U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee

Public Meeting Notes

September 28, 2023

Location: Virtual

Respectfully submitted by Venus Welch-White, EPA Designated Federal Officer

Certified as accurate by Beth C. Sauerhaft, Chair, Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee

NOTE AND DISCLAIMER: The meeting notes that follow reflect a summary of remarks and conversations during the meeting. Such ideas, suggestions, and deliberations do not necessarily reflect consensus advice from the Committee. Formal advice and recommendations may be found in the final advisory reports or letters prepared and transmitted to the agency following the public meetings. Moreover, the Committee advises that additional information sources be consulted in cases where any concern may exist about statistics or any other information contained within the meeting notes.

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About the Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee

The Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC, or Committee) is a policy-oriented committee that provides policy advice, information, and recommendations to the EPA Administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agriculture and rural communities. The FRRCC addresses specific topics of relevance to agriculture as identified by the Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator and reports its policy advice and recommendations to the EPA Administrator through the Agriculture Advisor.

The meeting was announced in the Federal Register (see appendix 1).

Please see appendix 2 for the agenda, and appendix 3 for FRRCC member names and affiliations.

Meeting opening and Welcome Remarks

Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC Raymon Shange, Vice Chair, FRRCC Rod Snyder, Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator, EPA Venus Welch-White, FRRCC DFO, EPA

Beth Sauerhaft welcomed participants and shared the day's agenda.

Venus Welch-White welcomed attendees and thanked Committee members for their service. She shared that only Committee members and guests will be able to participate in discussions, and she explained how listeners could submit public comments until July 28, 2023.

Raymon Shange said the groups have made significant progress, and he thanked members for their work.

Rod Snyder offered greetings from EPA Administrator Regan and said the Administrator is very interested in hearing the Committee's recommendations. He said the Biden Administration is ramping up implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act, and the FRRCC's recommendations are dovetailing with the Administration's activities.

Venus Welch-White reminded participants that this is a public meeting in which only FRRCC members will be allowed to speak outside the public comment portion. She said that there were no registered public commenters. She explained how members of the public could submit written comment by sending them in an email to FRRCC@EPA.gov by 11:59 p.m. on October 2, 2023. She said a meeting summary will be available within 90 days of the meeting.

Roll Call

Beth Sauerhaft conducted the roll call.

Barry Berg, present Brad Bray, present Emily M. Broad Leib, present Don Brown, present Phillip H. Chavez, present John R. H. Collison, present William (Bill) Couser, present, Eddie Crandell, Sr., present Michael Crowder, present Matthew Freund, present Sharon Furches, not present Jeffrey Gore, present David Graybill, present Jennifer James, not present Sarah Lucas, present Lauren C. Lurkins, not present Nicholas McCarthy, present William Thomas (Tom) McDonald, present Jeanne Merrill, present Christopher Pettit, present Clay Pope, present William R. Pracht, present James Pritchett, present Nithya Rajan, present Graciela I. Ramírez-Toro, present Lindsay Reames, not present Charles R. Santerre, present Beth C. Sauerhaft, (Chair) present Raymon Shange, (Vice Chair) present Jennifer Simmelink, present Chantel Simpson, present Ryan Smith, present Stacy Wayne Smith, not present Jeff M. Witte, present Amy Wolfe, present

Venus Welch-White confirmed a quorum.

Ad Hoc Workgroup Updates

Beth Sauerhaft asked workgroups for brief updates on what they have been working on since the July meeting and what they plan to work on in the next few months.

Climate Mitigation, Resilience, and Adaptation (workgroup 2)

James Pritchett said this workgroup focuses on how EPA's tools and programs can best advance the U.S. agriculture sector's climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation goals. He said the workgroup now combines two workgroups. The first is the original workgroup, which focused on regional ag advisers, EPA strategic communications, co-benefits, and collaboration with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC). He said this workgroup had submitted draft recommendations to workgroup 3 to get their input on inclusiveness. James Pritchett said a second workgroup merged with the original workgroup, which formally focused on Biotech and Ag inputs, including the use of drones in pesticide application/labeling; modern biotechnology and its applications; and technology adoption by producers.

Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance (workgroup 3)

Chantel Simpson said the group has focused on writing some equity language that would flow throughout the recommendations, and it has drafted a preamble to the final recommendations. She said they are drafting recommendations on the grant application process, developing best practices for data collection and implementation procedures, understanding why underserved groups did not apply for funding, and how state agencies can assist with human infrastructure.

Climate, Energy, Water Nexus (workgroup 1)

Michael Crowder said the workgroup has been working a lot on the issue of anerobic digesters, discussing the AgStar program, IRA funding, the high cost of installation, and challenges with permitting, running, and infrastructure, which make these not feasible for small farms. He said that following a wellattended discussion with Natural Resources Conservation Service chief Terry Cosby the workgroup was able to draft some recommendations that, while not unanimously endorsed are accepted by consensus. He said that, going forward, the workgroup will consider IRA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants; Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund; Other methods of disposing of wet/dry manure on dairies and farms; Solar siting selection process; Carbon capture/transfer/alteration; EPA 319 funding; WOTUS; CWA -Water availability/quality; and Energy Star certification.

Overview of Workgroup Reports and Recommendations

Climate Mitigation, Resilience, and Adaptation

James Pritchett said the workgroup thought about where EPA could make a difference with its investments. He said recommendations fell under four themes:

- 1. EPA's Regional Ag Advisers: catalysts, coordinators, and expert advice.
- 2. Strategic communication planning importance and urgency.

- 3. Prioritizing co-benefits in climate initiatives to scale impacts.
- Coordinating and Collaborating with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC).

James Pritchett shared the workgroup's six recommendations under these areas:

- 1. EPA should assess the current scope of activities and mission of Regional Agricultural Advisers as it relates to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Where appropriate, duties, responsibilities and resources may be adjusted to position the advisers to better support agency goals.
- 2. The EPA develops a strategic plan that allows for two-way communication elevating awareness and improving design of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency initiatives in agriculture. The outreach plan needs to include multiple agencies, be championed nationally, and have regional relevance.
- 3. The EPA organizes quarterly webinars specific to agricultural climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation to generate awareness of guidance, new initiatives, process improvements and coordination among groups. These sessions are meant to be region specific and best organized through the Deputy Regional Administrator's office with the expertise of Regional Agricultural Advisers. Impacts are elevated when other agencies (e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Service) are represented. Two-way communication is an essential element of these webinars.
- 4. The EPA organizes webinars by the 4th quarter of 2023 and again in 1st quarter of 2024 to inform and describe opportunities for agriculture to be integrated into the Climate Pollution Reduction Plans.
- 5. EPA accelerate co-benefits for agriculture and rural communities by:
 - a. reviewing policies, guidance, and funding processes to see the extent to which co-benefits in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience investments are considered,
 - b. developing a list of important co-benefits for climate resiliency for agriculture through a review of literature and expert advice,
 - c. disseminating information describing co-benefits, providing examples of co-benefits generated by climate resilient practices, and offering tools that assess co-benefits of projects and programs,
 - d. incentivizing projects that generate multiple co-benefits that are clearly articulated in proposals and outcomes measured in project reporting,
 - e. creating regional and agency wide co-benefit metric(s) that benchmark the share of EPA funding that supports multiple benefit outcomes, and
 - f. communicating the increasing share of EPA funding directed to co-benefits with examples shared across agencies and to the public.
- 6. EPA's LGAC and FRRCC collaborate on a joint guidance document for improving local government participation and local-state-federal coordination of climate resiliency and adaptation initiatives.

Chris Pettit said the discussion of multifaceted benefits is extremely important. He asked if the workgroup considered tightening the recommendation to highlight the need for continued data aggregation research and monitoring. James Pritchett agreed on the importance of being able to identify and measure co-benefits and said there may be an opportunity for the workgroup to do that.

Climate, Energy, Water Nexus

Michael Crowder presented the workgroups recommendations on anaerobic digesters.

