggested that the committee use the review of microloans as a pilot program to address larger issues with funding and capital distribution.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) commented on the microloan being a good place to start for the UAIPAC. He added that in order for the Committee and the country to be successful,

it would have to generate more farmers. He continued by mentioning that the FSA programs have historically required production data for large scale loans. He also made the case that the microloan is the best asset to move the generation of urban agriculture and innovative producers forward.

Zachari Curtis (Member) commented that the continuing issue will be the bottlenecks in the pipeline. She proposed that the committee review the recommendation as written and make sure the pipeline theory is clear and addresses the barriers. She concluded by adding that there should be an investigative analysis of the pipeline to determine if funding is being used to move urban agriculture and innovative producers forward.

John Erwin (Member) commented about the recommendation being a good first step to address the barriers and systemic problems. He added that there will be additional recommendations drafted to address the bigger problems.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) added that he believed the microloans intent is for producers to increase their production numbers. He added that the loan is also a pathway to build credit and gain financial literacy but, ultimately, it is fundamental to helping get production numbers up to qualify for bigger loans. He concluded by suggesting the Committee make a motion on the recommendation.

John Lebeaux (Member) commented that the recommendation as presented is acceptable, but he does support adding additional details to include the points being deliberated. He noted that with the two recommendations the committee has highlighted a need to review FSA programs to address the inadequacies.

Angie Mason (Chairperson) commented about one of the other recommendations being tied to the microloan and FSA. She added that the recommendation includes a review of the existing loan and underwriting standards, policy, and procedures for extending credit to confirm there is a uniform process. She proposed that the Committee decide to combine the two recommendations or leave them as standalone recommendations.

Kaben Smallwood (Member) stated that his concern would be expanding it too fast and losing any form of analysis by having large amounts of data coming in from multiple different ways. He recommended limiting the review to the microloan and using that as a guide for other lending programs.

Bobby Wilson (Member) cautioned the Committee to avoid setting producers on a path that may leave them with less assets than they started with.

Note: Motion passed to send the recommendation back to subcommittee for additional editing.

ADMINISTRATIVE BREAK (5 min)

Recommendation 3:

Permanently waive the exclusion of the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP) use for hot food purchased from grocers, farmers, farmstands, food trucks, and other value-added producers.

Presented By: Subcommittee #3

Charge: Identify New and Existing Barriers to Urban, Indoor and Innovative Production

Subcommittee Lead: Tara Chadwick

Subcommittee Members: Zachari Curtis, John Erwin, Jerry Ann Hebron, Allison Paap, Kaben Smallwood, Carl Wallace, Bobby Wilson

Tara Chadwick (Member) presented the third recommendation from subcommittee #3 and added the recommendation is based on identified barriers including a lack of representation for inclusiveness in the decision-making process and would allow equitable access and beneficiaries to use hot foods and produce from urban farmers.

Angie Mason (Chairperson) followed up to mention additional barriers identified including SNAP services being difficult to access and time intervals for the renewal of certification and benefits.

Allison Paap (Member) motioned to have the recommendations on SNAP benefits to be revisited by subcommittee #3 for additional editing. Further discussions would include closer ties to local and regional foods, along with being able to directly benefit food producers (in addition to consumers).

Note: Motion passed to send recommendation back to subcommittee for additional editing.

Recommendation #4:

Compile annually publicized aggregated demographic information for each USDA service to ensure that all resources are being made available for all eligible applicants.

Presented By: Subcommittee #3

Charge: Identify New and Existing Barriers to Urban, Indoor and Innovative Production

Subcommittee Lead: Tara Chadwick

Subcommittee Members: Zachari Curtis, John Erwin, Jerry Ann Hebron, Allison Paap, Kaben Smallwood, Carl Wallace, Bobby Wilson

Tara Chadwick (Member) presented the fourth recommendation and commented on the associated barriers including a lack of access to safe water and land, zoning development issues, and lack of access to capital through USDA. She also added that implementing the recommendation would help ensure urban farmers, Black, Native American, Indigenous, and Asian farmers have equal tax rights to support long-term sustainability for urban agriculture and innovative production.

Viraj Puri (Member) recommended that the committee develop guidelines state, local, and municipal governments to update outdated zoning regulation. He added that the

guidelines could be informed by precedent samples that have successfully amended their zoning and building codes to support urban agriculture.

Note: Motion passed to send the recommendation related to land, zoning, taxation and sustainability back to subcommittees 1 and 3 to combine and edit.

6. Closing Remarks

Brian Guse (DFO) thanked the committee members and the public for their participation. He also acknowledged the comments submitted via Zoom chat during the meeting and followed-up by reiterating the instructions for the public to provide written comments/statements.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 P.M EST.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

/s/

Brian Guse
Designated Federal Officer, Urban
Agriculture and Innovative Production
Advisory Committee

/s/

Angie Mason
Chairperson, Urban Agriculture and
Innovative Production Advisory Committee