

URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PUBLIC MEETING
AUGUST 5, 2022 | 1:00 PM – 3:00PM 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 second meeting on August 5, 2022, from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. The meeting was open to the public and held fully virtually via Zoom webinar.

A [Federal Register notice](#) was published on June 30, 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	Presenter
1.	Opening of Meeting/Roll Call	Tammy Willis
2.	Opening Remarks from DFO	Brian Guse
3.	UAIPAC Member Discussion	Full Committee
4.	Equity Commission Overview	Dewayne Goldmon
5.	Urban County Office Committees	Conisha Hackett
6.	Urban Technical Barriers	Margaret Gannon
7.	UAIPAC Open Discussion	Full Committee
8.	Closing Remarks	Brian Guse

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Federal Advisory Committee Members				
Name	Position Title	Represented Group	Present	In-person \ Virtual
Allison Papp	Member	Financial Entity	X	NA
Angie Mason	Chairperson	Related Experience	✓	Virtual
Bobby Wilson	Member	Urban Production	✓	Virtual
Carl Wallace	Member	Non-Profit	✓	Virtual
Jerry Ann Hebron	Member	Urban Production	✓	Virtual
John Erwin	Member	Higher Education	X	NA
John Lebeaux	Subcommittee #1 Lead	Business/Economic Development	✓	Virtual
Kaben Smallwood	Member	Innovative Production	✓	Virtual
Sally Brown	Subcommittee #2 Lead	Higher Education	✓	Virtual
Tara Chadwick	Subcommittee #3 Lead	Related Experience	✓	Virtual
Viraj Puri	Member	Innovative Production	✓	Virtual

Zachari Curtis	Member	Food Supply Chain	✓	Virtual
USDA Staff				
Name	Position/Title	Agency/Office	Present	In-person \ Virtual
Brian Guse	Director, DFO	NRCS, OUAIP	✓	Virtual
Tammy Willis	Acting FAC Coordinator	NRCS, OUAIP	✓	Virtual
Leslie Glover	Program Manager	NRCS, OUAIP	✓	Virtual
Dewayne Goldmon	Senior Advisor	OSEC	✓	Virtual
Cecilia Hernandez	DFO, USDA Equity Commission	OSEC	✓	Virtual
Conisha Hackett	Senior Policy Advisor	FSA	✓	Virtual
Margaret Gannon	Urban Conservationist	NRCS	✓	Virtual
Arthur Hawkins	Assistant State Conservationist	NRCS	✓	Virtual

Over 1,300 attendees from the public registered to join the meeting via Zoom webinar.

There were zero members of the public who presented oral or written statements during the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

As stated in the notice published in the *Federal Register* on June 30, 2022, public comments were accepted in advance of the meeting until 11:59 P.M ET on July 29, 2022. A total of **8** comments were received and can be reviewed here:

<https://www.regulations.gov/document/NRCS-2022-0006-0001/comment>.

The Committee will review the comments and address them at the next public meeting.

MEETING MINUTES

1. Opening of Meeting

Tammy Willis took attendance.

2. Opening Remarks from DFO

Brian Guse gave opening remarks and of the purpose UAIPAC committee, he first confirmed with Tammy Willis that they had a quorum (confirmed). Brian explained the purpose of the meeting was to provide the Committee an overview of what the Department is doing to support innovative and urban producers and to help guide discussion and stimulate ideas that can be considered by the Secretary of Agriculture.

3. UAIPAC Member Discussion

Angela Mason, Acting UAIPAC chairperson reiterated the purpose of this committee. Angela Mason explained that the committee will develop recommendations and advice on policies initiatives and outreach administered by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) according to the charter.

Subcommittee 1: Policies Initiatives and Outreach

- Subcommittee Lead: John Lebeaux
- Subcommittee Members: Sally Brown, Zachary Curtis, Jerry Ann Hebron, Allison Paap, and Carl Wallace

John Lebeaux shared that Subcommittee 1 will advise the director of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on program development and related administration. He stated that some of the public comments made at the public meeting in March included the need to increase land access for urban agriculture, particularly in low-income areas, what ideas will this new advisory committee mat bring to inner city communities that want space for growing, and how will the program give specific support to historically underfunded demographics? In addition, there were comments about access to available land and water and noted that they were urgent needs that how federal programs can be updated to be more equitable and accessible for small urban producers to help those addressing the needs of low-income food insecure schools and communities of color and how they might be funded.

