

## Introduction to the Office of Urban Agriculture

Please stand by for realtime captions.

Good afternoon, everyone. Let's go ahead and get started. Welcome to today's webinar, introduction to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. My name is Jen Ryan and I am a Natural Resources Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service at the East national technology support center. I will be your host for today. I'm pleased to now turn the webinar over to Terry D'Addio. Terry is a Natural Resource Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. She is a senior staff member in the outreach and partnership division in Washington, DC and is a staff member setting up the new office of urban, culture, and innovative production. Terry, you may now begin.

Okay. I've got my line unmuted. Good afternoon, everyone. I want to welcome you to our first webinar on the full USDA office of urban agriculture and Innovative Production. I will be your moderator for today's webinar. We will make sure we moved through and have plenty of time. I want to remind everyone that you will be muted for the presentation. The webinar is scheduled for an hour. What you see now on the screen is the agenda. This webinar will brief you on the activities that Congress has directed USDA to implement regarding urban agriculture. We will have a question and answer period at the end of the presentation. If you have a question please write your questions in the chat box. I want to let you know that we will be able to answer all the questions today, but we are going to develop a. Only asked questions document that will be posted on [Farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban). It is a website for our urban office. If you think of a question after the webinar please send your question to [urban\\_agriculture@usda.gov](mailto:urban_agriculture@usda.gov). I again, that's [urban\\_agriculture@usda.gov](mailto:urban_agriculture@usda.gov). I will remind you of that at the end of the webinar. Our first speaker today is Louis Aspey, Deputy Chief for Management and Strategy and the interim director for the office of urban agriculture and Innovative Production. Go ahead, Lewis.

Thank you, Terry, very much. Good afternoon and good morning everybody. Wherever you may be located across the landscape here. Thank you so much for joining the webinar today. We really appreciate you carving some time out to hear about the office and, hopefully partnering from whatever goal you may be in helping the office be a success and deliver urban agriculture to folks across the land. Thank you so much. Recognizing we have a broad group of folks, likely on the line here not only from agencies under USDA, but also customers, stakeholders, and general public. Thank you so much. We are excited about this. Excited about the opportunity to roll out this office and talk about what we have done over the last several months. Probably more importantly, how we can improve things in the future and how we deliver this new office and take your input to do so and be successful.

Just as a recap, as part of the 2018 farm bill NRCS has led iterations he collaboration to establish the office of urban ag and Innovative Production. The reason that the office is put in place is because food insecurity is an everyday reality across the United States, unfortunately. USDA economic research service estimates over 23 million people living communities like lacking food access with about 16 million of those being children that are food insecure. Is a significant problem. This is especially true in many urban areas, particularly caused by economic challenges in attracting retail grocery stores, which eliminates food shopping options, which results in a term you may be familiar with, which is food deserts. Office of urban ag supports Innovative Production methods that respond to these needs and interests to go food in small spaces. Efforts to help increase healthy foods that can have a range of dietary diversity and urban farms will contribute by connecting growers, schools, communities to address food insecurity and overall meet the increasing demand for locally grown food. Positive balance. Our work involves a public process. I want to highlight the Republic. We really focus on a locally led process those of you that are familiar with NRCS recognize it's one of the foundational principles of the agency. Locally led. We think that is especially true in the option to move forward under the urban agriculture banner. You are going to hear later in today's presentation a federal advisory committee is in the process of being established to provide advice on urban agriculture and Innovative Production. The process has already begun to establish 10 new pilot County committees with our sister agency FSA in urban and suburban locations across the country, which will be established to help decision-making at the local level. There's a number of things ongoing right now. One thing I want to highlight is the project team that we have is currently made up of many detailed staff. When I say detailed I mean folks that are cited temporarily to the office through multiple agencies representing broad range of skills. So, I really want to give a shout out to those staff that have been working tirelessly on this from across the department bringing their skill sets into help us achieve what we have done over the last several months, especially a sincere appreciation to those agency leadership members that have allowed those folks to come

