USDA Announces Inaugural Federal Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture

News Release | Michigan | February 02, 2022

Michigan

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1, 2022 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack selected 12 members to serve on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) inaugural Secretary's Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture to provide input on policy development and to help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

The new Secretary's Advisory Committee is part of USDA's efforts to support urban agriculture, creating a network for feedback. Urban agriculture plays an important role in producing fresh, healthy food in areas where grocery stores are scarce, and also provides jobs and beautifies neighborhoods.

"Urban agriculture has been growing in impact and importance, and we are taking bold actions to build a support structure," said Vilsack.

"It is great to see a Detroit urban farmer, Jerry Ann Hebron, on the inaugural Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture," said Tim Boring, State Executive Director in Michigan. "We look forward to learning how we can better serve Michigan urban agricultural producers and improve our efforts focusing on equity, local food systems, climate change, and access to safe and nutritional food."

Secretary's Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture

The Committee is made up of agricultural producers, and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing.

Members include:

- **Jerry Ann Hebron**, Mich., Urban Producer
- **Bobby Wilson**, Ga., Urban Producer
- **Viraj Puri**, N.Y., Innovative Producer
- **Kaben Smallwood**, Okla., Innovative Producer

- **Sally Brown**, Wash., Higher Education
- **John Erwin**, Md., Higher Education
- **Carl Wallace**, Ohio, Non-Profit Representative
- **John Lebeaux**, Mass., Business and Economic Development Representative
- **Zachari Curtis**, D.C., Supply Chain Experience
- **Allison Paap**, Calif., Financing Entity Representative
- **Tara Chadwick**, Fla., Related Experience
- **Angela Mason**, Ill., Related Experience

USDA and the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production peer reviewed more than 300 nominees, and Vilsack made the final selections. Selections ensured geographic, racial and gender diversity and a broad range of agricultural experience. The new members will serve terms of one to three years.

The first meeting of this inaugural committee, which will be open to the public, will take place in late February. More details will be available in the *Federal Register* and at farmers.gov/urban and the new Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture website.

USDA and Urban Agriculture

The advisory committee and county committees are part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include:

- Grants that target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.
- Cooperative agreements that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.
- Investing $260,000 for risk management training and crop insurance education for historically underserved and urban producers through partnerships between USDA's Risk Management Agency(RMA) and the University of Maryland, University of Connecticut, and Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems.
- Providing technical and financial assistance through conservation programs offered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service(NRCS).
- Organizing 11 Farm Service Agency (FSA) urban and suburban county committees. FSA will organize additional committees.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with numerous USDA agencies that support urban agriculture. Its mission is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including community composting and food waste reduction. More information is available at farmers.gov/urban and the new Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture website.

Additional resources that may be of interest to urban agriculture entities include grants from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture as well as FSA loans.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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