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## MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

FACILITIES OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE • FACILITIES PLANNING, DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION & ENERGY  
PROCUREMENT & LOGISTICS • REAL ESTATE

# Carbon-Intensive Foods Sub-Committee Meeting

Thursday August 8, 2019, 01:00 P.M.

301 W. Preston St. Eleventh Floor, Olmsted Conference Room  
Baltimore, MD

**Purpose:** Monthly meeting of the Carbon-Intensive Foods Sub-Committee

### **Attendees:**

Scott Barao, Maryland Cattlemen's  
Association  
Erin Biehl, Johns Hopkins Center for a  
Livable Future  
Danielle Bauer, Maryland Grain Producers,  
Maryland Pork Producers  
Bob Cooksey, Maryland & Virginia Milk  
Producers Cooperative Association  
Nicole Copeland, MCE  
Joseph Eccleston, DPSCS  
Colby Ferguson, Maryland Farm Bureau  
Delegate Jim Gilchrist, MGA  
Calvin Gladden, DGS  
Thomas Hickey, USM  
Robert Hopp, DGS  
Richard Louis, DGS  
James McKittrick, DNR  
Madelyn Miller, DGS

Tal Petty, Hollywood Oyster Company  
Holly Porter, Delmarva Poultry Industry  
Janet Ranganathan, World Resources  
Institute (joined by phone)  
Ellen Robertson, DGS  
Melissa Ross, Governor's Legislative Office  
Raychel Santo, Johns Hopkins Center for a  
Livable Future  
Jason Schellhardt, MDA  
Hans Schmidt, MDA  
Cassie Shirk, MDA  
Emily Soontornsaratool, DGS  
David St. Jean, DGS  
Michael Swygert, DGS  
Allison Tjaden, UMDCP Dining Services  
Sharon Vanzie, DGS  
Chloe Waterman, Friends of the Earth

### **Minutes:**

#### **I. Welcome**

- Hans Schmidt opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He stated the goal of the subcommittee is not to prohibit the purchase of meat by the State but is to have a discussion about carbon-intensive foods. Mr. Schmidt said that everyone's input and information is welcome.

- Emily Soontornsaratool explained her role as Green Purchasing Committee (GPC) Designee.
- Scott Barao requested and everyone in the room introduced themselves.
- A conference call was set up so that Janet Ranganathan could participate.
  - In the future the subcommittee encouraged in-person participation.

## **II. Review of Prior Activities of the Subcommittee**

- Emily Soontornsaratool reviewed the prior activities of the subcommittee. The Carbon-Intensive Foods subcommittee held its first meeting on July 9, 2019. This subcommittee of the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee was formed as part of an agreement between the Department of General Services (DGS) and Delegate Jim Gilchrist following Gilchrist’s withdrawal of House Bill 492 (Procurement – Carbon-Intensive Foods) to study the procurement of carbon-intensive foods.
  - Delegate Gilchrist clarified that the agreement is between DGS and the House Health and Government Operations Committee and referred to the letter from Chair Pendergrass.
  - Chloe Waterman said that the written agreement included a timeline and was not to only study the issue, but to also create deliverables. The documents that describe the agreement can be found in a Google folder shared to committee members.
- Emily Soontornsaratool emphasized that purchasing decisions are made by individual departments and agencies, not by DGS or by the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee.

## **III. Path Forward for the Sub-Committee**

- Hans Schmidt stated that, moving forward, the Sub-Committee will be co-chaired by Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Department of General Services.

## **IV. Presentation on Sustainable Practices in Agriculture**

- Hans Schmidt provided a verbal presentation on agricultural practices used in Maryland. He stated that farmers in Maryland are addressing carbon sequestration and are taking on other efforts to promote environmental health and water quality goals. Mr. Schmidt described the “co-benefits” from aligning farming practices with environmental and human health. All foods play an important part of the agricultural cycle. He emphasized his belief that Maryland has the most progressive farmers in the world and referred to his experience serving on the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC) and his background as a Maryland farmer.
- Mr. Schmidt discussed the need for a balanced diet of plants and animals for Maryland’s environment as well as health and said that the committee needs to recognize that food associated with higher greenhouse gas emissions than others are a part of a healthy environment.
- Mr. Schmidt referred to the definition of sustainable agriculture as found in Title 7 of U.S. Code § 3103(19):

*“An integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long-term satisfy human food*

*and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends; make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.”*

- Mr. Schmidt concluded his presentation by emphasizing that the subcommittee cannot look at food with blinders on or only by focusing on a list – it needs to consider agriculture at a larger scale.

