



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 17TH EMERGING FARMERS CONFERENCE

### NOVEMBER 12-13, 2022

Hosted by The Food Group, the 17th annual Emerging Farmers Conference was held at the Shoreview Community Center, November 12-13, 2022. This was the first in-person conference held since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as the first conference to take place on our new November timeline.

One year prior, in November, 2021, we hosted a special event, *ReRooting the Emerging Farmers Conference*, where we invited farmers to provide feedback about their experiences with the conference and the services and programs that it offered through our sponsors and partners. Sponsors, stakeholders, and community leaders were also invited to listen to farmers share their stories and constructive feedback. This feedback provided a platform for our 2022 conference planning team to continue to make our conference “for farmers, by farmers, with farmers.”

#### THINGS TO CELEBRATE

- Language Accessibility:
  - Interpreters provided simultaneous interpretation in 8 languages: Hmong, Karen, Kirundi, Somali (Mai Mai Dialect), Burmese, Spanish, Swahili, and Arabic.
  - Many of the interpreters appreciated that they were welcomed and acknowledged before each session, and many also voiced that they are interested in becoming farmers.
- Workshop Highlights:
  - 21 out of 26 Farmer presenters were BIPOC.
  - 13 of 15 sessions included farmer speakers.
  - An interactive workshop on policy, advocacy, and organizing with farmers was hosted by Midwest Farmers of Color Coalition.
  - The Minnesota Department of Agriculture hosted a listening session at the conference, engaging farmers with available programs and services and the Emerging Farmers Office.



*Farmer ZongXee Lee presenting on growing Culturally Relevant Crops in MN, photo by Karl Hakanson*



*Farmers discussing Land Access challenges*

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- Lunch from both days was catered from local businesses that center local produce in their meals. Lunch on Saturday was catered by Chelle's Kitchen, and on Sunday by Common Roots Catering. Coffee was sourced from local cafes and restaurants.
- A year of firsts:
  - We had our very **first wellness room** with mental health resources, a massage therapist, meditation and anatomy coloring pages.
  - We also had our **first farm business resource room** where farmers could have more in-depth 1:1 conversations with government agencies and lenders.
  - A **first-time formal seed exchange** workshop took place, providing an opportunity for farmers to learn about and share culturally relevant and Native seeds.
  - The conference was planned in part by our **first Farmer Advisory Committee**, through which farmers provided feedback and guidance on conference content and relevant resources.



Farmers sharing seeds at the EFC's first seed exchange

## FARMER DEMOGRAPHICS

- A total of 408 attendees registered for this event, including 289 farmers and 119 non-farmers. Total of 300 attended the conference, including 175 farmers and producers.
- Attendees joined us from 9 different states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, North Dakota, Kentucky, Ohio, Iowa.
- People from Minnesota came from 66 different cities and 28 counties.
- The majority of farmers who attended the conference have farmed less than 2 years.
- Farming experience: On average, 38% of farmers attending the conference have been farming less than one year, 34% of the farmers from 2 to 5 years, 6% farmed 6-9 years and 22% 10 or more years.
- Land ownership: 62% of farmers lease land to farm.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE EFC:

"It was delightful to be at a culturally diverse event that so well ensures that all attendees are included and felt welcome."

- Anonymous Farmer

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Lucas Humblet, photo taken by Free Truth Media

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Lucas Humblet, a descendant of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin shared his story of resiliency and how support from the agricultural community helped him build his own farming business. Lucas is also co-owner and operator of YAWELYAHSI·YÒ· Farm where he stewards the land that he cultivates with his partner Mallory. Together, they honor the land by saving the seeds and giving back to the soil. They have saved over 100 varieties of vegetables, herbs, and flower seeds, and co-hosted the EFC's first annual seed exchange.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE EFC:

"Learning from other farmers and getting to connect with all the different people there have given me energy to tackle the challenges to come."

- Anonymous Farmer

## RESOURCES, CONTENT, AND FARMER SUPPORT

In response to farmer feedback, workshops were intentionally formatted for farmer-to-farmer learning. Content was specifically catered to provide resources that would support growing their farm businesses. Workshops focused on selling to wholesalers, working with a food hub, land access, and connecting farmers to USDA programs and services. The conference also featured a farm business resource room where farmers could engage with staff from USDA, MDA, Renewing the Countryside and many other local organizations that support the success of direct market farmers.