over. They have been instrumental in what we have done to date. We recognize the need of demand for USDA to work with local governments, stakeholders, and the public to identify needs and opportunities and empower and strengthen urban agriculture. It will be gathering data, teaming together data, and in lies our first your activities to engage this federal advisory committee. Together with public input offer programs and tailor them to support all types of urban farming ranging from community gardens to rooftops, hydroponics, aeroponics, Aero phonics, all with the promise to contribute to the local food supply and economy. I have been amazed over the last few months at some of the presentations I have seen on how creative and innovative some of the urban agriculture opportunities are out there that are real. Folks that are converting warehouses to hydroponic gardens, aerosol water. It's just amazing to see that. How that is led from traditional agriculture that we may think of to really converting that creativity involving that. It's really exciting. The past year I want to talk about what we have done. You will hear more about this later on. The team has provided competitive planning and implementation grants that we are in the process of awarding. Announcements just went out earlier this week on that. Practice as a recap, the program planning projects will initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs. These projects may target areas with food access, education, business, and start up costs. Implementation projects are a little bit different. They're going to accelerate existing and emergency models, emerging models, I'm sorry of urban, indoor, and other ag practices that serve multiple farmers. These projects include local food access and collaborate with partner organizations to support the structure needs, emerging technologies, education endeavors, and urban farming policy implantation. In addition to those grants we also had 10 states, local municipalities venturing into cooperative agreements for composting and food gross waste reduction products actually, we were legislated and mandated to do at least 10. I believe we are up to 13 that we were able to fund with this initial tranche. That's exciting. That is to assist with compost and food waste production, recycle organic waste for use in urban ag. So, the broader picture of urban food production includes economics, environmental impacts, local policies for growing. The row that gets us there is going to be through partnerships. You're going to play a key role in that moving forward. So we can connect urban and suburban ad with employment opportunities, job training, skill development, powering small businesses and entrepreneurship. I'm excited about the office over the next year. With continued input from the public we can do that to be successful. The staff will be reviewing data and information gleaned from the first year, as I mentioned earlier. We look forward to working with the federal advisory committee to be that your on the ground, those eyes and ears, and help us plan efforts were fiscal year 2021, which amazing as it is to think, is just around the corner. So, in closing, I want to thank you again. The staff is going to continue to hold additional webinars on the activities of the office. We look forward to hearing your feedback and your questions and working together to make this office a success and help folks across the country. With that I will turn it back to you, Terry. Thank you so much, everybody.

Thank you, Lewis. Next speaker is going to give you a broad overview of the office. All the activities that Congress has put into the statute for this new office. Joseph Heller is the speaker. He is a natural resources specialist and is now the New Yorker urban conservationist from NRCS. He was also detailed to this office and has been working on many activities that we have undertaken. It is all yours, Joe.

Thank you. Thank you for providing that overview. The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production is new to USDA. It was created under the 2018 farm bill but as you can see from this slide, I pulled together some of the tenants of the office of urban agriculture that was language within the farm will. One of the things that we had established through the USDA natural resources conservation service, which is leading this effort includes representation on several other USDA offices and agencies, which I will highlight in the next slide. As you can see, some of the other tenants which were part of the farm bill that were things that we shall complete were competitive grants, pilot projects, as Lewis mentioned for cooperative agreements, urban and suburban County committees and the federal advisory committee.. The office mission is to promote emerging agricultural practices including community gardens and small-scale farms located in urban areas, suburbs, and as we are hearing from interested stakeholders across the nation innovations in things like vertical farming, rooftop farms, and green walls. All which help increase yields where we are trying to grow in smaller spaces. Many parts can expand opportunities for local and regional food supply chains as well as connect urban and rural commerce to address food insecurity where access to healthy food is limited. Indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical farms such as hydroponic, aeroponics, and aquaponics farm facilities are some of the methods that are science and technology staff our eager to engage in as well. Across the USDA innovations in agricultural production are being recognized as well as work in urban agriculture. Even recently a staff from food nutrition service was inquiring with us about the innovations in agriculture section of the Farm Bill. We are excited to see and hear from the other agency how this effort is evolving as a result of statutes of the relations of the 2018 farm bill and how the department has