- 1. Increase investment in the AgStar program.
 - Continue to enhance and implement the AgStar outreach/communications plan
- 2. Increase AgStar staffing.
 - Provide technical assistance and conduct feasibility studies for individual farmers considering methane digesters and/or other waste management practices.
 - Make regional staff available to provide farmers information and resources relevant to their state/region.
 - Coordinate directly with existing NRCS and state programs and staff regarding the implementation of climate resiliency programs and projects, including digester development and the implementation of alternative manure management programs and practices.
- 3. Utilize and promote AgStar as an incubator and resource for technological innovation, pilot project implementation, and research.
 - Explore alternative uses for generated biogas as well as the digestate.
 - Implement a farmer grant program to incentivize innovations.
 - Build and share portfolio of innovations and accepted/proposed projects with farmers, government and private businesses.
 - Incorporate continued monitoring and data collection for atmospheric methane around dairy digester facilities before and after digester construction to assess their efficacy in meeting mitigation objectives while helping operators avoid unintentional biogas product loss.
- 4. EPA should review and update existing guidance related to digesters to include emerging scientific research and studies regarding environmental risks tied to project implementation.

Jeanne Merrill noted that the workgroup was not in unanimous agreement about some of the issues surrounding digesters, including what the environmental impacts might be. She said a growing body of research suggests digesters may have substantial methane leaks and may also contribute to Nitrous oxide emissions. Another big concern is whether digesters are contributing to the expansion of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), which significantly impact air and water. She added that, when the time comes, she has some amended language to propose.

Emily Broad Leib suggested the recommendations could include more on, for example, alternatives to manure management, food waste, and the need for significant funding to support digesters. She suggested including a point on creating facilities that are able to use a broader set of feed stocks.

Bill Couser agreed the cost was a concern, especially given the challenges; he voiced appreciation for the committee's concerns.

Chantel Simpson asked for scientific citations.

Sarah Lucas asked how the recommendations can do justice to the breadth of EPA programing that will impact water and energy issues.

Michael replied, to Jeanne Merrill's point, that the group discussed these issues at length. Regarding Sarah Lucas's comment, he said the workgroup agreed and some of the issues they will delve into were shared in the overview.

Matthew Freund added that the workgroup is not trying to avoid the issues raised but rather looked at NRCS and DOA and tried not to reinvent the wheel.

Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance

Chantel Simpson said that the recommendation was to include a preamble, which had been shared with the group in advance.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adoption of Recommendations (Voting)

Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC Raymon Shange, Vice Chair, FRRCC

Climate Mitigation, Resilience, and Adaptation

Beth Sauerhaft explained that this part of the discussion would be used to provide substantive input, not copy edits, to the proposed recommendations. She reminded members that Climate Mitigation, Resilience, and Adaptation recommendations were already approved at the Colorado meeting.

James Pritchett moved to accept the report from the Climate Mitigation, Resilience, and Adaptation workgroup as written. David Graybill seconded the motion. Beth Sauerhaft opened the floor for discussion.

Tom McDonald said he noticed areas in the report that could use more work, particularly the consistent use of terms. Beth Sauerhaft said to send those comments directly to James Pritchett.

There were no other comments, so Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote. The motion was accepted with no one voting against it.

Chantel Simpson iterated her desire for citations, including to research that may counter what the workgroup recommends. Beth Sauerhaft said that at this juncture, Chantel Simpson would have to make a motion. Chantel Simpson moved that the recommendations include reference materials or data to support the recommendations. Eddie Crandell seconded the motion.

Matthew Freund asked what data needed to be quantified and backed up. Chantel Simpson said specific numbers, plus information on how digesters work for people who may not understand. Matthew Freund replied that digesters are individualized, and the numbers included aren't essential to the recommendations, which are about AgStar design a useable program for interested people. Michael Crowder said the numbers came directly from the EPA website, and they can cite that, but it doesn't change the recommendations. Jeanne Merrill said that she supports the motion and will have suggestions for other places in the report that should carry citations. David Graybill said the numbers

were included as examples, not evidence. Jennifer Simmelink said she recalled that the last time the group met they had decided not to cite specific numbers. Michael Crowder confirmed; he said he had no problem removing the numbers.

Matthew Freund moved to strike that information so it's not a part of the recommendations; Jennifer Simmelink seconded. Chantel Simpson said there are other places these recommendations need references.

Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote on striking the language on p.6. The committee voted to strike the language.

Beth Sauerhaft turned discussion back to the motion to add citations. Michael Crowder and Tom McDonald both agreed that they do not object to adding citations, and they also do not want the authors to get bogged down in citations. Chris Pettit suggested a middle ground.

Beth Sauerhaft conducted a roll call vote on the motion to include citations. There were 20 opposed and 7 in favor. Beth Sauerhaft confirmed the motion did not pass.

Beth Sauerhaft turned discussion to comments on the document starting at with the introduction. Edits were made in the document in real time.

Members voted to accept the following changes:

- Paragraph 1 a motion was made to remove the sentence, "This technology not only benefits air quality by reducing methane emissions, but it also reduces odors, often resulting in improved farm-community relation." However, the motion failed.
- Suggested edits were made to paragraph 1 that did pass
- In addition to removing bullets that was agreed upon earlier, text was suggested for the paragraph that begins "in the US, anaerobic digestion..."

Emily Broad Leib suggested three additional recommendations (1) Provide resources on broader suggestions for methane reduction, including not only digesters but also alternative manure management and other technologies that may work more effectively for certain producers; (2) Research opportunities to incentivize digesters to be built such that they can also accept food waste, so they are more of a useful community facility (and can raise additional funds for farmers from increased feedstock); and (3) "Provide resources on broader suggestions for methane reduction, including not only digesters but also alternative manure management and other technologies that may work more effectively for certain producers."

Michael Crowder said the third suggested recommendation may be premature, since the workgroup plans to explore alternative manure management going forward.

Emily Broad Leib made a motion to add her recommendation 1 (above) to recommendation B3. Phillip Chavez seconded the motion. Graciela Ramírez-Toro moved to amend the motion to be creating a separate bullet (B4) for the recommendation. Jeanne Merrill seconded. Emily Broad Leib moved add a recommendations B4 to include the three bullets as written. Eddie seconds. Emily Broad Leib and Graciela Ramírez-Toro withdrew their previous motions.

Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote on adding the following recommendation and title:

Recommendation B4: Ensuring solutions are available to serve a larger breadth of issues/challenges

- Provide resources on broader suggestions for methane reduction, including not only digesters but also alternative manure management and other technologies that nay work more effectively for certain producers.
- Research opportunities to incentivize digesters to be built such that they can also accept food waste, so they are more of a useful community facility (and can raise additional funds for farmers from increased feedstock)
- Provide focused resources on opportunities to support technology for community digesters that can support a group of smaller farms.

The motion passed.

Jeanne Merrill moved to strike the first bullet under Recommendation B3 and replace it with the following: "Conduct a lifecycle analysis of digester biogas and related co-products including digestate. As part of the analysis, include air and water quality issues in addition to GHG emissions profile of digester gas and its products." Emily Broad Leib seconded. Michael Crowder moved to keep the bullet; Tom McDonald seconded. Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote on keeping the first bullet and adding the new language proposed by Jeanne Merrill. The motion passed.

Based on discussions about the unintended consequences of the new language, Jeanne Merrill amended the language to read: "At the programmatic level, and not the individual project level, conduct a lifecycle analysis of digester biogas, and related co-products including digestate. As part of the analysis, include air and water quality issues in addition to GHG emissions profile of digester gas and its products." Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote, and the proposed language passed.

As no other motions received a second, Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote on accepting the recommendations as amended. The motion passed 22–3.

Beth Sauerhaft turned discussion to the report prepared by the Climate, Social Inclusion, and Technical Assistance workgroup. Phillip Chavez moved to accept the report; Chantel Simpson seconded.

Chris Pettis moved to amend the first clause of the second paragraph to read, "The FRRCC recognizes that EPA is committed to..." Tom McDonald seconded. Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote, and the motion passed.

After going through the document paragraph by paragraph, Beth Sauerhaft called for a vote on accepting the report and its recommendations. The motion passed unanimously.

The final approved documents are in appendix 4.

FRRCC Updates and Next Steps

Venus Welch-White, DFO, FRRCC Rod Snyder, Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator, EPA

Venus Welch-White thanked committee members for their work. She said there will be an FRRCC meeting in January or February. In the meantime, workgroups will continue to work on their topics.

Venus Welch-White said EPA intends to establish a subcommittee on Animal Agriculture and Water Quality, with membership solicitations expected to go out in about a month. She said it will be posted on the Federal Register, and the nomination phase will last about 45 days.

Venus Welch-White said that, if there is a lapse in appropriations, EPA will not be operational; hence, the FACAs will not be operational. Should that be the case, she said, they will pick up where they left off.

