



The Minority AgVocate™

DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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Honoring Our Veterans

This month, Freedmen Heirs Foundation proudly honors our veteran farmers, friends, and allies who have answered the call to serve. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, 9 percent of the nation's 3.4 million farmers have military experience, with Black farmers making up approximately 2.5 percent of that group. A veteran farmer's dedication, both in serving our country and in sustaining our nation's food supply, stands as a testament to their selfless commitment to duty and service. We at Freedmen Heirs Foundation extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for your service.



Agricultural News

The Farm Bill: Why Passing It is Crucial for Minority Farmers

Written by: Seanicaa Edwards Herron, FHF Founder and Executive Director

The farm bill is the cornerstone of U.S. agricultural policy, a significant piece of legislation that addresses everything from crop insurance to food assistance programs. The farm bill is also a declaration of the values that underpin our agricultural system. However, for minority farmers—many of whom face systemic barriers to resources, funding, and land ownership—the farm bill is more than just a policy tool; it is a lifeline. Ensuring the passage of a farm bill that prioritizes equity is crucial for the survival and growth of minority-owned farms and the broader agricultural landscape.



A Legacy of Inequity

The history of farming in the United States is deeply entwined with racial inequities. Black, Indigenous, and other minority farmers have faced decades of discriminatory practices, such as being denied access to loans, credit, and government programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has acknowledged and settled discrimination cases, but these systemic issues have left a generational impact.

Today, minority farmers make up a small fraction of the agricultural sector. For example, Black farmers account for less than 1.5% of all U.S. farmers. Similarly, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, and Asian farmers often face unique challenges tied to language barriers, cultural differences, and historical disenfranchisement. A thoughtfully crafted farm bill can help address these disparities and provide minority farmers with the resources they need to thrive.

How the Farm Bill Impacts Minority Farmers

The farm bill touches nearly every aspect of agricultural life. For minority farmers, the following areas are particularly critical:

1. Access to Credit and Grants

Many minority farmers struggle to access the capital needed to maintain or expand their operations. The farm bill can fund programs that provide targeted loans, grants, and technical assistance to historically underserved communities. By increasing access to credit, the legislation can help farmers invest in infrastructure, technology, and sustainable practices.

2. Land Retention and Ownership

Land loss is a major issue for minority farmers, particularly Black farmers who have seen a precipitous decline in land ownership due to legal loopholes, land theft, predatory practices, and lack of access to resources. Provisions in the farm bill could include support for heirs'

Agricultural News

property owners and programs to assist with legal and technical challenges related to land retention.

3. Climate-Smart Agriculture

Minority farmers are often on the frontlines of climate change but lack the resources to fully adopt these practices. The farm bill can support regenerative agriculture initiatives, provide cost-sharing programs for conservation practices, and ensure minority farmers have access to technical assistance and education.

4. Food Security and Local Food Systems

Many minority farmers are key players in local food systems, growing food for their communities. Farm bill provisions that support urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs can bolster these efforts while creating opportunities for minority farmers to access new markets.

5. Research and Education

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges, and other minority-serving institutions play a vital role in agricultural education and research. Increased funding for these institutions can help train the next generation of minority farmers and develop innovative solutions to agricultural challenges.

Why We Must Act Now

The continual delay in passing the farm bill has real consequences. Without timely reauthorization, programs that minority farmers depend on can lapse or be underfunded. This uncertainty undermines their ability to plan for the future and invest in their farms. Moreover, the failure to address inequities in agricultural policy perpetuates the systemic barriers that have long hindered minority farmers.

In a time of increasing economic uncertainty and climate change, it is more important than ever to ensure that minority farmers have the tools and resources to succeed. The agricultural sector is not only about feeding the nation but also about sustaining livelihoods and building resilient communities. Minority farmers are essential to this vision, and a robust, equity-focused farm bill is key to unlocking their potential.

A Call to Action

Policymakers have a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of minority farmers by crafting a farm bill that prioritizes equity and inclusion. Advocates, organizations, and community leaders must continue to raise their voices to ensure that the needs of minority farmers are not overlooked.