come together to support standing up the office by establishing an internal advisory committee. I have had a lot of great experience working across the agency with really great minds and big thinkers about what we can do. There are 17 agencies and or offices of the USDA that participate. Staff have been selected within the department that have technical subject matter and policy expertise that have been help in rolling out the initial work standing up the office. This collaboration across all relevant USDA agencies highlights the USDA commitment to providing this new national program. Thus, together the department support for urban, suburban agriculture has overarching efforts of the many agencies you can see listed here. For example, later in today's presentation you will hear about the Farm service agency role in County committees. And a quick note, while we are looking at this open slide the U.S. Forest Service has an internal agency agreement to implement innovations in agriculture as well. Yes, food and fiber from an urban forest - the office of urban agriculture and in bid production is proud to announce the words for recent notice of pending announcements. And 2020 there was an overwhelming response to the competitive grants application process with over 500 applicants. Urban ag and Innovative Production supported the development of urban agriculture and innovation production activity by funding three planning projects and seven implantation projects totaling slightly over \$3 million. The recipients were from one or more of the following eligible entities, nonprofit organizations, local or tribal governments, and schools that serve grades kindergarten through 12th in areas of the United States. In general, the target criteria of the competitive grants is to address urban and suburban areas in the United States where access to fresh food is limited or unavailable. So, for the first year what we wanted to do is to really ride stroke to ensure that we can cover a large range of urban and suburban agriculture and Innovative Production. As we moving forward seeking input from the public on how we are going to move forward on this competitive grant in the future. The Office of Urban Agriculture will also enter into cooperative agreements with local or municipal governments in 13 states to carry out planning and implementation projects for compost and food waste reduction. These projects incorporate plans to make compost easily assessable to add reducers, including community gardeners. Municipalities will also plan and implement integrations of other type of food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts. As I mentioned earlier, this is a USDA wide effort. As we are collaborating across agency lines building up the office of urban agriculture we are hearing from the public, well, aside from the office what other resources does USDA have? We have many internal working groups like a local and regional food working group that helps our staff understand and better promote the programs. We do have a variety of existing funding streams that come through throughout the year. I can mention a few here, but there are much more than what is listed. If you go to [Commerce.gov/urban](https://www.commerce.gov/urban) you will be able to find more information about the programs I'm discussing. Just quickly to roll through here, agricultural marketing service has a farmers market promotion program that funds directed producer and consumer projects to develop and coordinator expanding markets. The Farm service agency, which works hand-in-hand with farmers on the ground offers microloans for financing needs of small beginning farmers, farms that work in direct marketing and sales. These would be great opportunities, as you can see, in urban areas where they might be looking for small loans to improve and enhance programs and projects that are already in place. There is crop insurance programs. FSA also administers the organic cross sure initiative offered to reduce rates for the national organic program. Many of our urban and suburban farmers we know are engaged in organic principles and we believe that will be a great area for them to be able to reach assessable resources from USDA. I would be remiss if I didn't mention a recent success in from to school programs, assisting eligible entities throughout grants and technical assistance for implement and programs that increase consumption of fresh food for students. The food nutrition service also offers the supplemental nutrition assistance program for budding nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families, so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency. In urban areas there farmers market nutrition program offer also those coupons that can be used by eligible food from farmers markets or roadside stands that have been approved. Quickly, I just want to mention the national Institute for food and agriculture. There is some Farm Bill language that connects the for and the office of urban agriculture. They will have a competitive grants program to support research, education, and extension activities for the development of urban indoor and other emerging agricultural production. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides on the ground conservation planning and financial assistance for the implementation of practices across the nation. There are quite a number of urban conservationist that support urban farms. For example, helping producers with irrigation efficiencies that conserve and protect natural resources. NRCS also provides for conservation innovation grants, offering funding for producers, nonprofits, and institutes of higher education to develop innovative strategies for conserving the natural resources on farmland. You can find more about NRCS at your local service center. These are just some of the opportunities USDA has to offer. There are many more. We are looking to collaborate on ideas across USDA and seek your input as well. We are excited to expand our reach through these webinars and we are hoping to have more ongoing as

we present for the things that we are accomplishing through the office. Exciting ideas. I encourage you to visit the website, [Farmers.gov/urban](http://Farmers.gov/urban) for more information. We are looking forward to presenting more to you as the results of our grants and agreements and as the data comes in on some of the things that we can support urban and farmers throughout the nation. Terry, I would like to turn it over to you.

