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# Emerging Farmers' Working Group

Legislative Report

01/15/2024

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**Photo 1. Pictured from left to right: Lillian Otieno, Director of the Emerging Farmers Office; Alma Mahama, Ambassador of the Republic of Ghana to the United States; Assistant Commissioner Patrice Bailey**

Thank you to all the Emerging Farmer's Working Group members that have served in the past three years for your time, dedication, and steadfast advocacy for those not in the room. The list to thank people is too long but I will start off with my biggest thank you to Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan for always supporting emerging farmers wherever they may reside within our state and Minnesota Agriculture.

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## Introduction

"The stakes could not be higher in these days of corporate concentration and increasing corporate ownership of the United States' most precious resource: the soil. Family farmers are the answer; family farmers are the solution. Farm policies should support family farmers not giant corporations."

--Sarah Vogel, Author of "The Farmers Lawyer"

In 2023, was a monumental year which included a surplus of \$17.6 billion, which was the largest in Minnesota history. Many state agencies experienced lots of increases in priorities and within the Governor's legislative priorities, an expansion to the Emerging Farmers Office (EFO) which would allow more staff to handle the demand of various grants to emerging farmers. Minnesota spends less than 0.5% of its budget on agriculture. Agriculture is responsible for \$112 billion annually in total economic impact in Minnesota, driven by farmers, farmworkers, food makers, processors, and entrepreneurs. In agriculture we have experienced lots of change this past session which included the continuation and increase of the Down Payment Assistance grants. The inception of these grants continues to be a game changer in that the Minnesota Down Payment Assistance Grant offers up to \$15,000 for qualified farmers purchasing their first farm, which can be in a rural or urban setting towards a down payment for land. The Minnesota Legislature approved \$1 million for fiscal year 2024 Down Payment Assistance Grants to Minnesota farmers earning less than \$250,000 per year in gross agricultural sales. Emerging Farmers continue to experience barriers with land and finances always being at the top of the list. In the last five years, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has put in place many grants and programs to address inequalities to focus more on equity in agriculture.

The question that we hear often is, "How many Black farmers are in Minnesota?" To find out how many people participate in agriculture; an agriculture census is conducted. The Census of Agriculture is taken only once every five years, which looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income, and expenditures. In the last census that Minnesota took was in 2017 in which "39" Black farmers were reported. In 2022, a new agriculture census was conducted and although there was a more robust outreach and engagement around the country, we are hopeful that when the new data comes out in 2024, we hope that there will be a substantial increase of participation.

With the average age of a Minnesota farmer at 58 years old, farm transfer and succession planning are critically important for the future of the sector. The Emerging Farmers' Working Group (EWFG) which was created in 2020 to address the needs of emerging farmers throughout the state. Now that the working group is going into its fourth year, lots of attention will be given to coming up with more creative ways to empower emerging farmers. With the expansion of the EFO hiring its first Director, Grants Senior Specialist, and an Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, we continue to explore new ways to reach more emerging farmers across the state. This report highlights, reflects, and builds upon the work that has been done to help eliminate systemic barriers to entry into agriculture and the work of Minnesota's Department of Agriculture to continue being a national leader in supporting rural and urban emerging farmers.

## What are “Emerging Farmers?”

The definition of an “Emerging Farmer” continues to grow as more baby boomers retire and constant surgency of new, younger, more diverse farmers can refer to something that is starting to exist, or something which is just beginning to be noticed. In this regard, the term “Emerging Farmers” encompasses both those individuals who are entirely new to farming as well as those who have been farming for generations but were outside the scope of traditional state and Federal agricultural support programs. The focus on emerging farmers is relatively new to government agencies.

The MDA’s EFWG was created in the 2020 legislative session. This group was formed as part of the department's commitment to supporting and empowering emerging farmers in the state of Minnesota. The MDA defines an Emerging Farmer and aspiring farmers as women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Native, members of a community of color, young (35 and younger), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual (LGBTQIA+), urban (residing in a city with a population over 5,000), and any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner.

The background of the EFWG stems from the recognition that emerging farmers face unique challenges and opportunities in the farming industry. The group was created to address the specific needs and concerns of these farmers, ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions are recognized.