Rod Snyder said they are monitoring the situation closely.

Beth Sauerhaft thanked the workgroup for their hard work.

Venus Welch-White said public comments can be submitted to EPA until February 14, 2024.

Wrap up and Adjourn Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

Beth Sauerhaft adjourned the meeting.

Appendix 1. Federal Register Announcement



64910

Federal Register/Vol. 88, No. 181/Wednesday, September 20, 2023/Notices

Corporation, 7470 Auburn Road, Suite A, Concord, Ohio 44077. Active ingredient: Flazasulfuron. Product type: Herbicide. *Proposed use:* Avocado. Contact: RD.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 136 et seq.

Dated: September 14, 2023.

Delores Barber,

Director, Information Technology and Resources Management Division, Office of Program Support.

[FR Doc. 2023–20380 Filed 9–19–23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL 11397-01-OA]

Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Advisory Committee (FRRCC); Notice of Public Meeting

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), notice is hereby given that the next meeting of the Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Advisory Committee (FRRCC) will be held virtually on September 28, 2023. Due to unforeseen administrative circumstances, EPA is announcing this meeting with less than 15 calendar days public notice. The FRRCC provides independent policy advice, information, and recommendations to the Administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agriculture and rural communities.

DATES: This meeting will be held virtually Thursday, September 28, 2023, from approximately 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET. This meeting will take place virtually. To register and receive information on how to listen to the meeting and to provide comments, please visit: www.epa.gov/faca/frrcc. Attendees must register online to receive instructions for virtual

ADDRESSES: Virtual attendance will be via Zoom. The link to register for the meeting can be found on the FRRCC web page, www.epa.gov/faca/frrcc.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Venus Welch-White, Designated Federal Officer (DFO), at FRRCC@epa.gov or 202-566-2369. General information regarding the FRRCC can be found on the EPA website at: www.epa.gov/faca/

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Meetings of the FRRCC are open to the public. An agenda will be posted at www.epa.gov/faca/frrcc.

Access and Accommodations: For information on access or services for individuals with disabilities, please visit: www.epa.gov/faca/frrcc.

Rodney Snyder.

Senior Advisor for Agriculture, U.S. EPA. [FR Doc. 2023–20336 Filed 9–19–23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

Change in Bank Control Notices; Acquisitions of Shares of a Bank or **Bank Holding Company**

The notificants listed below have applied under the Change in Bank Control Act (Act) (12 U.S.C. 1817(j)) and § 225.41 of the Board's Regulation Y (12 CFR 225.41) to acquire shares of a bank or bank holding company. The factors that are considered in acting on the applications are set forth in paragraph 7 of the Act (12 U.S.C. 1817(i)(7))

The public portions of the applications listed below, as well as other related filings required by the Board, if any, are available for immediate inspection at the Federal Reserve Bank(s) indicated below and at the offices of the Board of Governors. This information may also be obtained on an expedited basis, upon request, by contacting the appropriate Federal Reserve Bank and from the Board's Freedom of Information Office at https://www.federalreserve.gov/foia/ request.htm. Interested persons may express their views in writing on the standards enumerated in paragraph 7 of the Act.

Comments regarding each of these applications must be received at the Reserve Bank indicated or the offices of the Board of Governors, Ann E. Misback, Secretary of the Board, 20th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20551–0001, not later than October 5, 2023.

A. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (Holly A. Rieser, Senior Manager) P.O. Box 442, St. Louis, Missouri 63166-2034. Comments can also be sent electronically to

 $\widetilde{Comments.applications@stls.frb.org:}$ 1. Laura Nell Lawless, Jonathan Lawless, Andrew J. Lawless, Jackson E. Lawless, and Robert R. Lawless, all of Bowling Green, Kentucky; Karan Annette Cowan Linkous Revocable Trust, Karan O'Sullivan, as trustee, John T. Linkous, and Laura E. Linkous, all of Edmonton, Kentucky; John Robert Cowen, Jacob Cowan, Luke Cowan, and

Seth Cowan, all of Lexington, Kentucky; as a family control group acting in concert, to retain voting shares of Edmonton Bancshares, Inc., Edmonton, Kentucky, and thereby indirectly retain voting shares of Edmonton State Bank,

Glasgow, Kentucky. In addition, the Kimberly P. Thompson Irrevocable Trust, John N. Thompson, as trustee, both of Brentwood, Tennessee; the Julie C. Thompson Irrevocable Trust, David W. Thompson, as trustee, both of Edmonton, Kentucky; to retain voting shares of Edmonton Bancshares, Inc., Edmonton, Kentucky, and thereby indirectly retain voting shares of Edmonton State Bank, Glasgow, Kentucky.

2. Julie Ann Swope 2020 Trust and Julie Ann Swope Family Trust, Julie Ann Swope, as trustee, Patrick & Julie Swope Children's Trust No. 1, Robin Ann George, Patrick Holt Swope and Julie Ann Swope, as co-trustees, two Minor Children, Patrick Holt Swope, as custodian of each, Charles E. George 2020 Trust, Charles E. George, as trustee, Charles & Samantha George Children's Trust No. 1, Robin Ann George, Charles E. George and Samantha George, as co-trustees Charles E. George Family Trust, Charles E. George, as trustee, all of Springdale, Arkansas; Evans Family Řevocable Trust, David R. Evans and Cathy George Evans, as co-trustees, Siems Family Joint Revocable Living Trust, Linden E. Siems and Brandon Siems, as cotrustees, Two Minor Child Crummey Trusts, Linden E. Siems, as trustee, Cathy George Evans Children's Trust No. 2, David R. Evans and Cathy George Evans, as co-trustees, Martin Swope, all of Fayetteville, Arkansas; 2020 Gary C. George Children's Trust No. 2, Julie Ann Swope and Charles E. George, as cotrustees, all of Springdale, Arkansas, and Mary Kathryn Brown and Carl E. George, both of Fayetteville, Arkansas, also as co-trustees; Mary Kathryn Brown 2020 Trust, Springdale, Arkansas, Mary Kathrvn Brown, as trustee, Favetteville, Arkansas; Mary Kathryn and Matt Brown Children's Trust No. 1, Robin Ann George, as co-trustee, both of Springdale, Arkansas, and Matthew J. Brown and Mary Kathryn Brown, also as co-trustees, both of Fayetteville, Arkansas; Carl E. George 2020 Trust, Springdale, Arkansas, Carl E. George, as trustee, Fayetteville, Arkansas; Carl & Anna George Children's Trust No. 1, Robin Ann George, as co-trustee, both of Springdale, Arkansas, and Carl E. George and Anna George, also as cotrustees, both of Fayetteville, Arkansas; Mary Kathryn Brown Family Trust, Springdale, Arkansas, Mary Kathryn

Appendix 2. Agenda



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee

Meeting Agenda September 28, 2023 All times listed in Eastern Standard Time

Time	Topic
10:00 – 10:30 am	Meeting opening and welcome remarks Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC Raymon Shange, Vice Chair, FRRCC Rod Snyder, Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator, EPA Venus Welch-White, FRRCC DFO, EPA
10:30 – 10:35 am	Roll Call Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC
10:35 – 11:20 am	Ad hoc workgroup Updates Climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation Climate, Energy, Water Nexus Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance
11:20 – 12:00 pm	Overview of Workgroup reports and recommendations Climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation Climate, Energy, Water Nexus Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance
12:00 — 12:45 pm	Lunch
12:45 — 1:15 pm	Public Comments
1:15 – 3:30 pm	Adoption of Recommendations (Voting) Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC Raymon Shange, Vice Chair, FRRCC
3:30 – 3:35 pm	FRRCC Updates and Next Steps Venus Welch-White, DFO, FRRCC Rod Snyder, Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator, EPA
3:30 – 4:00 pm	Wrap up and Adjourn Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC

Appendix 3. FRRCC Members and Affiliations

Beth C. Sauerhaft, Ph.D. (Committee Chair)

Vice President of Programs American Farmland Trust Chappagua, New York

Raymon Shange, Ph. D. (Vice Chair)

1890 Extension Administrator

Associate Dean, College of Agriculture, Environment, and Nutrition Sciences **Tuskegee University**

Tuskegee, Alabama

Barry Berg

Watershed Coordinator

East Dakota Water Development District

Brookings, South Dakota

Brad Bray

Chief Operating Officer Bray Farms, LLC Cameron, Missouri

Emily M. Broad Leib

Clinical Professor of Law

Faculty Director, Food Law and Policy Clinic

Harvard Law School

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Don Brown

CFO

Anchor Three Farm, Inc.

Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture 2015-2019

Yuma, Colorado

Phillip H. Chavez

Director

Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District, Catlin Canal Company, and Lower Arkansas Valley

Super Ditch

Partner

Diamond A Farms and Mohawk Valley Farms

Rocky Ford, Colorado

John R. H. Collison

Owner

BlackOak Farms Edmond, Oklahoma

William (Bill) Couser

President/Owner

Couser Cattle Company

Nevada, Iowa

Eddie Crandell, Sr.

Lake County California Supervisor Lucerne, California

Michael Crowder

President - Elect

National Association of Conservation Districts

General Manager/Shareholder

Barker Ranch **Local Supervisor**

Benton Conservation District

West Richland, Washington

Matthew Freund

Owner

Freund's Farm and CowPots LLC East Canaan, Connecticut

Sharon Furches

Co-owner

Furches Farms Partnership Second Vice President Kentucky Farm Bureau Louisville, Kentucky

Jeffrey Gore, Ph.D.

Research Entomologist

Delta Research and Extension Center

Mississippi State University Stoneville, Mississippi

David Graybill

Owner

Red Sunset Farm

Executive Committee, State Board of Directors

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Mifflintown, Pennsylvania

Jennifer James

Owner

H&J Land Company Newport, Arkansas

Sarah Lucas

Deputy Director, Office of Rural Development Michigan Dept. of Agriculture and Rural Development Marquette, Michigan

Lauren C. Lurkins

Director of Environmental Policy Illinois Farm Bureau

Bloomington, Illinois

Nicholas McCarthy

Senior Vice President of Agronomy Central Valley Ag Cooperative York, Nebraska

William Thomas (Tom) McDonald

Senior Vice President - Environmental Affairs and Sustainability Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, LLC

Dalhart, Texas Jeanne Merrill

Advisor, Climate Change and Agriculture National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Alameda, California

Christopher L. Pettit

Executive Director Washington State Conservation Commission Lacey, Washington

Clay Pope

Founding Partner CSP, LLC Loyal, Oklahoma

William R. Pracht

President/CEO **Pracht Farms** East Kansas Agri-Energy Garnett, Kansas

James Pritchett, Ph. D.

Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station Colorado State University Fort Collins, Colorado

Nithya Rajan, Ph. D.

Associate Professor of Crop Physiology and Agroecology

Texas A&M University, Department of Soil and Crop Sciences

College Station, Texas

Graciela I. Ramírez-Toro, Ph.D.

Institutional Director Center for Environmental Education, Conservation and Research

Inter American University of Puerto Rico San Germán, Puerto Rico

Lindsay Reames

Executive Vice President Sustainability and External Relations VA/MD Milk Producers Cooperative Association Amelia, Virginia

Charles R. Santerre, Ph.D.

Department Chair & Professor Food, Nutrition, and Packaging Sciences Clemson University Clemson, South Carolina

Jennifer Simmelink

Coordinator KS Soil Health Alliance Esbon, Kansas

Chantel Simpson, Ph. D.

Assistant Professor of Agriscience Education North Carolina A&T State University Greensboro, North Carolina

Ryan Smith

Senior Manager, Regenerative Agriculture Danone North America Chicago, Illinois

Stacy Wayne Smith

Owner S & A Smith Farms New Home, Texas

Jeff M. Witte

Secretary of Agriculture State of New Mexico Las Cruces, New Mexico

Amy Wolfe

President and CEO Emeritus AgSafe Modesto, California

Appendix 4. Final Approved Recommendations

FARM, RANCH AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE **RECOMMENDATIONS TO** U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR MICHAEL S. REGAN **OCTOBER 2023**

Background

EPA established the Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC) in 2007 to provide independent policy advice, information, and recommendations to the Administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agricultural and rural communities. Committee members include representatives from academia, industry (e.g., agriculture and allied industries), non-governmental organizations, and state, local, and tribal governments. The current charter was renewed January 25, 2022, and extends for 2 years through February 2024.

The current FRRCC held public hybrid (remote/in-person) meetings in January 2023 at EPA's Washington, DC headquarters building, again in July 2023 at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins, CO, and held a virtual meeting on September 28, 2023. Following the first meeting in January where the committee received their charge, numerous informative presentations from EPA staff and commenced discussion of the charge topic, Chair Beth Sauerhaft, PhD, established four ad hoc work groups: a) climate finance, social inclusion, and technical assistance; b) climate adaptation and resilience; c) climate, energy, water nexus; and d) biotech and ag inputs. Sauerhaft appointed leads/co-leads for each work group. In July following consultation with Co-Chair Raymon Shange, PhD and DFO Venus Welch-White, PhD, Sauerhaft consolidated these into three ad hoc work groups for greater ease of administration by all three and because it was determined there was sufficient overlap in discussion topics to warrant this change. The biotech and ag inputs work group was merged with the climate adaptation and resilience work group and renamed as the ad hoc work group on climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation. These ad hoc work groups have met (and continue to meet) virtually on a regular basis between full committee meetings to carry out and develop the work of the committee. During the virtual September meeting, recommendations were presented to the full committee, discussed and voted upon. The recommendations further down in this letter represent those that the committee voted to move on to share with you, the EPA Administrator.

Charge (as issued by the US EPA Administrator and delivered during the committee's first meeting in January 2023)

Advancing Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for U.S. Agriculture America's farmers and ranchers find themselves on the front lines of the climate crisis. Severe storms, widespread flooding, prolonged drought, and more frequent wildfires are creating unprecedented risks to

our food system. These extreme weather events threaten to erode agricultural productivity even while global population surges toward 10 billion people by mid-century.

The FRRCC is charged with considering how EPA's tools and programs can best support and advance the U.S. agriculture sector's climate mitigation and adaptation goals. By identifying voluntary, incentive-based opportunities; public-private partnerships; and market-based approaches, EPA can support farmers and ranchers in their efforts to reduce emissions, sequester carbon, and accelerate a more resilient food and agriculture system.

The FRRCC should evaluate the Agency's policies and programs at the nexus of agriculture and climate change. Specific topics may include:

- Alternative manure management systems and other methane reduction practices
- Improved quantification of greenhouse gas emissions reductions from low-carbon biofuels
- Climate and water quality co-benefits from nutrient management practices
- Strategies to achieve EPA and USDA's goal of halving food loss and waste by 2030
- Research and regulatory responses to evolving pest pressures due to climate change
- Water management and reuse strategies to address water scarcity

The FRRCC's recommendations should be rooted in EPA's foundational value of scientific integrity with a commitment to ensuring environmental justice for all communities.

FRRCC RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADMINISTRATOR REGAN

The FRRCC officially presents these recommendations to Administrator Regan for his consideration and adoption. Please note that full documents are attached as Exhibit 1 with additional information as determined helpful by the ad hoc work groups and the full committee. FRRCC leadership welcomes the opportunity to discuss the details of these recommendations with Administrator Regan.

I. <u>Recommendation Preamble:</u>

The Farm, Ranch and Rural Community Committee (FRRCC) members endeavor to serve our nation and citizens across its vast landscape. We recognize that with diverse backgrounds and experiences, many of us have experienced a legacy of injustice and the marginalization of others in our society.

The FRRCC recognizes that EPA is committed to continue to improve access to outreach, training, funding, and support for underserved and disadvantaged populations, rural communities and those defined by EO 13985 Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government ("populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life...).

Today, many opportunities, programs and benefits afforded to our citizens:

- Are not well-known or publicized to the desired beneficiaries,
- Are inequitably distributed, particularly to underserved and disadvantaged agricultural operations, tribes, and rural communities and
- Do not receive the resources or support needed for implementation, long term viability and management.

Organizations that have larger resource pools (ex: lawyers, grant writers, and engineers) are more often able to obtain grants and benefits from government efforts. Smaller rural communities and marginalized groups often don't have the same staffing and capacity. With these factors in mind, it is imperative to provide intentional outreach, resources and technical assistance to create a more equitable process.

To address these historic inequities, our committee has proposed a variety of approaches that will result in added resources, data, research, and technical assistance to these disadvantaged and underserved communities. Addressing these systemic barriers to equity will meet this committee's charge to improve the climate for current and future generations, as well as advance our hope to create a better nation for all.