#### V. Roundtable Updates from Sub-Committee Members

- Emily Soontornsaratool led the state agency members in sharing their responses to a food purchasing worksheet. Information gathering will play an important part of the Sub-Committee’s work. Agencies responded to questions on who sets menus, how far in advance meals are planned, the quantity of meals produced, tracking of food loss and waste, the facilities food is prepared in, and what kinds of food contracts are used.
- Joseph Eccleston, representing the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), read through the answers he provided on the worksheet.
  - Menu-Setter Questions
    - The Director of Correctional Food Service and Correctional Dietary Regional Managers set the menus for DPSCS facilities. Menu items are designed to follow nutritional guidelines. Consideration is also made for religious dietary restrictions.
    - It is unknown how much procured food is locally grown as each facility procures their own food. Facilities on the eastern shore and in western Maryland work with local farms. Consistent availability might be a challenge when purchasing locally grown food.
    - Menus are on a set cycle and do not frequently change.
    - A rough estimate of the meals prepared in fiscal year 2018 was 25,000,000 meals.
    - It is unknown if individual facilities track their food loss or food waste. This topic may be investigated more closely with a new food service contract.
  - Facility Questions
    - There are 22 correctional facilities throughout the state that provide food.
    - These facilities prepare food on site in full kitchens.
  - Contract Question
    - Facilities pull from statewide-contracts and some also go through local vendors.
- Nicole Copeland, representing Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE), read through the answers she provided on the worksheet.
  - Menu-Setter Questions
    - MCE does not set menus for the institutions they service. MCE operates a food services plant and provides food products.

- Nicole was unaware of the amount of locally grown food procured by MCE.
- MCE is unsure of how far in advance a menu would be set for each institution that is a customer.
- In fiscal year 2019, the MCE Meat Plant sold 4,516,475.36 lbs. of food items to their customers.
- MCE does not track food loss or food waste. However, MCE's food safety tracks all items used in production in the event of a recall.
- Facility Questions
  - MCE serves 37 customers.
  - The MCE central kitchen uses cooking kettles, ovens, and slicers. Their Meat Plant has a patty machine, band saws, a stuffer, injectors for roast, and three smoke houses.
- Contract Question
  - MCE purchases food through contracts that go out to bid.
- Tom Hickey, representing the University System of Maryland (USM), had previously answered many of the questions on the worksheet during the first subcommittee meeting. He reviewed some information for the benefit of those present. He said that there are 12 institutions in the USM and that half do not have traditional food services. Two institutions, the University of Maryland, College Park (UMDCP), and Salisbury University, do their food services in-house while others have food services contractors. Those contractors also procure food. The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and Bowie State University both have sustainability goals built into their RFPs for food service contracts.
- Allison Tjaden, representing Dining Services at University of Maryland, College Park, read through the answers she provided on the worksheet.
  - Menu-Setter Questions
    - Senior Executive Chef John Gray sets the menu.
    - Twenty-eight percent of the food procured by Dining Services is considered "sustainable" for being locally grown, ecologically, fair trade, and/or humanely-raised. Dining services defines "local" as grown within 250 miles of the institution. Ms. Tjaden thinks that local foods make up a significant portion of the sustainable foods Dining Services procures, though she did not have a number to support that during the meeting.
    - Most meals are planned about a semester prior. Pop-up specials are developed a couple months ahead of time.
    - Dining Services estimates that it serves 6 million meals per year.
    - Dining Services works with student groups and is implementing a new food management system to track food waste. The system is called Food Pro.
  - Facility Questions
    - Dining Services runs three dining halls, restaurants around campus, food court operations, and concessions. The full list of facilities can be found at <http://dining.umd.edu/locations/>.

- Food preparation facilities vary based on location. However, a central commissary is also run on campus for food prep.
- Contract Question
  - UMDCP does not pull from state-wide contracts; Dining Services procures food. Prime vendors include US Foods, Keany Produce, and Acme Paper.
  - Ms. Tjaden also provided the update that UMDCP signed the Cool Food Pledge, created by the World Resources Institute, and has committed to reducing their carbon emissions by changing the foods they purchase.
- Ms. Soontornsaratoool shared responses from two healthcare facilities as the Department of Health (MDH) was unable to attend.
- Ms. Soontornsaratoool provided the response from Christopher Mudge at the Holly Center.
  - Menu-Setter Questions
    - Mr. Mudge, supervisors, and a Dietician set menus for this facility.
    - It is unknown how much food is local.
    - The menu is on a 5 week cycle.
    - Yearly 1,095 meals are served.
    - The facility tracks food waste for monetary purposes. There are no issues reported with tracking.
  - Facility Questions
    - The Holly Center provides food for itself and its Café for the public and staff to purchase foods.
    - All foods are prepared on site. The kitchen has ovens, a stove, steamers, blenders, a buffalo chopper, fryers, soup kettles, etc.
  - Contract Question
    - The Holly Center procures food from food contracts with a company, by pulling from state-wide contracts, and from food service contracts.
- Ms. Soontornsaratoool provided the response from Carrie Foye at the Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center.
  - Menu-Setter Questions
    - Robin Hawkins sets menus for the facility.
    - Local food is purchased via Bel Air or Capital. A challenge to purchasing local foods is unknown options.
    - Menus are on a 4-week cycle.
    - The Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center provides about 328,500 meals per year.
    - The facility tracks food waste but a problem with tracking could be that cooks do not always record waste.
  - Facility Questions
    - The facility provides food only for itself.
    - The kitchen has steam kettles, fryers, ovens, slicers, a tilt skillet, and grill.
  - Contract Question

