

# OCFSN Farming for the Future Working Group Overview

*May 29, 2024*

## Background

Started around 2016, the [Oregon Community Food Systems Network](#) (OCFSN) is a collaboration of over 60 nonprofit organizations dedicated to strengthening local and regional food systems to deliver better economic, social, health and environmental outcomes across the state.

As a food systems network, OCFSN facilitates discussion and collaboration through working groups focused on food access, food distribution, policy, equity, and community scale food production. OCFSN members and allies include nonprofit organizations, state agencies, special districts, higher education institutions and individuals.

The Farming for the Future (F4tF) working group comes from combining two working groups that started in the early 2020s, the Beginning Farmer & Rancher (BFR) and Land Access working groups. In 2021, these working groups came together to expand capacity and formed the F4tF working group. In 2022, OCFSN hired a working group coordinator to support the expansion of this work and included Farm Viability and Climate Resilience and Stewardship subgroups to the BFR and Land Access subgroups. The full F4tF working group convenes in person once a year and the four subgroups each have regular meeting schedules.

### **Farming for the Future Subgroups**

- [Beginning Farmer & Rancher](#)
- [Land Access, Connection & Succession Technical Assistance](#)
- [Farm & Land Viability](#)
- [Climate Resilience & Stewardship](#)

### **Farming for the Future Working Group Purpose**

The purpose of this Working Group is to improve the collective effectiveness and impact of OCFSN member organizations working on a range of challenges for Oregon's farmers and ranchers. This is done through ramped up coordination and collaborative project support, building on 6 years of relationship building, coordinated action, and focused projects.

### **Objectives**

- Subgroups meet regularly to communicate on current work and develop collaborative projects.

- Working group members expand the reach and impact of programs and projects by collaborating with each other.
- Collaborative projects are focused on improving outcomes for Oregon's producers, workers, communities and regional food systems and economies.

### **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

*OCFSN equity statement:* Oregon Community Food System Network acknowledges that our food system is built and maintained on a foundation of oppression and systemic racism of Native peoples, people of color, and immigrants. Through a coordinated statewide network, we address this historic and systemic inequality in land ownership, food access, and labor by prioritizing the allocation of resources, decision making and power to historically excluded communities. We aim to hold ourselves accountable by building relationships, seeking inclusive participation, and practicing transparency.

The Farming for the Future working group is committed to delivering on OCFN's equity priorities through the inclusion of BIPOC organizations in the development of the working group, prioritizing and amplifying the work of BIPOC leaders work for just land and capital access, expand anti racist education through the O-FREAP for Oregon producers and continuing to evaluate and improve the equity lense of the working group by requesting feedback and engaging in OCFSN's equity scan process.

### **Working Group Interaction with Greater OCFSN**

The F4tF has regular feedback and communications with other OCFSN working groups and the broader network through:

- F4tF coordinator attending tracking and finding connections at other working group meetings (policy, veggieRX, food hubs)
- F4tF coordinator tracking working group work through an annual work plan and reporting back to the OCFSN Leadership Team
- Coordinating closely and sharing back and forth with the OCFSN Policy Committee. Many solutions around F4tF priority areas are through policy change, and policy change impacts F4tF member's work
- Sending F4tF working group updates in the monthly full OCFSN newsletter
- Working group participants report back and lead program sections at the OCFSN Annual Convening
- Participate in OCFSN regional gatherings that build connections and bridge work between OCFSN working groups
- Maintain and update with most recent information F4tF webpage

## **Who makes up the Farming for the Future Working Group?**

The Farming for the Future Working group includes a list of over 200 individuals. These folks come from food systems nonprofit organizations, federal and state agencies, local governments, OSU extension, farm owners, interested individuals, and other educational institutions. Working group members represent diverse interests from across Oregon.

## **Farming for the Future Subgroups:**

### **How the working group and subgroups communicate**

- The F4tF has a shared listserv for the full working group and separate email lists for each subgroup
- The working group coordinator sends regular every other week email updates
- All meeting notes and meeting recordings are shared with the full working group and stored on the OCFSN shared Google Drive folder
- Regional gatherings in conjunction with the full network increase connections and info sharing
- The F4tF holds an annual in-person gathering with the full working group

## **Beginning Farmer & Rancher Subgroup**

### **Purpose:**

Members of the Beginning Farmer & Rancher subgroup collaborate to coordinate existing services for Oregon's beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs) at all stages of development, between years 0 and 10 years of agricultural production. The primary focus of this working group is to support BFRs through education and training programs, access to capital, and access to other available resources and services.

### **Objectives:**

- To expand the availability and impact of BFR programming in Oregon
- To provide forum for collaborations with all organizations working on BFR programming in Oregon
- To develop and deliver collaborative projects expanding on current BFR programming

### **Current Projects/activities:**

- Beginning Farming & Rancher Brochure & Story Map
- Equity Literacy Curriculum
- Networking and info sharing at meetings

### **Potential projects/collaborations:**

- Curriculum review for different levels of training along the BFR continuum
- Online/recorded classes offered at central location

- Generate policy ideas/ needs/ advocacy
- Collaborative grant writing/funding
- Coordinating regional farm tours and farmer to farmer skill shares
- Sharing successful business plan/implementation and collective models
- Systems sharing (communication, for example)
- Program outreach

#### **Meeting schedule:**

Quarterly at 10am on the 3rd Thursday of the the month - February, May, August, November  
Project breakoff groups meet more regularly to work on specific project needs.