A. Climate Mitigation, Resilience and Adaptation Recommendations

The FRRCC recommends the EPA act on the following items:

Recommendation A1: The EPA should assess the current scope of activities and mission of Regional Agricultural Advisers as it relates to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Where appropriate, duties, responsibilities and resources may be adjusted to position the advisers to better support agency goals.

With mission adjustment, the Regional Agricultural Advisers can create collaborative networks for agricultural climate adaptation and mitigation by serving as a liaison across various levels of government (local, state, regional and national). These advisers may play a pivotal role in ensuring two-way communication among clientele and fostering best practice adoption.

Recommendation A2: The EPA develops a strategic plan that allows for two-way communication elevating awareness and improving design of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience initiatives in agriculture. The outreach plan needs to include multiple agencies, be championed nationally, and have regional relevance.

Recommendation A3: The EPA organizes quarterly webinars specific to agricultural climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation to generate awareness of guidance, new initiatives, process improvements and coordination among groups. These sessions are meant to be region specific and best organized through the Deputy Regional Administrator's office with the expertise of Regional Agricultural Advisers. Impacts are elevated when other agencies (e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Service) are represented. Two-way communication is an essential element of these webinars.

The FRRCC believes that many climate resilience and adaptation initiatives exist outside of public awareness, and the same may be true within the EPA. Webinars allow for critical information to be transmitted succinctly with appropriate context. Relevant information presented in the webinar includes ongoing efforts and initiatives that will be launched soon. USDA agencies (NRCS, Rural Development) may be important partners with EPA for organizing and presenting materials.

Recommendation A4: The EPA organizes webinars by the 4th quarter of 2023 and again in 1st quarter of 2024 to inform and describe opportunities for agriculture to be integrated into the Climate Pollution Reduction Plans.

Recommendation A5: EPA accelerate co-benefits for agriculture and rural communities by:

- a. reviewing policies, guidance, and funding processes to see the extent to which cobenefits in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience investments are considered,
- b. developing a list of important co-benefits for climate resilience for agriculture through a review of literature and expert advice,
- c. disseminating information describing co-benefits, providing examples of co-benefits generated by climate resilient practices, and offering tools that assess co-benefits of projects and programs,
- d. incentivizing projects that generate multiple co-benefits that are clearly articulated in proposals and outcomes measured in project reporting,
- e. creating regional and agency wide co-benefit metric(s) that benchmark the share of EPA funding that supports multiple benefit outcomes, and
- f. communicating the increasing share of EPA funding directed to co-benefits with examples shared across agencies and to the public.

Recommendation A6: EPA's LGAC and FRRCC collaborate on a joint guidance document for improving local government participation and local-state-federal coordination of climate resilience and adaptation initiatives.

This recommendation allows local governments better access to funding opportunities, ensuring local knowledge is integrated into program design and guidance, and benefits to rural communities and agriculture are maximized.

B. Water, Energy and Climate Nexus

The FRRCC recommends EPA act on the following items regarding anaerobic digesters and alternative manure management practices:

Recommendation B1: Increase investment in the AgSTAR program

• Continue to enhance and implement the AgSTAR outreach/communications plan.

Recommendation B2: Increase AgSTAR staffing

- Provide technical assistance and conduct feasibility studies for individual farmers considering methane digesters.
- Make regional staff available to provide farmers with information and resources relevant to their state/region.
- Coordinate directly with existing NRCS and state programs and staff regarding the implementation of climate resilience programs and projects, including digester development and the implementation of alternative manure management programs and practices.

Recommendation B3: Utilize and Promote AgSTAR as an incubator and resource for technological innovation, pilot project implementation, and research.

- Explore alternative uses for generated biogas as well as the digestate.
- Implement a farmer grant program to incentivize innovations.
- Build and share a portfolio of innovations with farmers, government and private businesses.
- Incorporate continued monitoring and data collection for atmospheric methane around dairy digester facilities before and after digester construction to assess their efficacy in meeting mitigation objectives while helping operators avoid unintentional biogas product loss.

Recommendation B4: Ensuring solutions are available to serve a larger breadth of issues/challenges

- Provide resources on broader solutions for methane reduction, including not only digesters but also alternative manure management and other technologies that may work more effectively for certain producers.
- Research opportunities to incentivize digesters to be built such that they can also accept food waste, so they are more of a useful community facility (and can raise additional funds for farmers from increased feedstock).
- Provide focused resources on opportunities to support technology for community digesters that can support a group of smaller farms.
- At the programmatic level, and not the individual project level, conduct a lifecycle analysis of digester biogas, and related co-products including digestate. As part of the analysis, include air and water quality issues in addition to GHG emissions profile of digester gas and its products.

II. Summary

The FRRCC appreciates the opportunity to provide input and recommendations to EPA leadership and could not have done this without the unending support of Venus Welch-White, Linda Brown and Rod Snyder. In addition, we had numerous EPA and other speakers both at our in person full committee meetings as well as during our individual ad hoc work group meetings. Your staff were ready to speak with us, respond to questions and follow up with information when needed. Thank you. Thank you for accepting these recommendations that were developed and refined with significant discussion and then accepted with consensus by the full FRRCC. Raymon and I look forward to hearing how EPA acts on them so we can report back to the full committee. In addition, our work continues and thus we look forward to sharing additional recommendations with you in the near future.

Exhibit 1

EPA Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Advisory Committee

Ad hoc Work Group Recommendations

A) Ad Hoc Work Group #2 - Climate Mitigation, Resilience and Adaptation

Introduction

In 2022, the EPA administrator charged the Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC) with advancing climate mitigation and adaptation strategies for U.S. agriculture.

Under this charge, the FRRCC is considering how EPA's tools and programs can best advance the U.S. agriculture sector's climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation goals. The EPA's foundational values of scientific integrity and commitment to environmental justice are an anchor point for recommendations.

In 2023, an ad hoc work group (work group #2) was formed to consider the FRRCC charge in the context of climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. Work group #2 is discussing a wide range of topics, and emerging considerations include:

- America's farmers, ranchers, and local governments feel the immediate impacts of a changing climate. These stakeholders seek technical assistance, resources, and innovative approaches for the mitigation, adaptation, and resilience of their agricultural production systems and their communities. The EPA can play a catalyzing role in this effort.
- Agricultural climate goals and related initiatives are infrequently integrated or considered by state and regional governments when creating climate plans. EPA can play a collaborative and coordinating role in elevating agriculture's relevance in climate planning and implementation.
- Understanding and accessing climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience funding is complex, and the complexity limits awareness and reduces accessibility. Stakeholders must navigate multiple agencies and levels of government to make meaningful investments in climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience efforts. Multiple agencies and governments are working across jurisdictions and in their climate planning. Climate planning for agriculture is seldom coordinated across these agencies and levels of government. The burden of coordination rests on the stakeholders seeking funds. EPA should consider mechanisms to reduce the burden on stakeholders.

 EPA's historical funding guidance is centered on creating a singular benefit. When cobenefits are incentivized, then climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience will be more successful. EPA should incentivize opportunities for providing multiple co-benefits directed at climate resilience.

EPA needs immediate action to realize the greatest potential benefits from new, timelimited funding sources. As an example, programs funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (5-year funding authorization) and their guidance are being mobilized now. These initiatives may benefit from greater engagement with agricultural stakeholders and agricultural expertise within the EPA. This is especially true of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program.

Opportunities to address these considerations are organized into a set of four themes, with recommendations made at the end of this document.

Theme 1: Regional Agricultural Advisers can be used more fully to catalyze outreach to stakeholders, coordinate opportunities and raise the awareness of agriculture in climate planning for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.

In the last ten years, EPA recognized the benefit of having trusted, local individuals with scientific technical training, agricultural knowledge and excellent communication skills to effectively inform stakeholders, serve as an agency liaison, coordinate opportunities, and cocreate knowledge with constituents. The Regional Ag Advisers often have a broad-based knowledge of collaborating agencies (e.g., USDA-NRCS), local governments, and EPA's internal scope of work. This knowledge is of increasing value in the context of climate adaptation in agriculture.

Theme 2: Strategic outreach planning and implementation will enhance the effectiveness of EPA's climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience initiatives.

