



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

15TH EMERGING FARMERS CONFERENCE

JANUARY 24 – 25, 2020

Hosted by The Food Group, the 15th annual Emerging Farmers Conference was held Friday, January 24 – Saturday, January 25, 2020 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

- A total of 390 attendees registered for the two-day event, including 220 farmers and 170 non-farmers. Farmer attendance increased by 33% from 2019.
- Attendees came from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, New York, Kansas, South Dakota, and Tennessee.
- Interpreters translated conference sessions into ten languages this year, one more than in 2019: Hmong, Karen, Kurdish/Kirundi, Somali, Burmese, Spanish, Nepali, Swahili, and American Sign Language.
- Friday's meal was catered by Chelle's Kitchen caterer, and Saturday's lunch was catered by local restaurant Lily's Authentic cuisine. Saturday's food was Kenyan to reflect the culture of this year's Keynote Speaker, Moses Momanyi.
- The conference was emceed by Delinda "Oogie" Pushetonequa who shared memories of farming in her indigenous culture.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE EFC?

"The diversity of different cultures and backgrounds."

"How to transition to organic and grow and maintain and make progress."

"How to add chickens to farmland and start a small business."

"It is important to find the right land and soil."

HIGHLIGHTS

Friday Night Workshops

In response to farmer feedback, we offered three Friday night hands-on workshops this year: "Basic Equipment Maintenance," "Organic Insect & Disease Management," and "Grow Mushrooms!" We saw a drastic increase in Friday night workshop attendance this year, with a record of 94 farmers at the "Grow Mushrooms" workshop! Basic Equipment Maintenance was attended by a smaller group of farmers, which led to intimate conversations on best practices.



Tractor Maintenance Workshop

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Moses and Lonah

Moses Momanyi grew up on a farm in rural western Kenya. He and his wife Lonah started Dawn2Dusk Gardens in 2009 on five acres that they rented in the St. Croix Falls, WI, area. In 2014, they purchased their own land and moved to Cambridge, MN, where they are working to bring the land back to organic status.

In his keynote address, Moses highlighted the true essence of entrepreneurship. He shared how his positive attitude helped him take the leap of faith to buy

his own farmland and home, despite challenges with weather and not having all the right markets in place. His story exemplified that successful entrepreneurship requires a plan, flexibility, and belief in oneself.

"Moses story of how he started farming was helpful to see someone who struggled but 'made it' and it's a relatable inspiration." - Farmer

SPECIAL SPEAKERS

This year's conference was blessed with great speakers. Our opening ceremony included a beautiful blessing and acknowledgement of the land by Lini Wilkins, Elder with the Dine (Navajo originally from Arizona). This was followed by a personalized welcome video sent from Senator Tina Smith recognizing the importance of the conference and the farmers who attend. Congresswoman Ilhan Abdullahi Omar spoke about the importance of nutrition for our next generation and her early career in nutrition. Over lunch, Assistant Commissioner Patrice Bailey from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture shared findings from his numerous listening sessions throughout Minnesota focused on issue that emerging farmers are facing.

Other special speakers included Martha Archer from Mill City Farmers Market on behalf of Harvester Level Sponsor Cobank, who shared information about their Next Stage Grant program for socially/economically challenged farmers. Henry Jimenz, Executive Director of Latino Economic Development Center, spoke about their continued support for this conference and commitment to engaging more Latino farmers. Sophia Lenarz-Coy, Executive Director of The Food Group, commended the conference for drawing a national audience and its continual growth in recent years.



Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture, Patrice Bailey

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FARMER DEMOGRAPHICS*

- Farming experience: On average, 12% of farmers attending the conference have been farming less than one year, 38% of the farmers from 1 to 5 years, 16% from 6 to 10 years, and 20% more than 11 years.
- States and counties of farms: Attendees farm in 24 counties in Minnesota, 2 counties in Wisconsin, 1 county in each state Iowa, Nebraska, New York, Kansas, South Dakota, and Tennessee.
- Ethnicity and culture: Farmers at this year's conference represented many ethnicities and cultural groups, with 97% identifying as farmers of color. Farmers represented the ethnicities: African American, Cameroonian, Hmong, Karen, Latino, Mixed, Native American, and Yazidi. The most notable change from last year is we have participation from Native American growers, and an increase in out-of-state farmers.
- Age Ranges of Farmers: 33% of farmers were ages 51 or older, 45% of farmers were ages 31-50, 17% of farmers were ages 21-30, and 5% of farmers were under the age of 20.
Gender of Farmers: 52% of farmers were women, 48 % were men, and 1% identified themselves as other.

**Not all demographic surveys were completely filled out.*

WORKSHOPS

In feedback collected from this year's workshops, an average of 76% of attendees evaluated that the information presented was helpful. The three best reviewed workshops were: Grow Mushrooms, Organic Pest Management, and Farmland Access. 100% of attendees found the information useful in the workshops "Seed Saving," "Farm Dreams: Goal Setting," and "Make Record Keeping Make Money"

A total of 12 workshops were offered on Saturday, including:

- 1) *Farmland Access panel: Strategies for Finding Land and Accessing Capital*
- 2) *Adding Chickens to Your Farm*
- 3) *Growing Premium Asparagus*
- 4) *The Future of Urban Agriculture*
- 5) *Soil Fertility Management*
- 6) *Adding Sheep and Goats to your farm*
- 7) *Seed Saving*
- 8) *Farm Dreams: Goal Setting*
- 9) *Soil Health for Fruit and Vegetable Growers*
- 10) *Starting a Small Food Bussiness*
- 11) *Farmer to Farmer World Café: Adapting to Climate Change*
- 12) *Make Record Keeping Make Money*



Farmer attendance increased by 33% since 2019

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CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE: Rodrigo Cala (Latino Economic Development Center), Annelie Livingston-Anderson (Land Stewardship Project), Natalie Hoidal (UMN Extension), Wayne Martin (UMN Extension), Lindsay Mutegi (USDA – FSA), Lillian Otieno (MN Department of Agriculture), Laura Mirafuentes (The Food Group), Mhonpaj Lee (The Food Group), David Van Eeckhout (The Good Acre), 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), Tou Xiong (Hmong American Partnership), Cindy Tong (University of Minnesota), Awana Moye (Farmer), Molly Schaus (The Food Group), Kaitlyn Walsh (The Food Group), Danielle Piraino (The Food Group), & Hannah Sutcliffe (The Food Group).

SPONSORS:

Sustainer \$8,000+

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Latino Economic Development Center



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Land Stewardship Project
Produce Safety Program (MN Dept of Agriculture)
MISA/NCRSARE
The Good Acre
Renewing the Countryside
Nan Roberts
Naima Dhore
Erika Legros
USDA-Farm Service Agency
Hmong American Partnership
Awana Moye
University of MN Healthy Food Healthy Lives
Institute
University of Minnesota Extension

Seed Sower \$250-\$999

Crossroads Resource Center
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MCIA (Minnesota Crop Improvement Association)
Pesticide Action Network North America
Minnesota Farmers Market Association
Sustainable Farming Association
Mississippi Market
USDA NRCS
North Circle Seed Stories
Minnesota Farmers Union
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Lina & Gene Farley Center for Peace, Justice & Sustainability
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