- Food is procured from state wide contracts including Kerates, Food Pro, Good Source, William Hill, and Dori Stanley Foods.
- Ms. Soontornsarathool concluded this portion of the meeting and said that worksheet responses would be compiled and sent to subcommittee members along with the meeting minutes.

## VI. Questions and Comments

- Hans Schmidt facilitated a discussion and comment period. A timer was used to limit comments to two minutes or less.
- Scott Barao said that if a deliverable from this subcommittee is a list of carbon-intensive foods, the committee would be assuming that reducing animal products consumed would have no impact on human life. He suggested that reducing the consumption of animal products and replacing them with plant products could increase food waste and that food waste is important for the subcommittee to consider. Mr. Barao said that he thought it would be a fallacy to use global data as a stand-in for the foods produced in Maryland. Mr. Barao said that the subcommittee ought to look at kilocalories delivered and nutrient composition of foods when comparing foods, not just associated greenhouse gas emissions and was concerned about potential effects to human dietary quality, human quality of life, and food waste that he thought the subcommittee could cause.
  - Mr. Hickey agreed with Mr. Barao regarding food waste as a potential way to reduce the greenhouse gas associated with State food purchases. Mr. Hickey also mentioned that food waste was brought up during the subcommittee's first meeting.
- Janet Ranganathan introduced herself and spoke about the urgency needed to address climate change. She said that we have about 12 years to bend the curve and limit global temperatures rising beyond what has been decided is a safe zone. She said that global agricultural practices contribute to the problem of climate change, and cited an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report that had been released earlier that day (August 8, 2019) on climate change and land use. The report found that climate change poses a threat to the world's food supply. Ms. Ranganathan said that we cannot become compliant with climate goals without addressing the food system. She said that no one was saying all beef consumption should be eliminated, and that by protein content, beef compared to plant-based protein has a much higher carbon footprint. She then said that beef consumption in the United States has decreased since the 1970s and that bringing the current level of consumption down by 1 ½ beef burgers per person per week could be a goal.
- Raychel Santo said that the Center for a Livable Future has a data set which this subcommittee may find useful. She said that dataset has information about the environmental impacts associated with different foods in the United States, including in regards to carbon intensity and water quality. Ms. Santo said that she thought using values for foods in the United States could serve as a proxy for foods Maryland may be purchasing.
- Colby Ferguson mentioned that he sits on the MCCC and that the Carbon-Intensive Foods subcommittee conflicts with the MCCC. Mr. Ferguson said that

he struggles relating what he had heard at this meeting to what he knows is being done with soil health in Maryland. He said that carbon sequestration occurs through growth of perennial plants and suggested that cattle and small ruminant grazing on perennials could be a carbon sink. He said that Maryland needs to have carbon sinks in the state through agriculture and forestry. He thinks that carbon needs to be removed from the air and that only reducing emissions is not enough. Mr. Ferguson also expressed concern about the potential environmental impacts that could arise from diets of only plant-based foods and acknowledged that Maryland farmers do not produce enough food to feed Maryland's population. He cited almond milk as an example of an alternative to an animal product that is associated with its own negative environmental impacts. Mr. Ferguson said that animal agriculture should not be labeled as evil.