Increasing awareness of EPA funding and guidance amplifies success and increases collaboration. Interested parties include stakeholders, local governments, state governments, federal agencies, and agency personnel. A strategic, two-way communication plan is needed.

Work group #2 recognizes climate adaptation and resilience to be a complex, difficult challenge involving interrelated biological, economic, political, and social systems. In these circumstances, frequent, targeted communication from EPA can be helpful in improving outcomes and participation. Systematic, two-way communication will ensure the benefits of diverse perspectives and improve opportunities for constituents and communities with limited resources when pursuing agency funding and support.

Theme 3: Evaluating the extent to which EPA climate policies, guidance, and incentives promote co-benefits for agriculture resilience.

Financial, technical, and human resources are scarce. Strategic use of resources is critical in meeting EPA's goals for climate resilience. The work group endorses approaches that create multiple co-benefits for enhancing climate resilience and adaptation. Prioritizing projects with co-benefits will accelerate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience in agricultural systems, and increases the return on investment of these initiatives. Some evidence exists that prioritizing co-benefits will alter decision making.

It is unclear if current EPA policies and tools promote projects and programs with significant cobenefits, or if EPA has a set of metrics that track co-benefits. A guest speaker suggested that this may be occurring in the Section 319 grants programs.

Historical approaches to projects and programs typically identify a singular outcome that improves environmental conditions. A singular approach is often repeated, so much so that opportunities are missed to improve agricultural and rural community resilience. Initiatives may become anchored around a few practices to the exclusion of others, which in turn slows innovation.

As an example, programs encouraging carbon sequestration may also improve soil health and generate many co-benefits including:

- Environmental benefits: soil conservation, improved soil structure and stability, nutrient availability, water infiltration, and moisture retention
- Water quality benefits: preventing nutrient runoff, irrigation efficiency
- Ecological benefits: increasing ecosystem service provision, reduced susceptibility to pests
- Social benefits: skills and knowledge development, knowledge community building, employment
- Economic benefits: agricultural production risk management (drought tolerance, flood mitigation), long-run cost savings, alternative revenues streams

If these multiple benefits are not identified and measured, then the long-run return on investment for carbon sequestration projects will solely be limited to stored carbon. Encouraging assessment of multiple benefits will better target investment opportunities for EPA programs. The assessment is a platform for sharing with the public the return on investment for climate programs.

Theme 4: Coordination with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) when examining opportunities to enhance climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience for communities.

EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) is an independent, policy-oriented advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to the EPA Administrator on critical environmental issues impacting local governments. Chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act in 1993, the Committee is composed of elected and appointed officials from local, state, tribal and territorial governments across the United States. Recent meeting agendas and recommendations can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/ocir/local-government- advisory-committee-lgac

The LGAC maintains a climate mitigation working group and has submitted recommendations for improving climate resilience of local communities. Review of materials suggests that the LGAC and the FRRCC may benefit through dialogue and sharing of materials.

A) Ad Hoc Work group #2 - Climate Mitigation, Resilience and Adaptation Recommendations

Recommendation A1: The EPA should assess the current scope of activities and mission of Regional Agricultural Advisers as it relates to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Where appropriate, duties, responsibilities and resources may be adjusted to position the advisers to better support agency goals.

With mission adjustment, the Regional Agricultural Advisers can create collaborative networks for agricultural climate adaptation and mitigation by serving as a liaison across various levels of government (local, state, regional and national). These advisers may play a pivotal role in ensuring two-way communication among clientele and fostering best practice adoption.

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- communicating the increasing share of EPA funding directed to co-benefits with examples shared across agencies and to the public.

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This recommendation allows local governments better access to funding opportunities, ensuring local knowledge is integrated into program design and guidance, and benefits to rural communities and agriculture are maximized.

B) Ad Hoc Work Group #1 – Water, Energy and Climate Nexus

Although these initial recommendations from the Water, Energy and Climate Nexus Ad Hoc Work group (Work group #1) initially focus on anaerobic digesters and associated alternative manure management practices, the work group looks forward to expanding its inquiry to significantly more diverse areas, including alternative energy, water conservation, and climate resilience programs and project areas.

Introduction

As climate change continues to impact agricultural producers and rural communities throughout the country, innovative solutions within the water, energy and climate nexus are needed to provide mitigation benefits, assist agricultural producers in adapting to climate change impacts, and to develop alternative revenue streams that can provide both public and private program and project benefits. One of the many management tools that producers employ on farms to help reach the goal of being carbon neutral is anaerobic digesters. This technology not only benefits air quality by reducing methane emissions, but it also reduces odors, often resulting in improved farm-community relations. Anaerobic digestion continues to be recognized as a viable technology to treat organic waste materials by converting waste to energy and fertilizer. In addition, anaerobic digestion should continue to be studied to promote additional efficiency in implementation and methane mitigation.

The agricultural community has been working to develop anaerobic systems, making them more reliable and finding valuable uses for the materials at the end of the digestion process. In efforts to provide key inputs to the circular economy, producers are taking costly waste and converting it to value-added products. Farm digesters are also being utilized in partnership with municipalities to reduce the burden of food waste and other organics that would otherwise be destined for disposal in landfills while at the same time producing renewable energy and reducing our use of fossil fuels.

In the US, anaerobic digestion has been largely utilized for larger scale livestock operations. There is growing interest in innovations to enable the technology to be adapted for smaller farms and a greater variety of feedstocks in a cost-effective way. At the present time, adopting anaerobic systems continues to be extremely cost prohibitive for producers who don't generally have the resources needed to develop and install digesters that are able to handle not only the farm's waste but waste from a variety of other industries. There are several companies interested in putting digesters on farms because of the tipping fees, carbon credits and the green energy values generated. Unfortunately, digestion does not reduce the nutrient

load or volume of the added organic material coming into the farm and producers are faced with adjusting their nutrient management plans to accommodate this added material. While in many cases, programmatic funding from state and federal agencies can provide much needed assistance, in most cases, investor participation is additionally vital for project success.

Farmer-participatory research methodologies have been applied in certain states, such as New York, to assess producer perceptions of anaerobic digesters at smaller scales and with diversified livestock and crop operations. Results indicated growing interest by a diverse group of farmers in using these systems in the development of additional methodologies and markets that could drive innovation and greater adoption. Additional outreach and the provision of information and data regarding economic viability can assist in the acceptance and development of pilot anaerobic digester systems on smaller farms. The New York example also showed that improved funding sources for adoption of this sustainable technology will likely increase adoption rates. Additional technical assistance for producers and governmental or non-profit partners is vital for implementation. For instance, programmatic efforts to provide feasibility studies by trusted expert entities can build trust and ensure that projects are appropriately located. Such studies could also consider and include recommendations for alternative manure management projects such as those discussed below.

The Environmental Protection Agency, along with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy originated the AgSTAR program in 1994 when digesters were in their infancy in the US. At that time, the program assisted farmers not only with feasibility studies, but with design and installation of projects. The program has a 30-year track record of relationships and interagency cooperation. Over the years, the program has steadily contracted to its current size as an information library with just one employee. A robust upsizing and reexamination of the value that can be provided by AgSTAR is essential for the continued success of anaerobic digester implementation.

Alternative Manure Management Program and Practices

Recognizing that the vast majority of dairy and livestock operations do not produce enough manure or have the capital for a digester, the California Department of Food & Agriculture launched the Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP) in 2017 to reduce methane emissions from manure management. The AMMP provides technical and financial assistance for dairy and livestock operators to shift from wet manure handling and storage to dry manure handling and storage, including pasture-based management. The program provides greater flexibility for cooperative agencies beyond the digester footprint to allow for more targeted utilization of resources to achieve a wider range of positive outcomes. Additional background on the program can be found at https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/AMMP/ and https://calclimateag.org/ammp/. The program allows for the provision of eligible practices to achieve positive alternative manure practices, including the utilization of composting and biochar to reduce methane emissions. More information can be found at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/acs.est.2c03467 and a list of eligible practices can be found at https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/ammp/docs/2023 AMMP RGA.pdf.

B) Ad Hoc Work Group #1 - Water, Energy and Climate Nexus Recommendations

The Water, Energy and Climate Nexus Ad Hoc Work group proposes the following recommendations to the EPA Administrator regarding anaerobic digesters and alternative manure management practices

Recommendation B1: Increase investment in the AgSTAR program

Continue to enhance and implement the AgSTAR outreach/communications plan.

