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## USDA Advances Food System Transformation with \$43 Million for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Adds New Urban County Committees

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*Funding is First Part of \$75 Million Investment to Support a Fairer Food System and Expand Access to Nutritious Food*

Tolland, Connecticut, June 6, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces significant investments to support urban agriculture, including \$43.1 million for grants and cooperative agreements as well as six new urban county committees to help deliver key USDA programs to urban producers. These actions support USDA’s efforts to strengthen the food supply chain and transform the food system to be fairer, more competitive, and more resilient.

Specifically, USDA is investing \$10.2 million in new cooperative agreements to expand compost and food waste reduction efforts and \$14.2 million in new grants to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects. Additionally, \$18.7 million will fund 75 worthy grant proposals from the 2021 application cycle, which was oversubscribed.

“Investing in urban agriculture innovations helps us build a fairer, more transparent food system and promote equity by increasing nutrition security and economic opportunity in underserved communities,” said Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Terry Cosby. “These projects will help for urban farmers create new, more affordable, and better local market options and help urban communities produce fresh and healthy food locally, reducing food waste while building nutrient rich compost.”

“Supporting agriculture in our urban communities helps grow our economy and provides food to people,” said U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow. “I’m proud that Michigan has been a pioneer in this effort. Urban farmers provide fresh and healthy food to children and families while creating jobs and revitalizing our neighborhoods.”

These investments build on USDA's [Food Systems Transformation Framework](#) unveiled earlier this week. The goals of USDA's Food System Transformation Framework include:

- Building a more resilient food supply chain that provides more and better market options for consumers and producers while reducing carbon pollution.
- Creating a fairer food system that combats market dominance and helps producers and consumers gain more power in the marketplace by creating new, more and better local market options.
- Making nutritious food more accessible and affordable for consumers.
- Emphasizing equity by creating wealth that stays in small towns and underserved communities.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is also standing up six more urban county committees, which help deliver farm loans, disaster assistance, safety net and conservation programs.

"Urban county committees promote equity by giving urban producers a voice in creating and implementing policy and developing and designing programs specific to urban producers," FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux said. "These new urban county committees will work to encourage and promote urban agriculture and address areas such as food and program access, community engagement and food security."

### **Composting and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreements**

This is the third year of USDA's Composting and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreements, and so far, USDA has invested \$3 million in community composting in urban areas across the country. The \$10.2 million to be awarded in 2022 will fund pilot projects that develop and implement strategies for municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans.

Local governments may submit projects that do one or more of the following:

generate compost;

provide access to compost to farmers;

reduce fertilizer use;

improve soil quality;

encourage waste management and permaculture business development;

increase rainwater absorption; reduce municipal food waste; and/or

divert food waste from landfills.

For example, Philadelphia is launching the first of a coordinated system of small-scale urban food waste composting sites on city properties. Meanwhile, Winterville, Georgia is building six composting stalls to collect and process food excess and refuse from producers and local community members. The compost is then provided to local producers and others.

Priority will be given to projects that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits, incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to farmers, including community gardeners, integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts and collaborate with multiple partners. Projects should span two years.

### **Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) Grants**

This is also the third year of OUAIP grants, which have already provided more than \$7.5 million focused on food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, and development of policies related to zoning and other needs. The \$14.2 million to be awarded in 2022 will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through:

**Planning Projects** that initiate or expand efforts of urban and suburban farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools and other stakeholders to target areas of food access, education, business and start-up costs for new farmers, urban forestry, and policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production.

**Implementation Projects** that accelerate urban, indoor and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers and improve local food access. They may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, education and urban farming policy implementation.

For example, Growing Gardens in Oregon received planning project funding to identify opportunities to meet community needs for healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food through building greenhouses. Meanwhile, Grow Ohio Valley in West Virginia received implementation funding to set up a training and demonstration farm to support new and aspiring urban farmers.

### **How to Apply for Grants and Cooperative Agreements**

Submit applications via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) for [Composting and Food Waste Competitive Agreements](#) and [UAIP grants](#). Pre-recorded webinars on the purpose, project types, eligibility and basic requirements for submitting applications will be posted at [usda.gov/urban](https://www.usda.gov/urban). Email [UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov) with any questions.

### **2021 OUAIP Grant Projects**

Additionally, \$18.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were awarded to 75 Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production grant applicants from 2021. This grant program has been oversubscribed the last several years, ARPA funds made it possible to fund these worthy projects. A full listing of project is posted on [usda.gov/urban](https://usda.gov/urban).

### **Urban County Committees for Urban Agriculture**

The new urban county committee (UCOC) locations are Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, and Oakland, and they join 11 previously announced urban county committees. The six locations for county committees were selected based on a consideration of data that included opportunity for economic growth, diversity, proximity to tribal nations, as well as the number of farm-to-table projects, urban farms, community and residential gardens, and green infrastructure projects within metropolitan and suburban areas.

Like rural county committee members, urban committee members make important decisions about how FSA programs are administered locally. Each urban and suburban county committee will be composed of three elected members who will serve a term of up to three years. Urban farmers who participate in USDA programs in the areas selected are encouraged to participate by nominating and voting for themselves or others.

### **USDA and Urban Agriculture**

Grants and cooperative agreements to support urban production are part of a broad USDA investment in urban agriculture. Other efforts include \$260,000 for risk management education from USDA's [Risk Management Agency](#) (RMA) and technical and financial assistance through conservation programs offered by USDA's [NRCS](#).

OUAIP was established through the 2018 Farm Bill. It is led by NRCS and works in partnership with FSA and 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. Learn more by visiting [farmers.gov/urban](https://farmers.gov/urban) or downloading the new [Urban Agriculture at a Glance brochure](#). 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](#).

These significant investments by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) build on the Biden-Harris administration's Food System Transformation framework for USDA to transform the food system to benefit consumers, producers and communities by providing more options, increasing access, and creating new, more, and better markets for small and mid-size

producers.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In 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](https://usda.gov).

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