- Tal Petty mentioned the day's headlines and that the IPCC special report identifies ruminants and rice cultivation as sources of methane emissions. Mr. Petty said he is highly cautious of codifying food policy and expressed confusion about the environmental impacts of shellfish. Shellfish had been identified on the draft list of carbon-intensive foods, though Mr. Petty said that the Department of the Environment had previously recognized oysters as being beneficial when considering their effect on the carbon cycle.
- Bob Cooksey spoke of the declining number of dairy farms and said that Maryland is a milk deficit state. He said that the dairy farmers in Maryland are very conscious of their carbon footprint and take efforts to be sustainable.
- Delegate Gilchrist thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and said that there was a lot of work to be done when examining carbon emissions associated with food but thought that this discussion was eye-opening. He stressed that the work of this subcommittee would not put anyone out of business and that the goal should be to reduce carbon emissions in the long term.
- Chloe Waterman said that she had no objections to using data from beef industry funded studies when determining the environmental effects of beef production. She also said that when comparing by protein content, the greenhouse gas emissions associated with beef are higher than plants with protein. Ms. Waterman said that consumption of animal products needs to be reduced in countries like the United States, where people consume meat and beef at a rate much higher than the global average. She said that she agrees with Mr. Barao that public health is something to be considered, but that Americans consume more meat than is recommended and red meat has been labeled a carcinogen.
  - Ms. Ranganathan commented that the World Resources Institute is not funded by industry.
  - Ms. Santo said that it is important to reduce food waste and change dietary consumption. She said that it will be impossible to meet global emission reductions goals without addressing those two things, even if emissions from all other sectors were cut to zero.
- Erin Biehl said that she wanted to clarify a point made earlier about carbon sequestration. She thought it had been said that shifting diets away from animal based products would result in fewer carbon sinks. Ms. Biehl said that this was not entirely true, and that shifting diets can be managed in a way that promotes

carbon sinks. She then said that while eliminating food waste has a climate mitigation potential of four gigatonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide, dietary shifts had a mitigation potential double that. Ms. Biehl also said that an opportunity for health co-benefits existed – people eating more fruits and vegetables.

- Allison Tjaden commented about how this topic brings together issues that are on a local, state-wide, and global scale. She said that she has read a bit about what UMDCP is doing through the President’s Climate Commitment, purchasing carbon offsets. She suggested the subcommittee explore investigating carbon offsets to respond to carbon emissions from food production, maybe as a side conversation.
  - Mr. Petty said that an infrastructure exists regarding credits for carbon sequestration.
- Holly Porter asked the subcommittee if the list and best practices document had been considered with a local perspective. She said that Maryland chicken production is about as local as it gets. She also said that chicken is close to a 1:1 ratio for the inputs to the calorie output and that the only animal better from this perspective is fish.
  - Ms. Soontornsaratool mentioned the Maryland Foods for Maryland Institutions Task Force and that they were holding a meeting 8/9/19 in the Miller Senate Office Building in Annapolis.
  - Ellen Robertson answered a question from Ms. Porter about communication between this subcommittee and that task force by saying that there is overlapping membership.
  - Ms. Waterman said that her impression was that outside of chicken and dairy, which are relatively local products, Maryland is in the global market for the food it procures.
  - Mr. Ferguson confirmed that he thought the majority of the food procured by Maryland is not local.
- Mr. Schmidt said that he had read through what the sub-committee had previously done and perceived the list as prohibiting or limiting Maryland’s procurement of beef.
  - Delegate Gilchrist responded that it was not the intent of the agreement to limited or prohibit the procurement of beef..
  - Mr. Ferguson said that it is hard to look at a list and not interpret it as a prohibition.
  - Ms. Waterman said that in an ideal world, this subcommittee would recommend that the State track all emissions from the food it procures but the decision to limit the list was one of practicality. She said that Friends of the Earth and other organizations have found that, by protein content, the greenhouse gas emissions associated with animal products is higher than plant products. Ms. Waterman said that it makes sense to have this subcommittee focus on and recommend tracking foods which are carbon-intensive, rather than all foods.
  - Mr. Ferguson asked for clarification about the endpoints of life cycle assessment studies for food.