Recommendation B2: Increase AgSTAR staffing

- Provide technical assistance and conduct feasibility studies for individual farmers considering methane digesters.
- Make regional staff available to provide farmers with information and resources relevant to their state/region.
- Coordinate directly with existing NRCS and state programs and staff regarding the implementation of climate resilience programs and projects, including digester development and the implementation of alternative manure management programs and practices.

Recommendation B3: Utilize and Promote AgSTAR as an incubator and resource for technological innovation, pilot project implementation, and research.

- Explore alternative uses for generated biogas as well as the digestate.
- Implement a farmer grant program to incentivize innovations.
- Build and share a portfolio of innovations with farmers, government and private
- Incorporate continued monitoring and data collection for atmospheric methane around dairy digester facilities before and after digester construction to assess their efficacy in meeting mitigation objectives while helping operators avoid unintentional biogas product loss.

Recommendation B4: Ensuring solutions are available to serve a larger breadth of issues/challenges

- Provide resources on broader solutions for methane reduction, including not only digesters but also alternative manure management and other technologies that may work more effectively for certain producers.
- Research opportunities to incentivize digesters to be built such that they can also accept food waste, so they are more of a useful community facility (and can raise additional funds for farmers from increased feedstock).

- Provide focused resources on opportunities to support technology for community digesters that can support a group of smaller farms.
- At the programmatic level, and not the individual project level, conduct a lifecycle analysis of digester biogas, and related co-products including digestate. As part of the analysis, include air and water quality issues in addition to GHG emissions profile of digester gas and its products.

C) Ad Hoc Work Group #3 - Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance

Introduction/Background

The ad hoc Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance Work Group (work group #3) was established with the goal of improving access to technical assistance and other forms of programmatic support for underserved farmers and rural communities. In alignment with this goal and the EPA commitment/charge to ensuring environmental justice for all communities, the committee developed preamble language to encompass this commitment to equity and justice.

Main Observations and Insights

The United States is plagued with a history of injustices that have been experienced by many of the more vulnerable populations or communities. Current recommendations, while addressing critical needs oft do not provide targeted outreach to underserved communities and community groups who may be unaware of EPA opportunities or lack capacity to compete. This language (in our Preamble above) acknowledges these historic injustices and provides the opportunity for more holistic support for members of these communities and acknowledges a continued commitment to the equitable access and implementation of goals and resources.

C) Ad Hoc Work Group #3 - Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance **Recommendations**

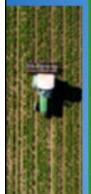
Recommendation C1: Accept the preamble language and place it in front of any and all recommendations forwarded to the Administrator for the duration of the committee's charge.

Preamble language is above in the text of the letter

Appendix 5. Presentations

Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC)





Federal Advisory Meeting

September 28, 2023

United States Environmental Protection Agency







Meeting Opening & Welcome Remarks

Beth Saverhaft, Chair, FRRCC Raymon Shange, Vice Chair, FRRCC

Rod Snyder, Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator, EPA Venus Welch-White, FRRCC DFO, EPA

SEPA Meeting Agenda

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12-10 - > 16-pm	Februaries	
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3.50 - 3.11 pm	FERCY Spines and New Hope. From Finish Plan, AFO, FRECY End Spines Spines Afolice in the Administration SPA	
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Roll Call

Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC



Ad Hoc Workgroup Updates

James Pritchett Michael Crowder Chantel Simpson

Working Subgroup #2 -Climate Mitigation, Resilience & Adaptation

Focus: how EPA's tools and programs can best advance the U.S. agriculture sector's climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation goals.

Team Members: Barry Berg, Brad Bray, Don Brown, Bill Couser, Jeff Gore, David Graybill, Nic McCarthy, Jeanne Merrill, Clay Pope, James Pritchett (Lead), Charles Santerre, Stacy Smith, Jeff Witte, Amy Wolfe

Subgroup #2 – Merging Two Workgroups

"Classic" Subgroup #2: Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Focus: Regional Ag Advisers, EPA Strategic Communications, Co-Benefits, Collaboration with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC).

Subgroup #4: Biotech and Ag Inputs

Focus: Use of drones in pesticide application/labeling; Modern biotechnology and its applications; Technology adoption by producers

Group 3: Climate Finance, **Social Inclusion & Technical Assistance**

Co-Leads:

Chantel Simpson & Phillip Chavez

Work Group Members:

Emily Broad Leib, Tom McDonald, Ryan Smith, Sarah Lucas & Clay Pope, Graciela Ramirez Toro, Eddie Crandell & Chris Pettit

SEPA Work Group Updates

Current Issues

 Development of equity language (preamble) to preface any and all recommendations sent to the EPA Administrator

Future Issues

- Review and provide recommendations for streamlined grant application processes
- Develop best practices / guidelines for data collection and on implementation procedures
- Conversations with underserved groups that qualify but did NOT apply for funding opportunities
- Utilizing state agencies to assist with human infrastructure

Group 1: Water, Energy and Climate

Co-Leads:

Michael Crowder & Matt Freund

Work Group Members:

Bill Pracht, Graciela Ramirez, Jeanne Merrill, Jennifer Simmelink, Nithya Rajan, Jennifer James, Lauren Lurkins, Eddie Crandell, Chris Pettit

SEPA Ad Hoc Work Group Updates

Topics Discussed

ANEROBIC DIGESTERS

- AgStar Nick Elger
- IRA Funding
 - Intersection of IRA work with EPA and NRCS
 - Inter-Agency cooperation
- Very high costs of installation
- Challenges with permitting, running, and infrastructure
- Not feasible for a lot of smaller farms



\$EPA

Future Topics for Consideration

- IRA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund
- Other methods of disposing of wet/dry manure on dairies and farms
- Solar siting selection process
- Carbon capture/transfer/alteration
- EPA 319 funding
- WOTUS
- CWA Water availability/quality
- Energy star certification



Overview of Committee Reports and **Recommendations**



Climate Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience

Recommendation Overview

ŞEPA Recommendation Themes

- Theme #1: EPA's Regional Ag Advisers: catalysts, coordinators, and expert advice.
- Theme #2: Strategic communication planning importance and urgency.
- Theme #3: Prioritizing co-benefits in climate initiatives to scale impacts.
- Theme #4: Coordinating and Collaborating with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC)

ŞEPA Recommendation A1

EPA should assess the current scope of activities and mission of Regional Agricultural Advisers as it relates to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Where appropriate, duties, responsibilities and resources may be adjusted to position the advisers to better support agency goals.

ŞEPA Recommendation A2

The EPA develops a strategic plan that allows for two-way communication elevating awareness and improving design of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency initiatives in agriculture. The outreach plan needs to include multiple agencies, be championed nationally, and have regional relevance.

€EPA Recommendation A3

The EPA organizes quarterly webinars specific to agricultural climate mitigation, resilience, and adaptation to generate awareness of guidance, new initiatives, process improvements and coordination among groups. These sessions are meant to be region specific and best organized through the Deputy Regional Administrator's office with the expertise of Regional Agricultural Advisers. Impacts are elevated when other agencies (e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Service) are represented. Two-way communication is an essential element of these webinars.

€EPA Recommendation A4

The EPA organizes webinars by the 4th quarter of 2023 and again in 1st quarter of 2024 to inform and describe opportunities for agriculture to be integrated into the Climate Pollution Reduction Plans.

SEPA Recommendation A5

EPA accelerate co-benefits for agriculture and rural communities by:

- a. reviewing policies, guidance, and funding processes to see the extent to which co-benefits in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience investments are considered.
- b. developing a list of important co-benefits for climate resiliency for agriculture through a review of literature and expert advice,
- c. disseminating information describing co-benefits, providing examples of co-benefits generated by climate resilient practices, and offering tools that assess co-benefits of projects and programs,

ŞEPA Recommendation A5 (cont.)

- d. incentivizing projects that generate multiple co-benefits that are clearly articulated in proposals and outcomes measured in project reporting,
- e. creating regional and agency wide co-benefit metric(s) that benchmark the share of EPA funding that supports multiple benefit outcomes, and
- f. communicating the increasing share of EPA funding directed to cobenefits with examples shared across agencies and to the public.

\$EPA Recommendation A6

EPA's LGAC and FRRCC collaborate on a joint guidance document for improving local government participation and local-state-federal coordination of climate resiliency and adaptation initiatives.