The group is now in its fourth year and continues to seek a desire to foster a more inclusive and equitable agricultural landscape in Minnesota. By providing guidance and recommendations to the Commissioner of Agriculture and the MDA, the EFWG aims to influence the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that directly impact emerging farmers.

Members in the working group are not all farmers. The group consists of diverse stakeholders, including emerging farmers, non-emerging farmers, representatives from a wide array of walks of life including agricultural organizations, community leaders, and subject matter experts. This diverse composition allows for a comprehensive perspective on the challenges faced by emerging farmers and facilitates the identification of effective strategies and solutions.

Since its inception, the EFWG plays a crucial role in helping to shaping policies and programs to better support emerging farmers. By actively engaging with the MDA, the group has been instrumental in advocating for various recommendations addressing emerging farmers, including the creation of the EFO.

Through ongoing collaboration and regular meetings, the group continues to provide valuable insights and recommendations to the Commissioner of Agriculture, helping to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for emerging farmers in Minnesota.

## Background

Within the MDA, there are currently seventeen advisory groups, each associated with a specific program area. While these advisory groups vary in terms of formality, some having bylaws, elections, and voting procedures, others function as informal groups providing ad hoc feedback. Notably, the EFWG stands out as the sole agency-wide stakeholder group dedicated to providing feedback across all divisions of the MDA.

The establishment of clear boundaries between the working group and the MDA initially posed challenges. Upon the initiation of the EFWG meetings, internal MDA staff and working group members encountered difficulties in defining the purpose and vision of the group. Divergent perspectives emerged among partners regarding the intended role of the working group. Some partners viewed it as an opportunity for a comprehensive overhaul of MDA policies and programs to address systemic inequities, while others perceived it as a platform to promote awareness of the existing programs and services already offered by the MDA. Without a clearly articulated and shared vision, there existed a potential for frustration and a sense of alienation among stakeholders.

Unlike other advisory councils that had well-defined mandates, the EFWG faced the challenge of having a broad scope, making it challenging to determine a starting point. Several members of the EFWG voiced apprehensions regarding the absence of distinct emphasis on and assistance for emerging farmers. They perceived that the MDA placed greater emphasis on showcasing presentations by department heads and external agencies, rather than prioritizing efforts to enhance outcomes for emerging farmers. They characterized the meeting structure as unsustainable, impeding vital discussions, and replicating a conventional format that hindered open dialogue.

The MDA and members agreed that the meetings should have an outlined agenda that provides a structure for the meetings but there will always be a primary focus on Emerging Farmer voices. The prevailing agreement among the MDA leadership and the working group was to center their efforts on the fundamental principle that the people impacted by policies and decision-making should be actively engaged in the formulation of those policies and decisions.

Members of the EFWG recognize that their involvement holds significant importance and is centered on providing dedicated support to emerging farmers across the entire state. These members operate with autonomy and are actively encouraged by the MDA to ensure that their advocacy efforts are not driven by self-interest. Instead, the aim is to generate ideas and strategies that will benefit the entire emerging farmer community throughout Minnesota.

## Highlights of 2023

In 2023, the collaborative efforts between the MDA and the EFWG have marked significant progress. Notably, the Legislature's decision to eliminate the sunset provision for the group underscores its enduring importance, with the MDA committed to providing ongoing support indefinitely. This legislative endorsement signifies a substantial milestone, reinforcing the group's role in fostering the development of emerging farmers across the state.

An exciting new development was the EFWG's inaugural presence at the State Fair in 2023. The group hosted a booth to not only showcase its work but also to establish connections with emerging farmers statewide. This marks a proactive step towards increased visibility and outreach, aligning with the group's mission to engage and support emerging farmers in various capacities.

While the challenges posed by COVID-19 initially led to primarily virtual interactions, the working group has adapted to the evolving circumstances. Although the majority of meetings have traditionally been conducted online, the group has embraced a hybrid model, incorporating in-person meetings. In October, the group was hosted by member Kelsey Love and convened at North Branch City Hall, a significant move towards fostering personal connections among its members. Subsequent meetings, hosted at Brooklyn Park's City Hall by the Mayor and Frog Tree Farm, further emphasized the importance of both virtual and face-to-face engagement. The working group's commitment to this new model in 2024 is evident with its January meeting to convene at the Fond du Lac Nation.