The following comments from the March meeting was also noted:

- Besides access to land, availability to water can be an extremely limiting factor with urban community gardens, as well as dealing with existing municipal and/or city ordinances which aren't always supportive of urban agriculture.
- This committee (UAIPAC) can assist to be proactive in removing barriers to land, water and the actual practice of farming in urban locations. Policies without funding to support them is not helpful. John Lebeaux also heard that urban growers need help dealing with changing and existing municipal and city ordinances which are not always supportive of what urban agriculture wants to do. He commented that government can assist urban ag producers by providing funding and a supportive government structure taking a proactive approach to removing barriers to land, water and practice of farming in an urban location. He described three subcategories to land access; increase access to capital, increase access to land, and increase access to technical assistance. He gave examples of potential ways to address these that the subcommittee discussed. During his summary, John Lebeaux mentioned the subcommittee sees that there is some understanding, possibly wide spread lack of understanding of just all the available programs and resources that are available throughout the urban ag space in the United States. He stated that the subcommittee established a consensus that a single database of existing resources should be established and that it should be a living document that's updated frequently as is necessary.
- In his conclusion, he acknowledged that the subcommittee's work has been principally focused on urban agriculture but that they need to also devote time to consider innovative production.

Subcommittee 2: Evaluation and Review of Research and Extension Activities

- Subcommittee Lead: Sally Brown
- Subcommittee Members: John Erwin, Angela Mason, Kaben Smallwood, and Carl Wallace

Sally Brown explained that the subcommittee is focused on research and extension activities and mentioned that the USDA over the course of its life as an agency has been a

real leader. She stated that the subcommittee is tasked with taking what has been done in a conventional agricultural and rural community framework and seeing how that can be extended as a resource to the urban and innovative agricultural sector. She explained that the subcommittee has taken an approach directly from the Charter and are focusing on; community development opportunities, looking at innovative production with aquaponic, hydroponic, aeroponics, and geothermal knowledge sharing, composting with food waste and food recovery as a tool to build safe soil food recovery and gleaning as a way to help urban farms and relieve food insecurity and reduce food waste at the source, and finally, to look at the USDA organic certification program and see how that would translate to innovative production.

The subcommittee members are developing folders of information, along with summaries and recommendations which will be reviewed internally by the subcommittee than presented to the committee as a whole for a decision on how to proceed.

Subcommittee 3: Identification of New and Existing Barriers to Urban Indoor and Innovative Agriculture

- Subcommittee Lead: Tara Chadwick
- Subcommittee Members: Zachary Curtis, John Erwin, Jerry Hebron, Allison Paap, Kaben Smallwood, Carl Wallace, and Bobby Wilson

Tara Chadwick explained the purpose of the subcommittee according to the Charter. She mentioned that members of the subcommittee also serve on other subcommittees. She reported that in order to understand what their responsibilities are and how they can move through the process of creating recommendations, they have taken a look at the public comments to see what some of the major barriers are—to ensure that current and potential agricultural producers and supporters are going to have all the access that they need.

She stated that the subcommittee came up with three main categories: information access, lack of transparency in the process for funding and selection, and a barrier to participation access and representation.

Tara Chadwick stated that outreach, education, and information is needed for all communities, and that program eligibility is equitable across all communities. She noted that the subcommittee is in the beginning stages of formulating and clarifying the areas that they are going to work on for this year. She also reminded the Committee that public comments are continually accepted, and the subcommittee will continue to include those as they formulate their recommendations. She stated that once they have formulated their recommendations, the whole Committee will review and the recommendations will come from the whole Committee.