Thank you, Joe. Can everybody hear me? I want to make sure I unmute it correctly. The next speaker is going to talk about the pilot urban, suburban County committees. It is Stewart knee, he is a program analyst list on detail to us at this office. He is from NRCS in North Carolina. So, Stuart, it's all yours.

Hello, everyone. It's great to be here and have the opportunity to share with you today I'm going to be going over the FSA urban county committee. The 2018 Farm Bill authorized the secretary to establish 10 new urban and suburban FSA Farm service agency County committees. To be part of a five-year pilot project. But it is five or more years, so this could continue well beyond just five years. There to be located in suburban, urban, and urban clusters. For the looking at urban we actually looked out for a range of what size off of the senses and what they can classify as urban, which is a population of 2500 or greater.. These County committees do not place existing County committees. These are new politic committees. We have divided the County committees of into two phases. Phase 1, which we have already announced in those locations. Phase 2 in the last five locations will be announced in fiscal year 2021. The first five locations are Portland Oregon, Albuquerque New Mexico, Cleveland Ohio, Richmond, Virginia, Philadelphia Pennsylvania. So, let me quickly go over how we came to determine what locations are going to be selected. The USDA, the office of urban ag and Innovative Production for this team worked with FSA and NRCS leaders to identify locations for the 10 new County committees. We used daters such as extended location having accelerated levels of green stations, green and structure projects, committee gardens or farm projects that occurred were housing markets showed trends in measurable levels of residential gardens, access community gardens, parks, and green spaces. We look at things such as farm to table projects and markets within metropolitan and suburban areas. Demographic data such as economic, levels of economic distress, diversity, proximity to tribal nations, percentage of students on free and reduced lunch programs, the number of food pantries, and level of economic growth.. We initially looked at well over 100 locations and kept working down based off of criteria. What would be best to start off with these pilot projects. Local engagement. What are the County committees? Well, if you think about our traditional County committees the County committees informed decisions made by FSA service centers across the country. Every FSA office is required to have a county committee and they are made up of local farmers that are elected by local farmers. While the committees don't outright make the decisions of who does or doesn't receive a loan they do help with the determination of eligible applicants and how to handle the disasters, priorities and conservation programs, and key administrative office of FSA programs. The new County committees will be selected traditional County committees. New urban county committee will act on their own. They will make determinations and listen to appeals and make decisions. They will work with the current County committees in performing administrative functions. They will also do outreach for both FSA and NRCS. Each county committee will have, of the new County committees, will have three local administrative areas. No committee member will be serving more than three consecutive terms. These boards must have diversity represented on these boards. For the current five County committees of the process for nominations start September 4th and will run for four weeks, approximately, concluding in October 2nd.. Everything will follow the judicial policies for election for County committees. How do you engage with these County committees? Very similar to the way you do currently. They will conduct meetings and the public can always provide input to a county committee. There are other options available for people to provide a voice in urban agriculture at the local level. All of these opportunities work together to communicate. They are cross functional in a lot of ways. Was mentioned earlier that there is the locally led conservation process. As he mentioned, it is very vital to help NRCS and are partners. The public and are partners and our nonprofit organizations and armies the parties will be encouraged to participate in the locally led conservation process, helping us identify priorities at the local level to address resource concerns with relation to urban agriculture. There is also the state technical advisory committee where the public is always encouraged to come and provide a voice and listen and participate as an active member of the technical advisory committee. The NRCS listens to and is advised on the scientific methods and practices that we use to address resource concerns. That's not the end. There is more to come. We are working with our partners across all of USDA. As Joe mentioned in one of the previous slides, we are all connected in this across the board. It is a USDA wide endeavor. It is not owned by one single office. We are all involved and all active. As we move forward on our website we will continue to provide information to the public on how you can have your voice heard, whether it's through the county committee or through a state technical advisory committee, locally led profits or one of the other many opportunities USDA agencies have available to the public. Thank you. I will pass it back over to Terry.