A notable achievement for the group was the successful recruitment of the director for the newly established EFO. This strategic hire represents a crucial step towards enhancing the group's impact and effectiveness in supporting emerging farmers.

Furthermore, the introduction of a downpayment assistance program has proven transformative in dismantling barriers for emerging farmers. Having completed two grant cycles, this initiative has garnered considerable success, providing emerging farmers with a viable avenue for financial support. The program's effectiveness in empowering emerging farmers underscores its role as a game-changer within the broader framework of support mechanisms.

As the EFWG continues to evolve and expand its initiatives, its proactive approach, legislative backing, and tangible successes position it as a vital entity in championing the interests and development of emerging farmers in Minnesota.

## MDA & the EFWG: Evolving Strategies for Enhanced Collaboration

As the relationship between the MDA and the working group evolves, continuous introduction of strategies aims to foster collaboration and enhance effectiveness in addressing the evolving needs of emerging farmers.

In its commitment to continuous improvement, the MDA is keen to involve the EFWG in a pivotal role during the comprehensive review of various aspects of MDA programs, procedures, and practices. Different departments within the MDA that work closely with emerging farmers will be called upon to present an overview of their programs, current practices, and procedures. This will not only provide valuable insights but also open the floor for potential strategies for improvement. Members of the Working Group will actively participate by offering

their feedback, ensuring a diverse and informed perspective. This strategy will engage various departments ensuring a holistic approach and allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of programs and practices that impact emerging farmers. Further, this allows for active participation of the Working Group members and empowers them as collaborators in the decision-making process, reinforcing the democratic nature of program reviews and encouraging a sense of ownership among participants.

Executing this review strategy establishes a transparent feedback mechanism. Members of the working group will be able to share insights, express concerns, and propose suggestions related to current programs, procedures, and practices. This facilitates responsive decision-making, allowing the MDA to address the concerns and suggestions voiced by members. This, in turn, contributes to a more agile and adaptive review process.

This approach aims to nurture a culture of collaboration within the EFWG and the MDA. It consistently encourages active participation and constructive dialogue. Not only does this strategy offer a platform for diverse voices, but it also allows the MDA to prioritize consensus-building. The goal is to ensure that the recommendations generated genuinely represent the collective input of the working group, fostering a more inclusive decision-making process.

To initiate this strategy, the MDA administration will engage with each department individually. The objective is to clearly delineate the scope and responsibilities of the Working Group in relation to programs, procedures, and practices. This collaboration aims to delineate the scope and responsibilities of the Working Group concerning programs, procedures, and practices. The objective is to ensure a focused and efficient review process aligned with the goals of both the MDA and the Working Group. As part of this initiative, the MDA will formulate an equity analysis rubric in the summer of 2024 and conduct a training session. This training equips Working Group members with the tools necessary for a comprehensive evaluation. Through this approach, the evaluation process will encompass diverse perspectives and address biases, thereby contributing to a more equitable review.

The engaged participation of the EFWG in the assessment of programs, procedures, and practices ensures that the MDA considers the distinctive requirements of emerging farmers. This inclusive method results in the creation of a more responsive and adaptable framework, better tailored to address the specific challenges and opportunities encountered by emerging farmers.

Building on the success of the yearly open portal for public input, the MDA will continue to utilize this platform to solicit ideas from the public. Additionally, public forums and workshops will be organized regularly to gather input from a wider audience. This inclusive approach extends to emerging farmers, advocacy groups, and other community collaborators. These events will not only serve as avenues for gathering valuable perspectives but also as educational platforms to inform participants about MDA programs, procedures, and practices.

The belief is that this innovative approach will not only enhance the EFWG but also contribute to a more dynamic and responsive agricultural policy landscape in Minnesota. Fostering collaboration and inclusivity allows for the collective shaping of programs that support the growth and success of emerging farmers in the state.