4. Equity Commission Overview and Priorities

Tammy Willis introduced two presenters from the Equity Commission, Dr. Dewayne Goldmon, Sr. Advisor, Racial Equity USDA OSEC and Cecilia Hernandez, Designation Federal Officer, USDA ODS. Their focus is to help the community have a better understanding of what the department is doing to address diversity equity and inclusion. Dr. Goldmon started his presentation by defining equity as the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including those who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment. Dr. Goldman described the work the Equity Office has been doing to work with stakeholders to get to the point where USDA can have consistent systemic fair and impartial treatment for all customers at the USDA. There has been engagement in a cross departmental effort to assess current internal barriers. Input from over 500 stakeholders revealed that their unique history and their unique needs need to be taken into account in order for USDA to figure out how we give them that specific thing that they need in order to move the needle on equity. Dr. Goldmon noted by prioritizing equity in America, the Biden Administration, is advancing a comprehensive strategy to consider the barriers and challenges faced by those who experience intersecting and compounding forms of the discrimination and bias related to gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, age and

socioeconomic status. He ended his presentation with a description of the USDA Equity Framework.

Cecilia Hernandez stated the purpose of the Equity Commission, which is to provide recommendations to the secretary on policies, programs and actions needed to address racial equity issues within the Department of Agricultural and its programs, including strengthening accountability at USDA and to provide recommendations to the Secretary on broader and more systemic equity issues at USDA. She gave background and described the legislation that gave the Commission authority; Executive Order 19385 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Section 1006. Cecelia Hernandez explained the goals of the Equity Commission. She described how the Commission reviewed recommendations from numerous committees' reports since 1965, compiled the recommendations made, and are in the process of analyzing the status of the past recommendations to hold the government accountable. Cecelia Hernandez described The Equity Commission (the parent Committee), the Agricultural Subcommittee and a new Rural Community Economic Development Subcommittee. She ended her presentation by showing a timeline and deliverables to date and stated that the Equity Commission plans to complete the final report in the summer of 2023.

Member Q&A

Question 1 (Tara Chadwick): In light of previous recommendations made in years past, I hope our recommendations now are not subject to a report like this in another 65 years. A lot of the issues being brought up are long standing issues. So, once you've completed the overview, are you going to make your analysis available to the public and what is the timeline for that?

- **Cecilia Hernandez:** That's the goal.
- **Dewayne Goldmon:** First let me applaud you for that very direct and important question and that 'this feels eerily familiar that we shared recommendations with you and what in the heck did you do with those recommendations that we've been

telling you about for a very long time?’ The recommendations currently being made by the Equity Commission are transparent accounting but this time we’ve flipped it a little bit as the Equity Commission will take those recommendations and provide recommendations back to the Secretary as to how they should be implemented and we’ve challenged him to share with us ways that we can improve accountability back to the department, as we implement those recommendations. I would challenge you to do the same thing; to think about those recommendations and how you can ask for accountability that will hold us responsible for you to know the recommendations are being implemented. Another thing to add, before, we may have shunned away from recommendations that maybe the secretary didn’t have the authority to act upon at his level. But part of this process is to not allow that to dampen the recommendations. If it will require deeper dive, congressional intervention, regulatory changes or whatever, I think the expectation is that we would explore those options in order to achieve equity and so that has to be a part of this process.

- **Cecilia Hernandez:** We do want to announce our report back from USDA to the Equity Commission and the public at the next public meeting.

Question 2 (Sally Brown): In general, the urban landscape is a lot more colorful than rural landscapes in that people of color are much more highly represented in urban areas and the fact that the USDA Commission or that our committee has been created suggests that if we expand USDA resources into urban areas, it will hopefully serve to create a greater equity with the resources within USDA.

- **Dewayne Goldmon:** I think that was a comment and not a question, is that right?
Sally Brown: I guess so. It’s just via the fact that USDA is starting to pay attention to what goes on in cities, that is a hopeful sign to me.
- **Carl Wallace:** What was the rationale behind naming the 2 committees Agriculture and the other Rural Agriculture?
- **Dewayne Goldmon:** The funding source, the American Rescue Plan, said that you will create committees that are required to accomplish the work. The Equity

Commission, overall, it is really there to make sure that we are thoughtful and that we have enough people thinking about how were going to do this so that it's more sustainable. We were also aware, though, there's program and disparities that exist around rural community and economic development, so those two subcommittees were ones we felt like would work. I don't know that we will have time to actually stand up another subcommittee, but we will remain open to that. This separate effort-separate but equal effort around urban agriculture I look at it as complimentary maybe even collateral to what we're trying to do around equity. Just making sure that we have the right kind of experience and expertise in the room to make those kinds of recommendations that are needed.