Thank you, Stuart. Our next subject is on the federal advisory committee. Our speaker is Faith Burns, she is in the NRCS policy advisor and she is located in the office of the chief. Faith, it's yours.

Thanks, Terry. Yes. My portion to discuss is a federal advisory committee act. When Lewis was speaking earlier he alluded to a couple of things that the 2018 Farm Bill requires us to do. One is to set up an office of urban ag and the other is a federal advisory committee. An initial question is what on earth is a federal advisory committee and what does it do? Actually, it's a group of people who actually provide advice to a particular federal agency in this instance it will be an advisory committee that provides advice to the secretary back culture and also advice to the director of the office of urban ag there are a few things that all federal advisory committees across the federal government have in common. First of all, the General Services Administration actually administers all of the committees. There are over 1000 federal advisory committees in the federal government they actually have a database and they have information on all the advisory committees. Every advisory committee has to have certain structures. Whenever we go through internally here at USDA to set up any advisory committee, including this one, there's a very strenuous review process that occurs not only here, but at GSA because GSA wants to make sure that what we have conforms to what their laws require. One of the statutes that is guiding us, that is a federal advisory committee act. That is found at five USC appendix 2. USC transfer United States code. That is a particular location of the statute for the federal advisory committee act. Where it's located. Then GSA also has regulations. Those regs that affect the advisory committee are found at 41 CFR, CFR stands for the Code of Federal Regulations, parts 101 six and 102-3. If you go to the Internet and do an Internet search for a federal advisory committee you should have a whole bunch of things that pop up. If you are interested in looking at the background information, the laws on federal advisory committees. So, what does the Farm Bill require us to do? Some statutes do not direct the number of members that a federal advisory committee is to have. This one does. The urban act committee is supposed to have 12 members. And the statute also directs the background of those individuals that are to be on the committee. Four of the members will be individuals who are agriculture producers. Of those four ag producers two of them have to be located in an urban area or an urban cluster and two other ag producers have to be farmers that use innovative technology. And then we go on to some other qualifications of membership. Two members need to be representatives from an institution of higher education or an extension program. One person needs to represent a nonprofit. That could be a public health organization, environmental group, or community organization. One person needs to represent a business and economic development interest. That can be a Business Development entity, Chamber of Commerce, city government, or planning organization. One member needs to have supply-chain experience and that can be a food aggregator, a wholesale food distributor, a food hub, or a person who has direct to consumer market experience. One person needs to be from a financing entity. Two people need to have related experience or expertise, basically in urban ag in general, or innovative ag production as determined by the secretary. That is are 12 members. And then the terms are to be staggered. Four members are appointed for three years. Four serve a two year term. Four are going to serve a one-year term. What is the role of the FACA committee? As I said earlier, it's to advise. If you notice on the left-hand side of the screen most of the words say advise. Because an advisory committee cannot direct policy. The only thing you can do is provide recommendations. And in this instance the advisory committee is to provide recommendations not only to the secretary of agriculture, but also to the director of the office of urban ag. And the advice to the secretary is, basically general advice about urban and indoor ag. That is kind of a catch all. I want to put that in. And the advice to the director is to develop recommendations and advise on the policies and initiatives and outreach administered by the office of urban agriculture and Innovative Production. Basically, it, look at, evaluate, and review any of the ongoing research that some of the extension programs have. That relates back to where we have to have two members that are from an institution of higher education or an extension program. Those folks would know what the current research is. So, the committee is to look at the ongoing research and to see if we need different research or if we need to improve on what we have going. Also, the fact committee is to identify any new and existing barriers to successful agriculture. Also, they are supposed to provide additional assistance and advice to the director as they deem appropriate. Again, this is an advisory role. These two pictures when I was putting this together I thought what? What can explain and express what we want to happen here? You see the photo on the left. It's actually a field in Wisconsin. And you see a lot of green and very little concrete. On the right it is the skyline of Seattle. Just the opposite is true. You see a lot of concrete and very little green. What we have got to do with this Office of Urban Agriculture and the FACA committee is take what we have learned on the left-hand side and bring it to the right-hand side, to the urban setting. And that's where FACA committees come in. This photo on the left you'll see it's an old black-and-white photo, which actually that is from Wisconsin as well. You can see a fellow with a team of horses. He has three horsepower in this. What the mechanisms and the machinery and information we had, say six years ago, it's much different than what we have today. And what we have been