## **Land Access, Connection & Succession Technical Assistance Subgroup**

#### **Background:**

This collaborative group concluded a Land Connection Technical Assistance pilot project in late 2020 after members spent a year providing assistance on all aspects of farmland transition, including help searching for the right piece land and the right new farmer, securing financing, developing business plans and agreements, writing leases, and other legal aspects around leasing and purchasing land. They are moving forward with new program development, funding, and setting up regional hubs for land connection assistance.

#### **Current Projects:**

- Supporting and sharing updates on BFRDP - Transitioning Oregon Farmland
- Tracking USDA Access to Land, Capital and Markets grants and projects

#### **Potential projects/collaborations:**

- Providing educational space for expanded land access discussions. Who currently owns Oregon farmland? Is there consolidation of land to fewer and fewer owners?
- Sharing updates and information on current projects
- Intersection w/policy work. What are the big changes needed to address land access issues?
- Identify land access, land connection, succession needs + barriers
- Develop tools and strategies to support planned transfers to beginning farmers

#### **Meeting Schedule:**

Monthly project team meetings, quarterly advisory committee meetings and planned quarterly information meetings on land access.

## **Farm Viability Subgroup**

#### **Purpose:**

To share observations and collaborate on supporting Oregon farmers and ranchers to ensure the long-term viability of their businesses and agricultural land.

**Potential projects/collaborations:**

- Creating shared curriculums and resources that are provided to growers by specific organizations and agencies.
- Tracking resources each org already offers (similar to story map),
- Continuum of accessing land, succession planning, land protection etc...
- Create awareness about existing farm viability programming, identify gaps in programming, build a community of business technical assistance providers that can share best practices, find opportunities for collaboration, and support efforts for increased funding for this work.
- Conduct research into land ownership and tenure trends,
- Explore innovative land ownership and lease models to address the rising cost of farmland and challenges with access to capital (cooperatives).

**Meeting Schedule:**

Not currently meeting regularly

**Climate Resilience & Stewardship Subgroup****Purpose:**

Integrate climate resilience into OCFSN member's food system projects and policy advocacy. Build collective power within the Farming for the Future Working Group and broader OCFSN to create synergies between ecological, community, and economic resilience in Oregon. Responsibly honor both the historical roots of resilient land management practices of Indigenous and Black communities as well as their continued leadership in climate advocacy and as ongoing stewards of the land.

**Objectives:**

- Provide a collaborative space to share issues, updates and opportunities to advance climate resilience and stewardship on Oregon's farms and ranches, and share these discussions across the Farming for the Future Working Group and broader OCFSN.
- Align subgroup members to identify and work on collaborative projects that assist farmers impacted by climate change and increase available resources to expand agriculture-based climate solutions.
- Advocate for and expand state and federal policy to advance climate resilience and stewardship on Oregon's farms and ranches and provide disaster relief, and align working group members to build collective power to address these issues.

**Current Projects**

- Farmer & Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program - \$2.65 million for 2024-2025 in Oregon State funds granted to farmers across the state for disaster resilience projects
- Tricky Topics workshops

**Potential projects/collaborations:** the subgroup has done some [project prioritization](#).

- Update and maintain OSU Small Farms Program's disaster relief webpage
- Research and share opportunities for collaborative projects that provide resources for producers to adapt to a new farming landscape under a changing climate.
- Advocate for food systems to be included in natural disaster planning.
- Recruit presenters or present yourself on climate resilient agricultural practices, opportunities for increased farm income (i.e. carbon markets), and other topics at the intersection of climate and agriculture.
- Coordinate on policy and project solutions to challenges of drought and water scarcity in a changing climate.
- Research and share upcoming funding opportunities for work at the intersection of agriculture and climate change.
- Support regional Farmer to Farmer hubs/cohorts to build resilience to climate impacts.
- Host and/or attend convenings to discuss and learn about regional climate change and agriculture issues and opportunities.
- Work on relationship mapping exercise to understand how different orgs work and collaborate on climate and agriculture issues.
- Advocate for renewed funding for natural disaster relief for small scale and marginalized farmers.
- Review completed regional assessments of climate impacts on agriculture and share opportunities for resilience.
- Reporting to subgroup on your producer listening sessions.
- Coordinate on creation of on-the-ground demonstration and training centers in various regions in Oregon that focus on agricultural practices that promote climate resilience.
- Advocate for passage of a bill that will implement the recommendations of the OR Global Warming Commission's Natural and Working Lands Proposal.

### **Meeting Schedule:**

Ongoing Farmer & Rancher Disaster Resilience Grant Program meetings

Quarterly educational Tricky Topics Meetings