- **Bobby Wilson:** We still have challenges getting that money to the neighborhood, especially our inner-city neighborhoods and especially to minorities and disadvantage farmers and there have been programs put in place so that money is supposed to be coming to us, but it seemed like it fell off the radar screen, because every time something good is supposed to have been our neighborhoods, it tends to be blocked. The commissions are all well and good, but at the end of the day when the powers that be decide to block the money from getting to the neighborhood, it never gets there. Are we making any progress on it-taking away the stumbling blocks from getting the money to the neighborhood?
- **Dewayne Goldmon:** I thank you, Mr. Wilson, let me be transparent, with everyone, I think you may be talking about the debt payments of the ARP; is that correct?
- **Bobby Wilson:** (Answers affirmatively) Just as a quick update, the American Rescue Plan had two sections that involved the USDA 1005 to pay off Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans. We start implementing that program shortly after we started, there were lawsuits, and we had to stop because of court injunctions. We had to stop actually processing the payments, because it was a congressional act, USDA is supporting the Department of Justice as we try and decide the best path forward. It is under litigation and that's an ongoing effort and we'll keep you updated as the litigation unfolds.

5. Urban County Office Committees

Tammy Willis introduced Arthur Hawkins, former OUAIP Detailee and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Tennessee.

Arthur Hawkins reminded the Committee that the Urban County Office Committees were established under the 2018 Farm Bill to operate in counties located in urban or suburban areas with a high concentration of urban or suburban farms. He reported that 17 pilot cities have been identified and stated that it would be advantageous for the Committee to hear about the plans for the Urban County Office Committees to help guide discussion and recommendations. Arthur Hawkins introduced Conisha T. Hackett, Senior Policy Advisor for Equity, FSA.

Conisha T Hackett gave a presentation on the Urban Agriculture County Committees' roles and responsibilities. She stated that presently they have established 11 Urban County Committees. She described urban agriculture and how to become an Urban County Committee member—the elections, nominations, and voting processes. Conisha T. Hackett explained that urban producers can get a farm number from a county Farm Service Agency office even if the farm is less than one hundredth of an acre which is a technology limitation faced by field offices and that headquarters can assist if needed. She provided a definition for a cooperating producer and described the roles, responsibilities, and terms of the Urban County Committee members. Following the presentation, Arthur Hawkins moderated a question-and-answer session. Sally Brown asked for clarification on the eligibility criteria for being a member of the Urban County Committee. She stated she heard from the presentation that only producers could be members. Sally Brown recommended the definition of eligibly be broadened, to get a truly representative committee, include people involved in assisting with food access such as food bank managers, managers of community gardens, and non-profits. Conisha T. Hackett responded that she would take that back to the team to review to consider in the interest of being more inclusive. Bobby Wilson commented that he was asked to be a Committee member and stated that the voting process be clarified to the Committee members. Conisha T. Hackett responded explaining that not only should materials be

made available about the voting process and to have people in the community meeting with local producers to explain the process to them. Tara Chadwick inquired whether there is a possibility of expanding eligibility on the county committees beyond just the FSA eligibility towards any USDA program to capture the people who might want to become producers. Conisha T. Hackett responded that she will take the question back to the team. Carl Wallace asked if there was anything being done to allow an urban farmer to get a farm and track number without having to go to a rural FSA office. Conisha T. Hackett stated that offices can be contacted by phone and that new urban conservationists being hired are required to go out into the different communities.