able to do over time is to gain a lot of expertise, knowledge, and information. Not only from partners that work with us, but from FACA committees. What the goal is is that the FACA committee for the urban ag committee will actually help us bring innovative new ideas to the city. On the right you see some folks here. It looks like they have tomatoes. It looks like that is a rooftop garden. This photo looks like a corner lot in the city somewhere. We don't know where every vacant lot in this country lies, but in your town and your community you know where opportunities exist. That is why the FACA committee is very important. How are you going to know when the FACA committee is ready? Well, a couple of things. Number one, we have to provide a fracture -- federal register notice. About everything a federal agency does has to be published in the Federal Register. What that federal register notice is going to do is going to be seeking membership for the urban ag committee. Whenever that is published it will give information of who to contact, where the information needs to be sent in, and the individual who is going to be the designated federal officer. There will be an employee of USDA who will basically oversee this committee to make sure that everything the GSA once done is followed, so that we are appropriately following everything that we need to do. In case you don't want to read the Federal Register every morning, which most people don't, USDA usually puts out a press release around the time or on the date of where we have a Federal Register notice going out. Looking on that website you should be able to find information. This is a combination of a lot of different produce and very colorful picture is. Everything in here can be done in an urban setting. On the far left the photo on the top and on the bottom, those are hydroponics. That can be done in an urban setting. Go to the next couple of slides and their RVs on top. We need bees for pollination. That can be done in an urban setting. There is apples down below. Going further to the right there is apples and melons. On the far right it looks like there is okra, maybe some tomatoes at the background, and some other vegetables in the middle. And on the very far right hand side on the corner another hydroponic. There is, basically, just about anything you could do in a rule setting you can do in an urban setting. Only in a different way. We are very hopeful. We are actually very glad that we have the opportunity to have a FACA committee. We hope that we will have a lot of interested folks to apply for this when the time comes. Terry, I will turn it back to you.

Okay, everyone. Now I'm going to open it up and read some questions from the chat box. Before I do that I'm putting in the chat box, so people can see, I know we have rattled off a couple of links and an email address. Please, everyone look in the chat box and I'm hoping it is showing up for everybody. Can everyone see it? Other speakers, can you see it?

I don't. If you want to put it in the presenters chat I will put it so folks can see it.

Okay. There it is. There it is. Okay. Let me get back to my word file. One of the questions that we had is how is urban to find or how do you will identify the service area of this office? I don't know if Luis or Joe, would you like to talk about what we are working on towards this?

Yes. So, this is Joe. I also lean towards my other colleagues on the call to have input. When we were first inquiring with stakeholders as well as internally about the definition of urban agriculture we were poised to make sure that we had enough input from across the department, as well as the public, to make such a decision on that topic. Even in our planning and implementation grants, as I mentioned, we tried to take broad strokes the first year and hoping that as we move forward and we learn more and we work with the public on what the needs are then, perhaps even the federal advisory committee would have input as well as maybe for some of the county committees that stored has been explaining to us could help us define urban agriculture moving forward. There are so many different things about it even coming to light with different issues of food access to the pandemic. I think taking smaller steps to look at the definition will help us come up with a really good profile as we move forward.

