



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# 16TH EMERGING FARMERS CONFERENCE

## JANUARY 27-30, 2021

Hosted by The Food Group, the 16th annual Emerging Farmers Conference was held virtually on Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup> on zoom. This was the first time this conference was conducted completely virtual.

- A total of 454 attendees registered for this event, including 359 farmers and 95 non-farmers. Farmer registrations increased by 16% from 2020.
- A total of 1275 attended all workshops with an average of 115 participants per workshop. Since it was virtual the conference was shared live on Facebook with cross shares from organizations that were on the committee adding up to a total of 1911 views for all the workshops with an average of 174 views per workshop.
- A toolkit on using Zoom and accessing interpretation was created and shared with community organizations that serve BIPOC and Immigrant farmers
- Attendees logged on from 26 different states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Virginia, Vermont, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, South Dakota, Missouri, Kentucky, California, Utah, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, District of Columbia, Montana, Maine, Texas, Washington, Oklahoma, Ohio, Louisiana, South Carolina, Hawaii, and Tennessee.
- Attendees also logged on from 3 countries outside the United States: New Brunswick and British Columbia from Canada, Venezuela, and Haiti.
- Interpreters provided simultaneous interpretation in 9 languages: Hmong, Karen, Kirundi, Somali, Burmese, Spanish, Nepali, Swahili, and Arabic.
- 12 prizes were raffled to attendees.
- In lieu of sharing a meal with one another, we had a live cooking show with Ethiopian chef Mimi Selam.
- The conference was emceed by Delinda "Oogie" Pushetonequa and Big River Farm's Operation Specialist Christina Elías. Although the conference was virtual they successfully engaged attendees during "in-between" transitions. Oogie lead stretches in between classes.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE EFC:

"It was educational, refreshing, and inspiring to participate in the workshops offered over the last few days. Not only did I learn a lot and get to hear from a fantastic group of experienced farmers, I also felt more connected to the community at large (a big feat in COVID times)... I feel more empowered to go after some of our bigger goals on food production here." - Farmer

Hosted by:



big river farms  
*a program of the food group*

## THINGS TO CELEBRATE

1. *This was the first virtual conference that the planning committee has ever conducted.*
2. *We had an intern who helped Renewing the Countryside create an official [Emerging Farmers Website](#).*
3. *Due to the ability of Facebook live and cross-sharing between organizations, we reached at least 3,186 views in sum of the entire conference.*
4. *We reached participants in 31 different counties in MN, 25 different states, and 4 countries.*
5. *9 Different languages were interpreted simultaneously on zoom.*
6. *Presenters, moderators, interpreters, and committee members gained new skills on virtual presentation.*
7. *All the workshops had BIPOC farmers as presenters.*
8. *There were more attendees per class than any other conferences before.*
9. *A virtual conference offered the ability to record sessions and share. Many people could not make it to the live workshops due to work and school but have access to conference content for 3 months post conference.*
10. *85% of farmers were emerging farmers.*
11. *Tiffany LaShae was the first Black Woman to present as the keynote at the Emerging Farmers Conference.*



*Cooking with Mimi Food Demo*

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



*Tiffany LaShae*

Tiffany LaShae grew up in Oak Cliff, TX without any farming experiences. She attended Dillard University, an HBCU (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) in New Orleans, LA and received a business degree. She wanted to heal her Mom and her community from diseases that were nutrition related. She realized that there are major disparities within race, socio-economic status, and location on food access.

She started looking into agricultural practices to grow food for her community. She believed that “one of the

most radical and revolutionary things you can do is grow your own food and eat from the land.”

During her keynote, she addressed issues of racism in the agricultural system and shared her stories and experiences of how she is working towards overcoming those barriers. She provided action steps on-farm and off-farm for educators, land stewards, and farmers. She also shared an intimate story about why representation matters, and a name given to her during a farming project in Malawi, Africa.

*“Tiffany's keynote got me fired up! Can't wait to start farming and rethinking about what role I play in the food system.”*

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## FARMER PRESENTERS

*"I was able to view the session with the Community Mentor Panel and was really struck by the camaraderie that came through, not to mention all the knowledge that was shared. This was quite an undertaking and I wanted to say thank you for this wonderful collaborative creation of a virtual conference."*

The uniqueness of a virtual conference allowed us to have special farmer presenters from all over MN and South Dakota without traveling as a barrier. We started the conference with three weekdays evening sessions that paved the way for the main conference day on Saturday. On Saturday, we started the day with special pre-recorded welcome videos from MDA's Assistant Commissioner Patrice Bailey, Senator Tina Smith, and USDA-FSA National Outreach Director,

Latrice Hill. Hope Flanagan provided a land blessing, a song, and story telling to jumpstart the day.