## Outreach and Engagement

The EFO outreach and engagement coordinator along with internal and external stakeholders collaborate in many ways to stay engaged with emerging farmers and producers, and to leverage mutual opportunities for the benefit and success of Minnesota farmers. Engagement and communication are foundational in meeting emerging farmers where they are, and a means to prioritize their voices. Beyond engaging, listening, and supporting individual farmers across Minnesota, the outreach and engagement coordinator worked to establish collaborative relationships that are mutually beneficial yet provide resources and opportunities for emerging farmers and producers, while also telling their stories in their own voices. Some examples:

- The year opened in January with a farmer listening session with Ag. Chairs Vang and Putnam at Smude Sunflower Oil company in Pierz, Minnesota. Also in attendance were Ag. Commissioners and local leaders. Approximately twenty plus emerging farmers were in attendance and participated by sharing their voices in this critical space.
- Great Lakes Indigenous Farming Conference at the White Earth Nation provided for engagement and continuous relationship building with indigenous farmers and stakeholders which continue to result in many partnerships and collaborations.
- The Minnesota Zoo's Family Farm staff engagements, looking into ways to transition farm animals to emerging farmers by donating or sale. Farm animals like sheep, pigs, goats, chickens, and cows.
- The 2023 MASDA Regional Meeting held in Minneapolis in the summer brought in Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of Agriculture from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. A diverse group of emerging farmer leaders and representatives from Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA), Kilimo MN, Harvest Nation and The Good Acre were panelists on the topic: Emerging Farmers and Supply Chain Resiliency, moderated by the EFO outreach and engagement coordinator.
- Language accessibility: Emerging farmers are unique, and their needs extend beyond the farm. The EFO worked internally with six MDA divisions and provided guidance and financial support for translated materials. Additionally, interpretation services were provided when requested for input sessions.
- Xiong MN New Rice Harvest Meal: provided remarks and tour of rice field with farm owner in Rush City, Minnesota. In attendance were local Mayor, Hmong 18 council leaders, Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans ED, Public Engagement staff from the Office of Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan.
- Advocacy for emerging farmers: Some engagements were of difficult conversations confronting biases, equity in service delivery and sometimes indifferences. Examples included connecting emerging farmers with internal staff resource to help intervene between local USDA program provider and an Indigenous and Black emerging farmer. Another example was support in engaging a local city administrative official to help navigate complex ordinances on behalf of a Hmong farmer in rural Minnesota.
- A myriad of facilitation, speaker, panelist participation at many farmer and stakeholder conferences, workshops, and community events.

## Minnesota State Fair – Emerging Farmers Booth

The 2023 Minnesota State Fair was the first time the MDA had a booth specifically dedicated to Emerging Farmers in the Horticulture Building. The EFO staffed the booth with fifteen plus volunteer emerging farmers and producers and stakeholders. The Emerging Farmers booth was a big success thanks in part to our many volunteers who shared their emerging farmer stories with the community and visitors. Let's do it again this year!



Photo 2. Volunteer serving at the new Emerging Farmers booth at the 2023 Minnesota State Fair

## MDA Emerging Farmers Office Listening Session: 2023 Emerging Farmers Conference

The Emerging Farmers Conference is designed by farmers, for farmers. The MDA Emerging Farmers Listening Session – Your Voice Counts! on Friday November 3, 2023, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for farmers to share what they would like to see the office focus on, receive updates from their 2022 feedback gathered at the conference, and updates on services the MDA Emerging Farmer Office looks to provide. Attendance was 80 and counting.

### Where we have been:

The EFO was intentional in listening to emerging farmers at the 2022 Emerging Farmers Conference. We shared ideas/feedback presented then and provided what we did with the feedback gathered: Below are samples and summaries of the session.

- Land access – Quote from last listening lesson – “Can the office do something as an intermediary step to support farmers getting their own land?”
  - Shared feedback with the Legislature, unedited, and advocated for resources. What came out of it was the Down Payment Assistance Program.
- Culturally Relevant Technical Assistance – We’ve heard that it’s difficult to read and navigate state and federal grants, and farmers need assistance.
  - Offered a new Emerging Farmers Technical Assistance Grant. 8 awardees, total of \$550,000 in funding, to entities to help emerging farmers put together business plans, apply for grants, etc. 40% of funds went directly to emerging farmers. These grants have been awarded and the funding and the technical funding it supports will go through the end of June 2024.
- Interpretation and Translation – “most of the time there’s only one or two languages represented, and some communities are left out.”
  - The Legislature awarded us \$25,000 to do translation at the agency and this is something that now receive every year. But we’re also doing interpretation at listening sessions about grants, legislative ideas, etc.
- Market Access – “We need to get very creative on how we support marketability and helping farmers find markets.”
- Local Food Purchasing Assistance – this is closed and we’re waiting for all contracts to be signed.
- Farm to School: federal funds, this funding went to schools to buy local food.
- Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Initiative: applications are coming this winter.

