



Urban Ag Work Group Meeting Notes

Fairfax Food Council

April 15, 2024

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Introductions:

Attendees individually introduced themselves and their urban agriculture backgrounds and interests.

Presentation of Community Health Assessment Data

Sarah White, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Fairfax County Health Department

Sarah presented the data collected during the Health Department's recent Community Health Assessment. A lot of data was covered, but here are some key statistics.

- Adults who have **not completed high school** are over **2 times** as likely to be unemployed and nearly **6 times** more likely to live in poverty compared to those with a college degree.
- Nearly **half (46%)** of Fairfax residents spend more than 30% of their income on housing.
 - Nearly **1 in 5 (19%)** of households live above the federal poverty line but still struggle to meet basic needs due to the high cost of living and limited financial resources.
- Nearly **half (48%)** of food-insecure residents can't get help from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) because their households make too much money to qualify.
- The 7 Corners/Bailey's Crossroads area and the Hybla Valley area are consistently in the highest need categories.

Work Group members shared their surprise that students lacked vegetable consumption, given that every FCPS school has a Salad Bar open during lunch. Plus, the Annandale area has 5 schools that participate in the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program. FCPS is considering introducing hot vegetable options for students. Data regarding Youth/Teens are from the 2022 Fairfax County Youth Survey.

Work Group members also mentioned that gardening is a good way to improve food access and increase physical activity.

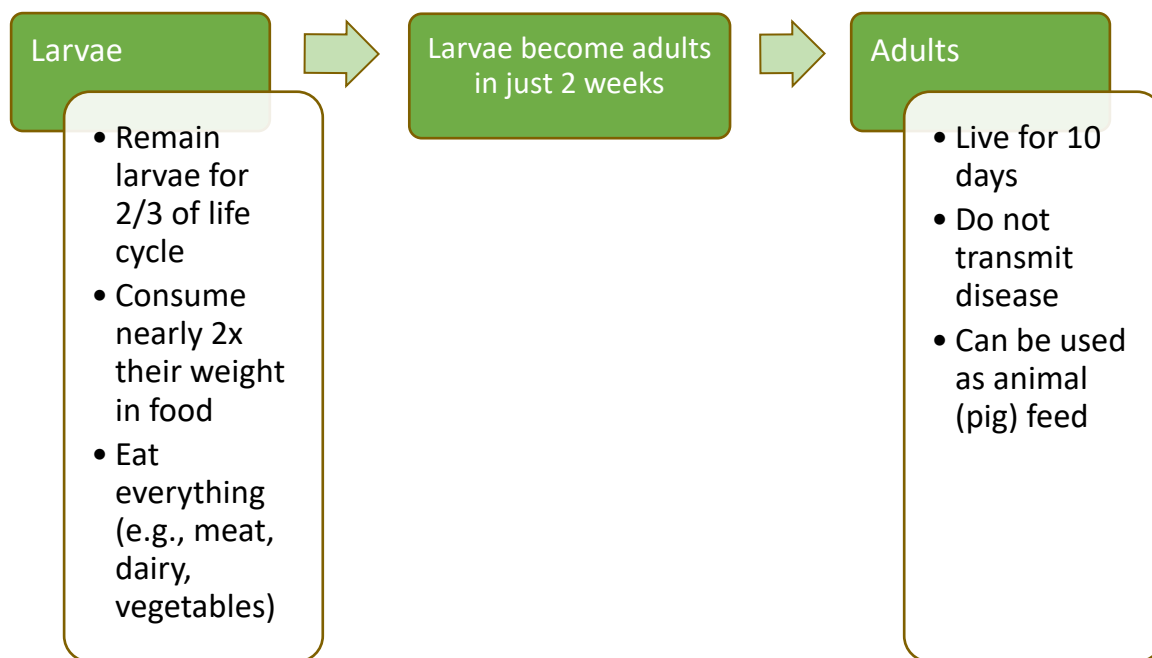
A key theme already emerging from the community data walks is that housing is too expensive and is dominating the household's budget. If households spend the bulk of their monthly income on housing costs, money for food, healthcare, school, etc., will be stretched thin.

See the attached presentation to review more data!

Black Soldier Fly Larvae, Composting & Future Acres Farm

Dave Littere, Owner, Future Acres Urban Farming

Dave discussed his research on Black Soldier Fly Larvae (BSFL) and their role as a catalyst in the composting process.



Dave can stack 600 lbs of food, and the larvae will consume it within 2 weeks. A complete product is available in just 6 weeks. This is why BSFL make great composters!

Future Acres is committed to learning more about how BSFLs can be used in the composting process because they have seen the many challenges facing composting companies. One of those challenges is the reluctance of large food waste generators (like restaurants) to incur the additional cost of food scrap collection. Additionally, there are many permit restrictions in urban areas that limit where composting companies can operate. Ultimately, it is challenging to run composting businesses when the scale is too small, when pickup points are spread out too far, and when land for operations is limited (due to urban planning and or permits).

Dave also shared information about the farm's operations. Based in Burke, VA, Future Acres is focused on food systems and the circular food economy. Repurposing vacant office space and vertical farming have been the key to their operations.

Review [Dave's research](#) or his attached White Paper to learn more.

Next Urban Ag Work Group Meeting: May 20, 2024