Although we only had 11 workshops, these workshops were rich in diversity and conversations. Majority of presenters were farmers. 8 out of 11 workshops had a presenter who spoke English as second language. We provided information on how farmers can find funding for projects, organic pest management techniques, record-keeping, value-added production, accessing land. Majority of farmers are emerging farmers; 100% found that the Farmer Mentor's panel was very valuable and 100% plan to use the information that they have been provided.



*Mentors Panel:*

*(Top left to right) Javier Garcia, Jessika Greendeer, May Lee,  
(Bottom left to right) Lolly Aguilar, Hope Flanagan*

## FARMER DEMOGRAPHICS

- ***Farming experience:*** On average, 13% of farmers attending the conference have been farming less than one year, 72% of the farmers from 2 to 9 years, 15% 10 years or more.
- ***Counties of farms in MN:*** Attendees farm in 31 counties in Minnesota. We had farmer representation from 4 countries: United States, Haiti, Canada, and Venezuela.
- ***Languages:*** Farmers spoke 10 different languages: English, Hmong, Karen, Kirundi, Somali, Burmese, Spanish, Nepali, Swahili, Arabic.

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## WORKSHOPS

According to the polls from zoom, 99% farmers learned new content and 97% plan to use that information. 100% of the workshops featured Black, Indigenous, Farmers of Color as presenters. 4 out of 11 workshops were panels with farmers sharing their stories and expertise. Hope Flanagan, a Native American elder, lead Saturday's big event with a land blessing and shared a beautiful song. Tiffany's



Land Blessing and Storytelling:  
Hope Flanagan

keynote wrapped up the conference in such a fitting way that spoke loudly to the theme of this year's conference, Reclaiming our Voices: For Farmers, By Farmers, With Farmers.

A total of 11 sessions were offered:

- 1) *An Emerging Farmers Guide to Conservation: Support, Grant Funding & Resources*
- 2) *Grants for farmers: Finding Funding for Projects, On-Farm Research, and Infrastructure*
- 3) *Diversifying Farm Income Through Value-Added Products*
- 4) *Community mentor panel: Overcoming Obstacles and Reclaiming our Voices in Food and Agriculture*
- 5) *Welcome Session: Welcome videos from leaders and Land Blessing and Teachings with Hope Flanagan*
- 6) *Choosing the Right Market for You: Scaling to Wholesale vs. Direct Markets*
- 7) *Profitable farming: Keeping Records and Setting Prices*
- 8) *Food Demo: Cooking with Mimi, hosted by Healthy Food Healthy Lives (U of MN)*
- 9) *Insect and Disease Management*
- 10) *Farmer Panel: Challenges and Opportunities for Accessing Land*
- 11) *Keynote: Tiffany LaShae*



Land Access Panel:  
(Top left to right) Naima Dhore, Elizabeth Bryant  
(Bottom) Dani Pieratos

Hosted by:



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

**CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE:** Lillian Otieno (MN Department of Agriculture), Laura Mirafuentes (The Food Group), Annelie Livingston-Anderson (Land Stewardship Project), Natalie Hoidal (UMN Extension), Karl Hakanson (UMN Extension), Aaron Blyth (Latino Economic Development Center), Nan Roberts (Volunteer), Naima Dhore (Somali American Farmers Association), Erika Legros (Gardener at Fond du Lac Bimaaji'idiwin Gitigaan or Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College Tribal Extension program Bimaaji'idwin Ojibwe Garden Program), Eli Goodwell (Renewing the Countryside), Kaitlyn Walsh (Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College Tribal Extension program Bimaaji'idwin Ojibwe Garden Program), Shannon Kesner (MN Department of Agriculture) Christina Elías (The Food Group), Dan Mahoney (USDA-FSA), Chuck Anderas (Midwest Organic Sustainable Education Services), Ka Zoua Berry (The Food Group), Theresa Keaveny (Sustainable Farming Association), and Rodrigo Cala (Cala Farms)

**Other Conference Support:** May Lee (The Food Group), Eric Wilson (The Food Group), Matt Frank (The Food Group), Hannah Sutcliffe (The Food Group), Danielle Piraino (The Food Group), Technical Support (MARCO), Weaving Cultures LLC and Global Languages Connect LLC (Interpretation Services)

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