- Ms. Waterman responded to Mr. Ferguson and said that 83% of greenhouse gases from the food system are emitted pre-farm gate. Though she said this was true for most foods she gave the example of potato chips being a product for which the ratio was different. She said that because potatoes had such low emissions, the process of frying them for chips made it so that only approximately 50% of their emissions were pre-farm gate. She said it would yield more scientifically robust data for DGS to track all foods procured and calculate their associated emissions, but that this would be difficult from a practical standpoint.
- Mr. Barao said that a major flaw of the work previously done by the subcommittee was that it gave no consideration to human dietary needs nor to human quality of life. He said that the subcommittee was called to develop a list and he disapproved of that.
- Ms. Soontornsaratool explained that the study falls under the purview of the GPC to study the environmental impacts of what the State buys. If the subcommittee were to create a best practices document and it were to be issued after going through an approval process, the document would only be a recommendation. The GPC does not have the authority to enforce those suggestions.
- Ms. Ranganathan, responded to Mr. Barao and said that climate change is a quality of life issue and that it is already beginning to impact Maryland's eastern shore through saltwater intrusion, storm surges, and sea level rise.
- Richard Louis asked the subcommittee if there was a study that compared grass-fed beef to cattle raised other ways. He also commented that he thought reducing meat consumption could be in line with improving public health outcomes. He shared that his doctor tells him to eat less meat to be healthier.
- Mr. Schmidt said that Maryland farmers are using sustainable practices and that the cycle that is important to producing plants includes inputs from animals. He commented that Maryland's eastern shore is densely populated with farms, like the Midwest, and that Maryland is not capable of producing enough food to feed all of its inhabitants. He spoke about the progress made in protecting the local watershed, and that every action within a watershed eventually effects water quality. He said that Maryland's agricultural workers are conscious of that and are doing what they can to use good practices.
- Mr. Schmidt said that co-chairs of the subcommittee would consider all of the comments made today and formulate a report. He asked for people to send information that they think is important.
  - Danielle Bauer spoke in response to Mr. Schmidt's point that Maryland farmers are the best in the nation. She agreed that Maryland farmers use the best methods to promote soil health and water quality. Ms. Bauer said that other states and even other countries, like Peru, look to Maryland's example. She said that growing corn acts as a carbon sink in Maryland and that the grain industry would not be able to be in Maryland without the other industry that is here, like beef and poultry production. She said that the whole cycle needs to be considered.

- James McKittrick said he thought that oysters were a low carbon food but that shellfish was listed as the fourth most carbon-intensive food type on the draft list of carbon-intensive foods.
  - Ms. Waterman said that scientific reports have grouped different types of shellfish when coming up with an average. She said that oysters are a low-carbon food and thought the draft list should be updated to reflect that.
- Ms. Waterman addressed the Co-Chairs to say a report was not one of the deliverables from the agreement between DGS and the House Health and Government Operations Committee.
  - Ms. Schmidt said it was his intent to not provide a list of carbon-intensive foods as a deliverable from the subcommittee. He mentioned the special report released by the IPCC that morning and said that those numbers were not descriptive about what is happening in Maryland.
    - Mr. Barao asked about the relevancy of global information to this subcommittee. He suggested that Maryland was not procuring any beef from Sub-Saharan Africa and that agricultural practices used there are substantially different than the ones used by farmers in Maryland.
    - Ms. Waterman reiterated that the beef industry supplied data also indicates similar findings.
  - Mr. Schmidt said the intent of the subcommittee is not to come up with a list of restricted foods but to come up with ways to reduce our carbon footprint from food.
    - Ms. Waterman said that the agreement was specific about reductions being achieved through food purchasing.
  - Mr. Schmidt said that he thinks people should have the choice to decide what they eat and that the subcommittee needs to be careful about its messaging. He said again that he believes there is a cycle for environmental health that animal raising is critical to. He said the message of the subcommittee should not be reducing the consumption of animals. Mr. Schmidt mentioned the length of time that methane lasts in the atmosphere and improvements in the milk production of dairy cows over time. He said reducing the emissions associated with food has to be looked at as a much bigger picture than as a list of foods to influence consumption of.
  - Delegate Gilchrist said that a list of recommendations that this subcommittee makes would not be what people form their menus around. He said that this subcommittee will not end the purchase of meat by the State. Delegate Gilchrist said that any recommendations this subcommittee could gather would not change that.
  - Ms. Porter asked why a deliverable would then be a list of foods. She said that the list had a negative impact and would be a public relations concern for the subcommittee.
  - Ms. Soontornsaratool said that the draft list had been generated from a review of scientific consensus in existing literature, but it was only intended as a starting point of discussion. She said that the subcommittee

should be free to discuss the form and granularity of the list moving forward, including possibility of breaking it down to “local” or “grass-fed” sub-categories, or tracking a broader category such as “proteins.” She said that the intent of the list was to be able to track associated greenhouse gas emissions at some level, even if DGS was not able to commit to tracking all food purchases. She encouraged more conversation and said that the list was not intended to prohibit the purchasing of any type of food.

- Ms. Tjaden said that UMDCP Dining Services has started to track a similar list of food products and that Dining Services had already been tracking food waste. She said that a list of foods or of food categories to track had been useful in comparing what was bought to what was used or wasted. They could determine if they were wasting one category of food more than another. Food categories were needed for evaluation and analysis so it could be ensured that progress was made.
- Mr. Schmidt closed the meeting. Mr. Schmidt expressed that all comments would be important moving forward and the next step for the subcommittee would be for the co-chairs to meet and decide how we will move forward. He said the co-chairs would update the committee members.