Okay. Another question is, are there plans for round two of funding for new projects? I can go ahead and answer that. That will all depend on what happens to the budget. We plan to, once we see what happens with the 20/21 budget. There have been a number of questions on the order towards NRCS, in a sense. I'm just going to read this a little bit. And then, Luis, if you want to take the lead in answering that. We can't really answer them all at the same time, but I want everyone to hear this. NRCS offers conservation practice to eligible producers and technical assistance, like high and low tunnels, etc. In addition to high tunnels will there be equipped programs that specifically target urban farmers? Sometimes they can take advantage of current programs, so it doesn't make sense to due to their size. Thanks. Joe?

So, in states in the nation the state conservationists, along typically with a state technical committee as a steward had discussed, has an opportunity to have input on how the state can disturb you those funds among the environmental qualities intensive program. That can be something asking local service center of their opportunities for them to be a pipeline of a funding. They can also be through the agricultural management assistance program in specific states. I would say there are opportunities to inquire within your states about that.

This is a question dealing with payment schedules. NRCS has conservation practices and skills to assist urban agriculture. However, our Farm Bill payment schedules do not reflect the smaller scale urban farms in some cases by the square foot. High tunnel way to by the square foot. Irrigation systems and supporting management practices must be calculated by the square foot as well. So, Joe, do you want to comment to some of the thoughts going on? This is just to remind everybody, this office and getting more involved in urban ag is new. It will be looking to see what we can do about finding out answers to this. Joe, do you want to make a comment?

I think specific to some of the practices and the standards that in NRCS that would be something to work with your local district conservationist on. As the office evolves I think looking into controlled environments there may be opportunities to pay for things where NRCS would not be able to. And then as we look across USDA I think looking at urban agriculture is an opportunity for us to provide a matrix of resources across the department. Like a mentioned, we have 17 offices and agencies within USDA that have different types of funding that can assist communities. So, we may not be able to be a funder of choice at NRCS for those things, but perhaps across-the-board it could be possible. And then there's opportunities for NRCS to seek innovations as well and how those practices are paid for, as you mentioned.

Let me go to another. I just want to remind everybody, I see a whole bunch of questions coming in, hopefully we will be able to get to them. If I don't answer your question now there will be and answer posted on the website. We have had a number of questions, quite a few questions about the county committee. How our county committee selected, what are the eligibility requirements for these? So, the five counties in the pilot councils are established and are the only counties in the U.S. that can benefit from this program from now? When do we get the guidance on COC elections for that county office? And how will the new county committees get voted and established a vote in the upcoming election? Stuart, do you want to talk a little bit on these and I can remind you what the questions are?

Sure. So, for eligibility it's going to follow the same lines as the traditional county committee, for the most part. Producers are eligible to be nominated if they participate or contribute to FSA and reside in and or their farm operation falls within the urban ag boundaries. Also, we can have producers who are part of a nonprofit as long as that dissipate or contribute. They will be eligible even if they are heading a nonprofit organization. That guidance for these new county committees, the elections are if they are not already at the state level in these five locations they will be this week. As a mentioned, the elections start on September 14th. NRCS and FSA are working together to help identify eligible voters. That information has already been provided to the state and there is outreach being conducted right now. Across those five locations. As far as eligibility, I think it is to remind everyone that though this is a pilot project where we will be using the county committees to help be a voice in a sounding board for local producers in the urban ag community it doesn't mean that the services that we can provide to urban agriculture producers or those interested in urban agriculture are those municipalities, nonprofit organizations, that individual backyard gardener, that USDA still doesn't have the ability to service them. Our programs are available to all of those who are eligible to participate. So, just because the county committees are in these locations does not mean that the same programs that we would be offering in these five locations would not be available to other urban locations. Whether you are in the five are not. So, at the programs are still open.

Okay. Let me see. Sorry, everyone, I'm bouncing back and forth from two different places. One of the questions about the county committee, in order to be on them to they have to be and FSA client?