Water, Energy, Climate

Recommendation Overview

SEPA

Anaerobic Digester Recommendations

- INCREASE INVESTMENT IN THE AGSTAR PROGRAM
 - Continue to enhance and implement the AgStar outreach/communications plan
- INCREASE AGSTAR STAFFING
 - i. Provide technical assistance and conduct feasibility studies for individual farmers considering methane digesters and/or other waste management practices.
 - Make regional staff available to provide farmers information and resources relevant to their state/region.
 - Coordinate directly with existing NRCS and state programs and staff regarding the implementation of climate resiliency programs and projects, including digester development and the implementation of alternative manure management programs and practices.

SEPA

Anaerobic Digester Recommendations

- UTILIZE AND PROMOTE AGSTAR AS AN INCUBATOR AND RESOURCE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION, PILOT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, AND RESEARCH
 - i. Explore alternative uses for generated biogas as well as the digestate.
 - Implement a farmer grant program to incentivize innovations.
 - iii. Build and share portfolio of innovations and accepted/proposed projects with farmers, government and private businesses.
 - iv.Incorporate continued monitoring and data collection for atmospheric methane around dairy digester facilities before and after digester construction to assess their efficacy in meeting mitigation objectives while helping operators avoid unintentional biogas product loss.
- EPA should review and update existing guidance related to digesters to include emerging scientific research and studies regarding environmental risks tied to project implementation



Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance

Recommendation Overview

SEPA Recommendations

The following preamble language to accompany all committee recommendations forwarded to the administrator.



LUNCH BREAK

12:15PM -1:15PM (EST)



Public Comment Session

Venus Welch-White, FRRCC DFO, EPA



Committee Report (Including Recommendations) Voting

Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC Raymon Shange, Vice Chair, FRRCC



Climate Mitigation, Adaptation, and Resilience



Water, Energy, Climate



Climate Finance, Social Inclusion and Technical Assistance



FRRCC Updates and Next Steps

Venus Welch-White, DFO, FRRCC



Meeting Adjournment

Beth Sauerhaft, Chair, FRRCC Venus Welch-White, FRRCC DFO, EPA

EPA Preamble Continued...

"Today, many opportunities, programs and benefits afforded to our citizens:

- Are not well-known or publicized to the desired beneficiaries,
- Are inequitably distributed, particularly to underserved and disadvantaged agricultural operations, tribes, and rural communities and
- Do not receive the resources or support needed for implementation, long term viability and management.

Organizations that have larger resource pools (ex: lawyers, grant writers, and engineers) are more often able obtain grants and benefits from government efforts. Smaller rural communities and marginalized groups often don't have the same staffing and capacity. With these factors in mind, it is imperative to provide intentional outreach, resources and technical assistance to create a more equitable process."

EPA Preamble Continued...

"To address these historic inequities, our committee has proposed a variety of approaches that will result in added resources, data, research, and technical assistance to these disadvantaged and underserved communities. Addressing these systemic barriers to equity will meet this committee's charge to improve the climate for current and future generations, as well as advance our hope to create a better nation for all."

New FRRCC Charge (2022-2024)

- The FRRCC should evaluate the Agency's policies and programs at the nexus of agriculture and climate change. Specific topics may include:
 - Alternative manure management systems and other methane reduction practices
 - Improved quantification of greenhouse gas emissions reductions from low-carbon biofuels
 - Climate and water quality co-benefits from nutrient management practices
 - Strategies to achieve EPA and USDA's goal of halving food loss and waste by 2030
 - Research and regulatory responses to evolving pest pressures due to climate change
 - Water management and reuse strategies to address water scarcity
- The FRRCC's recommendations should be rooted in EPA's foundational value of scientific integrity with a commitment to ensuring environmental justice for all communities.



Overview of EPA Organizational Structure and Federal Advisory Committees

Venus Welch-White, Ph.D.

Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee



SEPA Organization: Headquarter Offices

- Office of the Administrator (AO)
- Office of Air and Radiation (OAR)
- Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP)
- Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)
- Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA)
- Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR)
- Office of General Counsel (OGC)
- Office of Inspector General (OIG)
- Office of International and Tribal Affairs (OITA)
- Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM)
- Office of Mission Support (OMS)
- Office of Research and Development (ORD)
- Office of Water (OW)

⇔EPA Organization: Regional Offices

- Region 1: Boston (Serving CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, and VT)
- Region 2: New York (Serving NJ, NY, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands
- Region 3: Philadelphia (Serving DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, and WV)
- Region 4: Atlanta (Serving AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, and TN)
- Region 5: Chicago (Serving IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, and WI)
- Region 6: Dallas (Serving AR, LA, NM, OK, and TX)
- Region 7: Kansas City (Serving IA, KS, MO, and NE)
- Region 8: Denver (Serving CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, and WY)
- Region 9: San Francisco (Serving AZ, CA, HI, NV, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau)
- Region 10: Seattle (Serving AK, ID, OR, and WA)

SEPA Mission of EPA

The mission of EPA is to protect human health and the environment and works to ensure that Americans have clean air, land and water.

EPA carries out regulatory and mission supports through:

- National efforts to reduce environmental risks are based on the best available scientific information;
- Federal laws protecting human health and the environment are administered and enforced fairly, effectively and as Congress intended;

ŞEPA Mission of EPA

- Environmental stewardship is integral to U.S. policies concerning natural resources, human health, economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade, and these factors are similarly considered in establishing environmental policy;
- All parts of society--communities, individuals, businesses, and state, local and tribal governments--have access to accurate information sufficient to effectively participate in managing human health and environmental risks;
- Contaminated lands and toxic sites are cleaned up by potentially responsible parties and revitalized; and
- Chemicals in the marketplace are reviewed for safety.

Mission of EPA **ŞEPA**

To accomplish this mission, we as a regulatory agency:

- Develop and enforce regulations
 - Congress writes an environmental law
 - We implement it by writing regulations
 - Often, we set national standards that states and tribes enforce through their own regulations
 - If they fail to meet the national standards, we can help them
 - We also enforce our regulations, and help companies understand the requirements.

Grants **ŞEPA**

Grants support our overall mission

- Nearly half of our budget goes into grants (approx. 4 billion annually)
- This funding is awarded to state environmental programs, non-profits, educational institutions, and other entities.
- Grant funds can be used for a wide variety of projects, from scientific studies that help us make decisions to community cleanups.

Study Environmental issues

Science is the foundation for EPA's credible decision-making to safeguard human health and ecosystems from pollutants

- At laboratories located throughout the nation, we identify and conduct research to solve environmental problems.
- We share information with other countries, private sector organizations, academic institutions, and other agencies.
- We fund extramural research grants

Partnerships and Education

- We work with businesses, non-profit organizations, and state and local governments through dozens of voluntary partnerships.
 - Examples include:
 - conserving water and energy,
 - minimizing greenhouse gases,
 - re-using solid waste
- Education is critically important to ensure the public, educators, business owners understand the issues.
- EPA publishes and disseminates information on agency activities as reports and guidance.

⇔EPA Federal Advisory Committees @EPA

- EPA has 21 Federal Advisory Committees
- Committees are subject to the Federal Advisory Committees Act (FACA) are created to obtain advice on a wide range of environmental issues.
- Every committee meeting, no matter what the subject matter or where it is held, is dedicated to open government and citizen participation.

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ŞEPA Federal Advisory Committees @EPA Committee/ Office **Function** Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee Advises, consults with and makes recommendations to EPA on issues associated with the development of regulations to (CHPAC) Office of the Administrator/Office of address prevention of adverse health effects to children. The Children's Health Protection (AO/OCHP) Committee also carries out related functions such as collecting information and data to inform Agency decisions and serves to improve the breadth and depth of analyses related to the rules. Clean Air Act Advisory Committee (CAAAC) Provides independent advice and coursel on the development of policy and programs necessary to implement Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) and enforce the requirements of Clean Air Act amendments enacted in 1990. The Advisory Committee is consulted on economic, environmental, technical, scientific, and enforcement policy issues. Provides advice and recommendations to EPA on (1) lowering Environmental Financial Advisory Board (EFAB) costs by proposing ways of removing financial and Office of Water (OW) programmatic barriers that raise the cost of environmental protection; (2) increasing public and private investment in environmental facilities and services; (3) proposing ways to improve the efficiency of investments; and (4) building the state and local financial capacity necessary to carry out environmental mandates.