Agripreneur Spotlight

Reviving a Legacy

Read below on Kendrick Ransome's journey to sustain Black agricultural traditions within his North Carolina community

Kendrick Ransome stands as a beacon of perseverance and tradition in the agricultural sector. As a fourth-generation farmer, Kendrick has taken up the mantle on his family's North Carolina land—a plot first cultivated by his great-grandfather in the early 1900s. This land, which once thrived with livestock, tobacco, and an array of fruits and vegetables, symbolizes more than just agricultural productivity; it represents a rich family heritage and legacy of Black farming resilience in the face of systemic barriers. The original farming activities faced significant



challenges after his great-grandfather's era, leading to much of the land being leased out. However, the essence of self reliance and sustainability never faded.

In 2017, Kendrick reignited his great-grandfather's legacy

with the establishment of Golden Organic Farm. The farm was created not only to produce crops, but to represent the enduring strength of Black agricultural traditions, grounded in sustainable practices.

While the term "organic" now carries specific regulatory meanings, the decision to use it reflects a deeper connection to the ancestral ways of farming that have long been a part of Kendrick's family lineage. Golden Organic Farm's mission is to maintain these traditions, enrich the soil, and ensure the land, rich in history, continues to benefit both the community and future generations. The farm specializes in producing pasture-raised pork and is directly connected to fresh whole

foods. Golden Organic Farm currently offers seeded watermelon and watermelon juice as well as direct-to-customer meat boxes and CSAs.



Kendrick's passion extends beyond farming to youth and community development. He is actively working with local schools, municipalities, and grassroots organizations in North Carolina to integrate farming education into community-focused programs. Kendrick believes it is crucial, particularly for young Black students, to see themselves as leaders in agriculture. He envisions Golden Organic Farm growing into an agricultural incubator for young BIPOC and minority farmers where together, the community cultivates crops and a new generation of land stewards.



To learn more about Golden Organic Farm, please visit www.goldenorganicfarm.com or follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Agripreneur Spotlight

From Investment Banking to Agrarian Leadership

Read Dr. Cindy Ayers-Elliott's impactful journey of empowering communities through agriculture and education

Dr. Cindy Ayers-Elliott is the Chief Executive Officer and co-owner of a 68-acre farm and agricultural enterprise in Jackson, Mississippi. Recognized as a distinguished contributor to agriculture, community development, and education, she is affectionately known as “The Agrarian Evangelist”.

Before her agricultural journey, Dr. Cindy held a successful career as an investment banker in New York. She decided to move back to her home state of Mississippi, trading her high heels for sturdy work boots. In 2010, she



began operating Foot Print Farms, Mississippi's largest urban farm dedicated to growing a variety of fruits and vegetables. The farm also raises meat goats and cattle. Foot Print Farm's mission is to grow not only healthy food but also provide youth

outreach opportunities and educate the community about agriculture through agri-tourism. Additionally, Dr. Cindy is the President and Principal CEO of the organization T.I.M.E. —To Improve Mississippi Economics — which provides hands-on training and education to underserved communities.

Dr. Cindy collaborates closely with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in partnership with the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) National Urban Agriculture Program (NuAg) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). She is also Risk Management Agency's (RMA)

first-appointed Outreach Ambassador. As Ambassador, Dr. Cindy educates producers in underserved communities on farm business structure, record keeping, and risk management tools.

Her collaborative work also includes contributing to NRCS Racial Equality and serving as an outreach educator for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation MS Ag Innovation Center.



Photo description: Dr. Cindy's organization, T.I.M.E., is committed to transforming lives through sustainable farming practices, economic development, and community empowerment.

Dr. Cindy strongly believes that planting seeds in the earth yields fresh vegetables, however, planting seeds in the minds of young people cultivates a new universe of scholars. With her background in finance and experience working with government agencies, she has successfully broken through mountains of red tape and helped make a difference for the disenfranchised in Mississippi.

Agripreneur Spotlight



Photo description: Dr. Cindy is the first USDA Outreach Ambassador for the Risk Management Agency (RMA).

A catalyst for change, Dr. Cindy has received numerous honors and awards, including the 2024 Women United Excellence Award from United Way and being named USA Today's 2023 Women of the Year honoree for Mississippi. In 2022, she was featured as GOOGLE's Hero of Small Business and named 2021 Farmer of the Year by the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives. She was also featured in the HULU docuseries "Searching for Soul Food", Episode 1 entitled "Mississippi", released in June 2023. Additional honors include *Mississippi Business Journal's* Top 50 Businesswomen in Mississippi, Who's Who Among Black Americans, Outstanding Minority Business of Central Mississippi from the Mississippi Minority Business Alliance, Inc., and Women for Progress of Mississippi awardee.

