

Recommendation #27

Promote a Healthy Food System Supported by Low-Carbon, Regenerative Agricultural Practices

Description:

Create and support a county-wide healthy food management program by implementing a sustainable and systemic approach to the entire life cycle of food within the County. Preservation of agricultural land in our rural and urban communities is a central tenet of this recommendation¹. As our climate changes, the "breadbaskets" of the West may soon become unable to produce enough food beyond their communities. Therefore, our County must be forward-thinking and adopt zoning law and revise our codes to promote, enable, and incentivize permanently zoned agricultural land to preserve our County's ability to produce food locally. Dedicated lands for urban farming could also turn our County's food deserts into vibrant urban communities with direct access to their own locally sourced fresh food. Production of local food, in turn, drives local job creation and helps curb diets toward lower carbon healthy foods². From farm to the table, urban farms can create and sustain community-based businesses and jobs.

Supporting a local and sustainable food system also has many intersections with climate planning. Reducing the distance that food travels from farm to plate helps to reduce transportation emissions. Reducing wasted food with organic diversion for localized composting for community and urban gardens will reduce greenhouse gases. Rural and urban farm regenerative agriculture practices will improve soil health, increase carbon sequestration, and increase water retention.

Proposed Measurement & Tracking

- Acres in agricultural and horticultural (native plant) production
- Tons of local fresh produce
- Number and location of Farmer's Markets
- Orchards in the County
- Secondary productions-wine, micro-breweries

¹ <https://healthyfoodpolicyproject.org/crosswalk>

² <https://buildingdetroit.org/land-reuse-programs/>



Within County Control

Alignment with Existing Initiatives

Technical Feasibility

Cost-Effectiveness

Time Frame

0-3 years

- # Agricultural jobs
- # Farms (rural and urban)
- Estimated carbon sequestration

Capacity and Funding:

What Capacity and funding is necessary to enact this recommendation?

1. Increase funding to expand the County's University of Maryland Extension Services by hiring additional agents and supplemental programmatic support.
2. Increase funding to the Historic Agricultural Resources Preservation Program(HARPP).
3. Create Prince George's County Land Trust for natural resource preservation and create dedicated spaces for local food production.

Implementation Steps

Step 1: Integrate Climate Resilience into Local Food System Efforts. Develop partnerships to ensure that climate resilience, including related carbon sequestration goals and land use planning, are integrated into existing food system planning and support efforts. As part of this effort, DoE will help SCD articulate the carbon sequestration benefits of local agriculture and help track that metric. The County will also identify funding opportunities for projects and programs that align food system planning with climate action goals.

Step 2: Expand Community Education on Food and Climate. Through its partnerships, the County will support expanded community education and engagement on the following:

- Educate and engage the agricultural community and consumers to understand what actions they can take to reduce the carbon intensity of their food choices and farming practices.
- Increase public awareness of agricultural technical and financial assistance programs.
- Integrate climate resiliency education with the following county-sponsored education and training resources for local food production and farming:
 - Prince George's County Community College Agricultural/Urban Farming curriculum.
 - PGCPs Career and Technical Education program under Environmental, Agricultural, and Natural Resources.
 - Maryland Extension Service-Master Gardener's Program.

Step 3: Increase Demand for Local Food and Native Plant Production. Leverage the County's purchasing power to support local food production and agriculture through procurement policies:

- Support local native plant production through start-up grants for local non-profits and small farms to initiate contract growing of native plants for County Capital Improvement Programs'(CIP) stormwater management, street trees, and restoration projects.
 - Highlight local farm-to-table producers at County-sponsored events that serve foods or beverages.
 - Create dedicated grant and rebate programs to support community gardens, planting fruiting trees, and edible landscapes.
 - Create the Prince George's County Land Trust to transfer, purchase, or lease land from the County, government surplus land, or other private landowners for agricultural use.

- Encourage the adaptation of vacant and unwooded lots for agricultural production by allowing Land Trust first to choose all available government surplus land transfers.
 - Develop policy and programs that allow the repurposing of vacant or paved County lots for agricultural production.
 - Provide guidance on the soil remediation of potential contamination to protect public health and financial assistance removing impervious surfaces.

Step 4: Revise Prince George's County Code of Ordinance and applicable Zoning to support urban farming and community gardens to achieve the following:

- Specify which zones allow urban agriculture by including agriculture allowances in all land use tables, ensuring legal protection as farmland and ease of understanding where agriculture activities are permitted.
- Promote rainwater harvesting for onsite greywater reuse to irrigate and reduce onsite runoff.
- Enable onsite sale of farm produce without triggering commercial parking and additional facility requirements. Zoning and code revisions should also provide limited flex zoning for urban and rural farming (restaurant, produce street).
- Enable utilization of utility easements for dedicated community gardens.

Equity Considerations

Equity Concerns:

Healthy food access and opportunities to farm or garden are not equitably distributed in urban areas.

Recommendation Implementation Considerations To Lead To Equitable Outcomes

- Allow non-commercial agricultural production. Commercial agricultural production is intended for sale, but not all urban growers want to sell their products. Allowing residents to access land for non-commercial food production can increase their ability to grow food for themselves, their families, and share with the community.
- Revise County's tree rebate program to create a tract promoting edible landscapes and planting fruit trees in tandem with pollinator gardens.
- Provide grants to enable "corner stores" with refrigerators, increase shelf space, and train owners to handle fresh produce to ensure that items ripen slowly and have a longer shelf life.

Helpful Resources

- **Resource:** Healthy Food Policy Project
<https://healthyfoodpolicyproject.org/key-issues/zoning-for-urban-agriculture>
- **Resource:** HARPP
<https://www.pgscd.org/agricultural-land-preservation/harpp/>
- **Resource:** [Conservation Agriculture](#)
 - Org: FAO
 - Description: Website with fact sheets, resources, new and case studies related to conservation agriculture.
- **Resource:** [Food, Agriculture, and Land Use Solutions](#)

- Organization: Project Drawdown
- Description: Solutions to reduce GHG emissions and/or sequester carbon dioxide with benefit-cost data. Includes [conservation agriculture](#), [farm irrigation efficiency](#), [nutrient management](#), [plant-rich diets](#), [reduced food waste](#), [regenerative annual cropping](#). Each solution includes a Technical Assessment References resource.
- **Resource:** [Cool Farm Tool](#)
 - Org: Cool Farm Alliance
 - Description: Online GHG, water, and biodiversity calculator for farmers.

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