### Panel discussion:

- **Abdiwahab Mohamed** – Assistant Commissioner for Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, DEED
- **Kim Vu Dinh** – Associate Professor, Director of the Economic Inclusion Clinic, Mitchell Hamline School of Law

Both AC Mohamed and Kim shared services that the Office of New Americans (ONA) and Pro bono services by Mitchell Hamline law clinic students can provide to emerging farmers. This discussion was very well received with lots of questions and immediate 1:1 follow up during the conference and future connection requests. Below is a small sample of raw comments/feedback.

- **Cooperative land access and ownership.** Minnesota land ownership law prohibits, can develop alternative land ownership models in which multiple parties could participate? Secondly, Islamic finance is kind of partnership for shared ownership that hasn't been applied to agriculture land ownership. Seems like a powerful tool we should use.
- North Minneapolis **operationalizing the sustainable development goals** for the UN, trying to give a practical model to build a viable demonstration model for what that looks like. WE should also be looking at the new deal that built the WPA. I'd like to talk with the gentleman from DEED to see if we can build a work force model that brings public and private sectors together to build a sustainable ag workforce.
- To Kim, would you be willing to do **pro-bono legal services to farmers**? Because I see farmers have challenges writing leases, writing contracts, and reading contracts for grants. As we have more farmers going into farming, we have more need for legal help. The other one related to land access – we find it hard to understand zoning.
- I was interested in the idea of a **legal blog** so that people can post questions at the state, county, or city level. Then students can research, post, and categorize. John Hopkins used to offer this, and its helpful (Kim says this is doable). Secondly, how can they reduce tax burdens when receiving grants and donations?
- Could the law school help put forth info about **land succession and transfer**. So, farmers can be proactive on heiress retention.
- Pickford lawsuit, work in the 80s and 90s was led by FLAG in St. Paul, you might be able to do some work. There is still some residual funding that could be stirred up.
- Attendee: Could you **help farmers who are experiencing harassment** from white neighbors? My mother who is Hmong is harassed by a neighbor when she uses her land access road.
- DEED: We've been hearing these stories in other states too. We've done some research with a national firm to see the root cause of this, how can we change the narrative? Talking about the importance of diversity. As opposed to the legal side. You are not alone and we're really looking into it. Let's do community work.
- Kim: Laws exist to protect us. We need enforcement. WE don't need a lawyer to create a law, we need police that protect us. We already have laws on the book.
- Attendee: If you don't have money for a lawyer, then you don't have any rights.
- Attendee: **Zoning** – with the stacking of enterprises. If you get 40 acres, it's zoned ag. But you want to teach classes or having camping, then it's all zoned differently, and you need a variance. And not knowing which ones you need and what it takes. Zoning is a big deal.
- When I talk about **climate change** up there. Permafrost is a layer of ice, we have 1.5 trillion tons of ice locked in the earth, containing methane. It's equivalent to twice the carbon in the air. When I look at the ideas of how laws are made, those political bodies have a huge reach to impact climate. Climate change is happening – and the only thing that can work is the change of laws. We must start thinking and doing different, mitigating. To wrap up the question – I think it's global, not just Minnesota. How do we protect what's important for the rest of the world.
- Attendee: Answer is to invest in farmers in color!
- Kim: An oral contract is still a contract, but it's harder to enforce. But it sounds like you'd like help where folks can walk into. I was with the LEDC today and we were talking about trying to get a grant to hire a full-time lawyer to help with ag. Because you are all around the state, are consultations over zoom, ok? Show of hands show that people are ok with it.

## Topics/areas of interest to farmers:

We also collected information on the topics that are of most importance to attendees. We used colored dot stickers to show the type of attendee.