Physical resilience, mental health support, and body-centered content were also an emphasis at this year's conference. Laura Gosewich, a clinical massage therapist and owner and operator of Vital Ground Farm, created a comprehensive Wellness Room where conference attendees learned about heat stroke and exhaustion, located mental health services, received body work through massage, and had a place of rest. We also had a nursing room and a prayer room to honor the diverse needs of our farmers.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE EFC:

"I am so happy to learn about the farming resources. I've farmed in Inver Grove Heights for 5 years and have never heard about these resources. Now I can look at getting a tractor to help my farm operation. "

- Hmong Farmer who worked with Farm Service Agency staff at the EFC

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*Pillsbury United's Freight Farm Site, photo by Karl Hakanson*

The conference held its first field day on Sunday and provided transportation for attendees via coach bus. Participants rotated between Pillsbury United's Freight Farm located at North Market, a Microgreen demonstration at one of the University of Minnesota Saint Paul Campus sites, and season extension and a tour of the Good Acre warehouse

and greenhouse. Farmers reported learning a lot and likely using the knowledge they learned from the microgreens workshop in particular.

## WORKSHOPS

12 sessions were offered on Day One:

1. *Diversifying with Flowers*
2. *Connecting to NRCS and FSA Programs and Resources*
3. *First Annual Seed Exchange*
4. *Growing Culturally Relevant Crops*
5. *Regenerative Grazing*
6. *Strategies for Physical Resilience on the Farm*
7. *Finding New Buyers for Your Products: How to Sell Wholesale*
8. *Let's Talk About Land Access*
9. *Listening Session with MDA Emerging Farmers Office*
10. *How can Working with A Food Hub Benefit Your Farm Business*
11. *Farmer Issue Mini-Caucus*
12. *Beyond Tomatoes: Innovative Ways to Use High Tunnels*

3 Urban Farm Tour locations on Day Two:

1. *Season Extension at The Good Acre*
2. *Leading with LUV: An Intro to Microgreens at UMN Greenhouses*
13. *Hydroponic Farm at North Market*



*Field Day: Season Extension at the Good Acre, photo by Karl Hakanson*



*Field Day: Hydroponics at North Market, photo by Karl Hakanson*

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***Thank you to our community partners and sponsors  
for making this conference happen!***

**FARMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

ALBERTO ORTIZ ***FORMER BIG RIVER FARMS FARMER***

JOSIE TROPLE ***SHARING OUR ROOTS FARM***

LAKISHA WITTER ***LIVE ORGANICALLY FARM***

MALLORY MITCHELL ***YAWELYAHSI-YÒ***

NAIMA DHORE ***NAIMA'S FARM***

TIFFANY LASHAE

KRISTIN THOMPSON ***TUTTIE FRUITTIES FARM***

LUCAS HUMBLET ***YAWELYAHSI-YÒ***

MOSES MOMANYI ***KILIMO & DAWN2DUSK FARM***

NATHANIAL DIOH ***BETHEL EMPOWERMENT FARMING VENTURE***

**CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE:**

BEKAH KROPP *BIG RIVER FARMS*, ELI GOODWELL *RENEWING THE COUNTRYSIDE*, ERIKA RESENDIZ ALONSO *FOND DU LAC TRIBAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE*, KAZOUA BERRY *BIG RIVER FARMS*, LUCINDA WINTER *SUSTAINABLE FARMING ASSOCIATION*, NAN ROBERTS *CONFERENCE VOLUNTEER (SINCE YEAR 1!)*, NIKKI CROWE *FOND DU LAC RESERVATION*, ZOE HOLLOMON *MIDWEST FARMERS OF COLOR COLLECTIVE*, DAN MAHONEY *FARM SERVICE AGENCY*, ELLYN OELFKE *FARM SERVICE AGENCY*, ERIC WILSON *COMMUNITY MEMBER*, HINDOLO PAKAWA *SIERRA LEONE FOUNDATION FOR NEW DEMOCRACY*, KARL HAKANSON *UMN EXTENSION*, LILLIAN OTIENO *MN DEPT OF AGRICULTURE*, MICHAEL CHANEY *PROJECT SWEETIE PIE*, *MIDWEST FARMERS OF COLOR COLLECTIVE*, NATALIE HOIDAL *UMN EXTENSION*, PILAR INGRAM *LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT*

**OTHER CONFERENCE SUPPORT:**

BIG RIVER FARMS AND THE FOOD GROUP STAFF, SHOREVIEW COMMUNITY CENTER, GLOBAL LANGUAGE CONNECT (INTERPRETATION SERVICE), UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE (INTERPRETATION SERVICE), COMMON ROOTS CAFÉ, CHELLE'S KITCHEN, CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS, THE GOOD ACRE (FIELD DAY HOST SITE), NORTH MARKET (FIELD DAY HOST SITE), UMN GREENHOUSES (FIELD DAY HOST SITE)

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LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT  
MINNESOTA FARMERS UNION  
MISSISSIPPI MARKET  
MOTHER EARTH GARDENS

NORTH CIRCLE SEEDS  
PANNA  
RIVER MARKET COOP  
THE GROSSMAN LAB  
TWIN CITIES COOP PARTNERS

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