I think I just covered it. You do have to participate or contribute to and FSA program. In some way. And reside or have a farming operation that lies within that boundary. To be on the board. It is following, for the most part, the traditional policy that is outlined for the more traditional county committees.

Okay. Thanks. One thing I want to say, when I was saying I was putting the links in the chat box I was using the wrong term. The links are being posted in the Q&A. Correct, Jennifer?

I believe they did get put into the Q&A. We posted that and I showed up there. I also put them in the today's link pod, which is to the right hand side of the screen.

Okay.

Just click on the link and then click on the browse to and it will take you right to it.

I'm going through so many questions that came in while we were answering questions. Is there a minimum area to be considered an urban farm?

This is a story. No. I don't think so. I think -- and Joe was talking about this -- as we move forward some of these definitions on what is urban and an urban farm will evolve. But, again, there is already eligibility for all of these USDA programs. You would still have to meet those eligibility requirements, but for our purposes as we have mentioned here, the definition: this idea of urban is growing and evolving as we move along.

There is a question about what is the urban ag LA boundary?

So, the LAA boundary, you can have the county committee that is in one county, but then you will have LA boundaries that extend into other counties that are included into that one county committee. So, for these five locations they have three LAA boundaries to be included in where the county committee is located. I will just give you an example. Here in North Carolina where I'm located in Durham County there is a county committee. But the adjacent counties do not have a county committee. They are included into the Durham County county committee. Those boundaries outside of that one county are and LAA. They are included into that one county committee. For each of these locations, because we are trying to, and I think this might touch one of the other questions in the chat box, because we are trying to make sure that we encompass an urban cluster, which is not just the county seat of a city location or just the county itself or a large city where it resides, it's looking at the landscape of what is a metropolitan region. Because we are trying to look at data make sure we are including all who can participate in a county committee and vote in a canonic county committee they can have a voice on that county committee. We are looking at those LAA boundaries to be more inclusive. And that is why, for each one of these locations there are three LAA is for each one.

Story? Stuart, one of the things that is coming through is what does LAA stand for?

Oh. I've got you. The LAA, I'm sorry, you know, we are all federal people, so we love to throw these acronyms around. The LAA is the local administrative area. There are some on the FSA website that you can actually type in on the search bar on the FSA webpage, local demonstrated area or LAA and you can get several fact sheets on what and LAA is and what a traditional county committee is.

Thank you.

We just have a few minutes left. I believe there is some questions that were about the federal advisory committee, but they were pretty much before she got to those, to the slides. We will make sure that the answers to those questions will be individually asked questions. I want to remind everyone, oh, there is also questions about eligibility for our funding programs. Those answers, we have an extensive quickly asked questions document for both the composting, community composting and food waste reduction cooperative agreements and the urban ag grants on [Farmers.gov/urban](http://Farmers.gov/urban). I recommend you go look at those and review. There is number of questions and answers there about eligibility. I want to thank everybody for participating today. I can, please go to [Farmers.gov/urban](http://Farmers.gov/urban) for further information on activities as has been mentioned so far in the different presentations, we will be updating that regularly as the office continues to move forward with its operations. Again, if you have questions or comments please send them to our email address, urban agriculture at [USDA.gov](mailto:USDA.gov). Thank you, everybody for participating today. Jennifer, I'm sending it back to you.

Okay. Thanks, Terry. As a reminder to everyone, if you look in the today's hand outside you can find a PDA coffee of today's presentation in the today's link pod. You will find the farmer stuck up in urban agriculture websites and the links to those websites. I can, we will post the recording of this webinar. I believe it will be to cometary correct me if it's wrong it will be to the urban agriculture site.

Yes. [Farmers.gov/urban](http://Farmers.gov/urban).

Okay. That recording will be posted probably early next week. Also along with the recording will be the transcript with that I will go ahead and close out webinar. On behalf of the USDA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service I wanted to say thank you to Terry, Luis, Joe, Faith, and Stuart for taking time out of their busy schedule to present presentations about the introduction to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Thank you again to everyone for attending today's webinar. Have a great afternoon. Goodbye.

[ Event concluded ]