Here are the topics with the most interest, by number of dots:

| Area of interest                            | Green<br>(farming<br>more than 5<br>years) | Yellow<br>(farming less<br>than 5 years) | Blue<br>(aspiring<br>farmer) | Red<br>(farm<br>service<br>provider) | Total |
|---|--|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Cooperative land access                     | 8  | 12                                       | 4                            | 6                                    | 30    |
| Land access                                 | 11   | 4  | 6                            | 8                                    | 29    |
| Market access                               | 10   | 5  | 3                            | 6                                    | 24    |
| Infrastructure (inflation<br>reduction act) | 8  | 1  | 3                            | 2                                    | 14    |
| Climate change                              | 2  | 5  | 3                            | 2                                    | 12    |
| Business support                            | 4  | 1  | 3                            | 4                                    | 12    |
| Pesticide drift & water safety              | 1  | 3  | 3                            | 2                                    | 10    |
| Mental health                               | unknown                                    | unknown                                  | unknown                      | unknown                              | 10    |
| Farmer education                            | 5  | 5  | 0                            | 0                                    | 10    |
| Culturally relevant outreach                | unknown                                    | unknown                                  | unknown                      | unknown                              | 9     |
| Food hubs                                   | unknown                                    | unknown                                  | unknown                      | unknown                              | 9     |

## More takeaways:

- **Demographic data:** “We advocated in this last session that there would be demographic data reported on the farmers receiving these grants. The emerging farmer definition is broad. Is that part of these next rounds of funding, so we can know who is benefitting from these grants?”
- **Co-op farm ownership model:** “To expedite the urban farm movement, we need to start thinking about cooperative ownership. Could you put together a co-op within each of the folks being owners so they could put together their down payments and purchase a larger piece of land among people who may not have the where with all to purchase land alone. Is this an option for the down payment assistance program, and string together multiple owners?”
- **Grants flexibility:** Flexibility and creativity in grants and other programs to recognize needs of emerging farmers which might be different than we normally provide and looking at grant applications that are not complicated. Continue to look at Down payment assistance program for tweaks.
- **More information on FarmLink:** Add more features.
- **More info on lending possibilities:** Other funding options.

## Emerging Farmers Office staffing

The EFO Director, Lillian Otieno, assumed her role in November 2023. Lillian is no stranger to the Emerging Farmer Program at the MDA as she was the sole staff member for the EFO and was instrumental in assisting to build the program while providing outreach and engagement to emerging farmers, producers, and stakeholders. The immediate task for the EFO Director is to increase the office capacity to meet the needs of emerging farmers (hiring a grants specialist and an outreach and engagement coordinator), and to build a functional infrastructure with operational tools to manage the program effectively.

The EFO has hired a Grants Specialist Sr, who begins in January 2024 and will develop and administer grant programs specifically designed to impact emerging farmers throughout Minnesota. Examples of competitive grant programs include technical assistance for emerging farmers and urban agricultural conservation projects, and non-competitive programs like funding for the Local Emergency Assistance Farmer Fund (LEAFF) program and other hunger relief efforts that directly impact emerging farmers. This position supports the EFO by assisting with grant proposal writing, triaging questions regarding grants and financial opportunities available for emerging farmers throughout the MDA, managing and executing contracts, and overseeing grant work completion and reporting. There will also be an evaluation and analysis of MDA grants systems with an equity lens. Based on funding from the last legislative session, following are examples of some grant work we look to get started:

- Community Development Financial Institutions/Funding opportunities.
- Beginning farmer equipment and Infrastructure grant.
- Services to immigrant and BIPOC producers grant.

## What's Next...

The EFO job posting for an Outreach and Engagement Coordinator closed in December 2023. The process continues and looks to fill this role in the first quarter of 2024.

Focus areas continue to be related to land access and land preservation, access to capital, language accessibility, technical assistance, data-farmers stories, farmer education/training and expanding engagement into further rural and great Minnesota.

Develop the EFO Strategic plan. The EFO and the EFWG are new to the MDA and believed to also be the first of its kind in the nation at state government level. Creating a strategic plan will address a timeline roadmap to provide services to emerging farmers and will be modeled after the MDA strategic plan and the One Minnesota Priorities. The plan will include collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, legislative and civic engagement, and create measurements for evaluation. The EFO strategic plan will allow for adjustments, recalibration as needed, and we will engage the EFWG and various partners and stakeholders for input and feedback from start to finish.