6. Urban Technical Barriers

Brian Guse introduced Leslie Glover, Program Director for OUAIP. Leslie Glover stated the purpose of the next presentation and that it was to help Subcommittee 3 understand what is involved with identifying barriers and steps that agencies need to take to find remedies for those barriers. He introduced Margaret Gannon, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Urban Conservationist in Texas and former OUAIP detailer. Margaret Gannon gave an overview of the process NRCS is taking to identify and remove barriers to urban and small acreage producers receiving assistance with conservation. She stated that historically, NRCS targeted assistance to large acreage, conventional, commodity type operations which has had unintended consequences that at times can hinder NRCS' ability to assist urban and small acreage production systems or provide those systems the same level of service that large acreage, conventional commodity type operations receive. She noted that NRCS recognizes that conservation is important no matter the type or size of production system and the agency is actively taking steps to ensure that all its resources can be applied equitably to all production systems, including those located in urban, peri-urban, and tribal areas. And over the last year there has been a concerted and coordinated effort to improve the agency's ability to serve urban and small acreage operations across the country. NRCS staff working on this effort have had an opportunity to come together to share ideas and information across state lines and up and down the chain of command. They came together with FSA counterparts to create an informal urban discussion group made up of employees from

across the country that have many different job descriptions and meet regularly to share ideas. In addition, many state conservationists have formed urban subcommittees to their state technical committee to hear recommendations from the urban and small acreage communities in their states. Margaret Gannon also reported that Agency experts are working with urban and small acreage conservation subject matter experts to review policy, technical resources, training materials and other internal resources with an eye to how they would be applied to urban and small acreage operations. She also described a collaborative effort between the OUAIP and NRCS to take steps to identify, remedy, remove and mitigate the impact of barriers to Farm Bill program delivery. Through this collaboration three categories of barriers, or needs, were identified: 1) overarching, 2) technical and 3) programmatic.

7. UAIPAC Open Discussion

Brian Guse announced that the USDA is holding its annual food loss and waste innovation fair on September 14, 2022, a free virtual event and reported that the OUAIP offers two funding opportunities and gave the status of the application processes.

Brian Guse opened the floor for discussion. Angela Mason invited committee members to speak to some of the challenges they have had in working through some of the USDA programs. Sally Brown noted the disconnect between the language used at the local level and the language used by the USDA and that the urban agriculture that she knows requires a new vocabulary for USDA to really get involved. Kaben Smallwood expressed that he hopes innovative agriculture, not necessarily in urban areas, does not get lost in the backdrop and that innovative production and urban ag are part and parcel and that innovative production will be a necessity towards moving the urban environment to be more prone to accepting agriculture. He also mentioned that aquaponic, hydroponics and aeroponics have been left out of NRCS programs. Carl Wallace commended the committee and what they all bring to the table. Viraj Puri noted that innovative production—hydroponics, aquaponics, and aeroponics is probably at an all-time high. He stated that the biggest challenges are with the regulatory framework, food safety, and workforce development. Brian Guse invited the group to think about other presentations

they might want the OUAIP to organize for them. He mentioned that Subcommittee 2 could probably benefit from hearing from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Agriculture Research Service (ARS) about what they are doing in terms of agriculture and extension work. To address the point that Viraj Puri made about food safety, Brian Guse offered to get someone from the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and others to talk about what they are doing to address these unique issues. Bobby Wilson mentioned that it seems like there is a culture change taking place in the NRCS offices, that they are more receptive. He also stated that more input is needed from the community. He reported that one of the things that urban producer need is access to land and that one barrier is taxes being raised. He recommended expanding urban agriculture by using the model of the high tunnel initiative from Cleveland, Ohio. Tara Chadwick raised the point that many urban growers are not part of the process because they cannot be due to many reasons such as they do not speak the language or they cannot take time off work and that the Committee needs to think about how to address who is not in the room.

8. Closing Remarks

Brian Guse made closing remarks. He thanked all for their participation in the public forum and stated that the UAIPAC will receive all written public comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal. He said that if there was not adequate time to consider any comments submitted after Friday, July 29, 2022, prior to the meeting all comments are welcome via the UAIPAC email box at

UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov at any time. He also reported that the next Advisory Committee meeting will be posted on www.farmers.gov/urban.

Brian Guse thanked everyone for calling into the second Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee meeting and adjourned the meeting at 2:59 P.M EST.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 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

These minutes will be formally considered by the Committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.