Facilitated Conversation Outcomes

1. **Identifying the problem: What are your concerns related to drought?**
   - Some producers are concerned that water demand is increasing, while others are not concerned about water quantity as an issue.
   - Those using lots of water are concerned about the long-term viability of CT Ag.
   - Existing water use systems are incompatible with regulation guidelines.
   - Getting permits for water diversion can be difficult and expensive.
   - There is fear about capturing water use data, because of concern that it can be used to enforce regulatory permitting. It is easier and safer to remain ignorant about water quantity used.
   - Some wonder about the 50,000 gallons per day limit. Is this the right number? Can DEEP revisit it?
   - Water storage is a mystery, not much known about ability to implement.
   - Concern about FSMA and water use restrictions.
   - Some are reliant on surface water and they have observed limited water in the streams this summer. They are concerned about secure supply in ponds.
   - Wells are a better option for health and safety.
   - Concerned that access to municipal water might be restricted.
   - Producers have identified the need to grow differently: drought tolerant crops and seeds, and to identify best management practices for changing conditions.
   - There is a need to breed seeds for drought conditions.
   - Water transfer to farm is expensive: time, labor, gas, etc.
   - Some producers are concerned about investing in infrastructure improvements on leased farm land. Long-term infrastructure only worth the investment if land is long-term.
   - One size plans and regulations do not fit all.
   - Lack of historical data.
   - Runoff/water quality issues.

2. **What ideas do you have for addressing these concerns? How do you think UConn Extension can best support the farming community’s needs related to the drought?**
   - Offer education about how to be most effective. There is the expectation that more is better and this leads to waste.
   - Stream line info for farmers through an information clearinghouse, e.x. how to set up a chlorinator.
   - Innovation is needed: learn from others in Europe. Technologies transfer/learning by regulators and producers. Explore innovations that are cost effective and efficient.
   - Tap into rich groundwater resources. Offer grants for bedrock wells. (Comment that bedrock wells are generally low capacity wells, 2-6 gpm.)
• Electric farm equipment.
• DEEP needs policies particular to agriculture (i.e. rainwater collection) and policies that encourage larger scale production.
• NRCS/UConn should work with DEEP to address these issues and urge them to adopt regulations that permit scientifically sound practices.
• Some say more staff resources needed at DEEP, others say more staff resources at DoA.
• Farm policies that are based on unique regional geography/topology/morphology. Using land for production in a way that makes sense.
• Tap into data and notes from Government Council on Agriculture and offer support for implementing recommendations.
• NRCS should support “new” infrastructure, not just upgrades
• Use trade groups to share information. Work together in trade groups.
• New resources allocated through the state to support farm management.
• A document that describes best practices.
• Identify how much water is being used and how much water is ‘needed’
• Establish a ‘general permit’ for diversion
• Support and resources for building storage.
• Small scale farms/food security lacking capacity to build capacity over time.
• Help landowners evaluate capacity for water resources based on property attributes.
• Focus on solutions that do not relate to economies of scale.
• Help remove fear about reporting data use.