The MDA mission is “to enhance all Minnesotans’ quality of life by **equitably** ensuring the integrity of our food supply, the health of our environment, and the strength and resilience of our agricultural economy.” The EFO will work to:

- Create a one-stop shop for resources for emerging farmers.
  - Provide training resources.
  - Provide grants and funding opportunities.
- Support equity and inclusivity training in farming communities.
  - Strengthen connections between current and emerging farmers.
  - Audit state programs that support farmers for equity, unintended biases, and consequences of funding.
- Assess the MDA’s lending and grantmaking practices.
  - Create specific grant opportunities for emerging farmers.
  - Focus on assistance for establishing farm businesses.
- Provide trainings to farm service providers.
  - Help reduce barriers for emerging farmers.
- Articulate a vision for agriculture in Minnesota that encompasses emerging farmers and small farming businesses.

## Appendix A: 2023-2025 Emerging Farmers' Working Group

### Members

- Ngozi Akubuike, Ramsey County
- Marcus Carpenter, Hennepin County
- Nikki Crowe, St. Louis County
- Alexandra Diemer, Hennepin County
- Gigi DiGiacomo, Hennepin County
- Catherine Fleming, Hennepin County
- Cindy Hale, St. Louis County
- Kiersten Hansen, Brown County
- Kelsey Love Zaavedra, Chisago County
- Rev. Dr. Maren McDonell, PhD, Carver County
- Caliton Ntahompagaze, Clay County
- Ian Oundo, Anoka County
- Lisa Schutz, Olmstead County
- Taran Skwira, Morrison County
- Relyndis Tegomoh, Ramsey County
- Friendly Vang-Johnson, Hennepin County
- Celeste VerHelst, Hennepin County
- Jane Windsperger, Kanabec County

## Appendix B: Existing Resources for Emerging Farmers

Note: This list is a snapshot of resources available to emerging and historically underrepresented farmers.

### Federal

- USDA American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance
- USDA Small and Mid-Sized Farmer Resources
- USDA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Loan
- USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)-Outreach Programs, Pandemic Assistance, FSA Veterans in Agriculture
- USDA Local and Regional Food Sector Toolkits and Handbooks
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- USDA New Farmers Website
- USDA Rural Development
- USDA FSA Stakeholder Tool Kit
- USDA Urban Agriculture Tool Kit

### State

- Aggie Bond Beginning Farmer Loan Program
- Beginning Farmer Tax Credit
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Dual-Training Pipeline (Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry)
- MDA FarmLink
- Farm to School
- MDA Grants
- MDA Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program
- Farm Business Management Scholarships
- Livestock Investment Grant
- MDA New Markets Program
- Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant
- DEED-Office of New Americans
- Value-Added Grant
- Minnesota Grown
- Starting a Food Business Roadmap
- Workplace Safety Consultation (Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry)

## Non-Government Resources

- Agua Gorda Cooperative
- AURI
- Big River Farms
- Black Family Land Trust
- Blue Zones
- Carpenter Nature Center
- Clean Energy Resource Teams
- Compeer Financial Emerging Markets, Local Food & Non-Traditional Ag
- Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship
- Dream of Wild Health
- Driftless Grown
- Emerging Farmers Conference
- Farm at the Arb
- Farm Commons
- Farmer Veteran Coalition
- Farmers' Legal Action Group
- Farmland Access Hub
- Food Animal Concerns Trust
- Grow and Farmer Fund
- Hmong American Farmers Association
- Hmong American Partnership
- Holistic Management
- Iroquois Valley Farmland REIT
- Lake Superior College Eco-Entrepreneurship Program
- Land Access Workshops
- Land Stewardship Project
- Local Food Advisory Committee (MISA)
- Main Street Project (Northfield)
- Midwest Sustainable Ag Working Group
- Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)
- Minnesota Organic & Sustainable Education Service
- Minnesota African Immigrant Farmers Association
- Minnesota State Horticultural Society
- Minnesota Dairy Initiative
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Farmers Union-New Leader Academy
- Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence
- Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Services (MOSES)
- National Center for Appropriate Technology-ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program
- National Farmers Union-Beginning Farmer Institute
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust
- Northern Growers & Markets Conference