Her commitment to education extends to her efforts in establishing the 2nd Freedom School Summer Program in Washington County, Mississippi. She is also a proud member of the George Washington Carver Future Scientist of America 4-H Club and recently received the Women Entrepreneurs Award from the Jackson State University College of Business. In 2014, she was elected

chairman of the Hinds County Soil and Water Conservation District and is an active member of the Hinds County Board of Commissioners.

Dr. Cindy takes immense pride in her Alma Mater, "Thee" Jackson State University, where she earned her Ph.D. Her signature color combination, pink and green, are the colors of her beloved sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc. However, pink also represents her role as a female farmer and green symbolizes the earth and the bounty it produces. She is a proud, loving mother to sons LaGrand and Eric Elliott and a doting grandmother to Christian, Erica, Zoe, and Skylar Elliott. Dr. Cindy's life and career embody a legacy of service, innovation, and dedication to improving her community and the broader agricultural landscape.



Photo description: Images from Footprint Farms

To learn more about Footprint Farms and T.I.M.E., please visit www.footprintfarmsms.com and www.toimprovems.org. You can also follow Foot Print Farms on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Upcoming Events

Webinars and Live Events

Upcoming Freedmen Heirs Foundation Webinar

Our **"Wholesale Opportunities at Procurement Companies"** webinar has been rescheduled for **December 3, 2024**, at **1:30 pm CST**.

Our guest speaker, Lynn Gorsuch, Category Development Manager for Supplier Diversity & Sustainability at Foodbuy, will share invaluable insights on how farmers can tap into wholesale food opportunities with procurement companies and Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs). Lynn will also provide actionable steps to help farmers navigate this market.

Click the link below to register to attend this vital conversation.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Assessing Opportunities and Barriers for Minority Producers Transitioning to Climate-Smart and Regenerative Agriculture Programs Webinar Series

Freedmen Heirs Foundation (FHF), Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR), and Resources for the Future (RFF) are collaborating to conduct a webinar series and an in-person convening event in early 2025.

The final webinar will be on **Friday, December 6, 2024**, at **1:00 pm EST**. This session will highlight the cost benefit analysis and economic discussion of the real cost for minority farmers to transition to climate-smart practices.

Click the link below to join the discussion.

[REGISTER HERE](#)


LIVE WEBINAR

Wholesale Opportunities at Procurement Companies

Held Virtually via Zoom



LYNN GORSUCH
Category Development Manager
Supplier Diversity & Sustainability
Foodbuy

Upcoming Events

In-person Events

National Black Growers Council 2024 Annual Meeting

Regular registration is now available until December 10, 2024, for the National Black Growers Council 2024 Annual Meeting. This year's event will take place from **December 10-13, 2024**, in **Charleston, South Carolina**. Virtual registration is also available for those who cannot attend in person. Click the link below for more details about the annual meeting and to finalize your registration.

[MORE DETAILS](#)A promotional poster for the NBGC 2024 Annual Meeting. The background is a collage of images: a large, ancient tree in the foreground, a cable-stayed bridge over water in the middle ground, and a city skyline in the background. The text is overlaid on a dark green background. The top left features the text 'NBGC 2024 ANNUAL MEETING' in large, bold, white letters. Below this, in a white arrow-shaped box, is 'The Francis Marion Hotel'. To the right of this is a location pin icon followed by 'Location: 387 King St., Charleston, SC 29403'. Below that is a calendar icon followed by 'Date: December 10-13, 2024'. At the bottom left, there is a 'REGISTER NOW' button with a dotted arrow pointing right. At the bottom right, there is a globe icon followed by 'For More Information: https://nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com/annual-meeting/'. The NBGC logo is in the top right corner.

**NBGC 2024
ANNUAL MEETING**

The Francis Marion Hotel

Location:
387 King St.,
Charleston, SC 29403

Date:
December 10-13, 2024

REGISTER NOW

For More Information:
<https://nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com/annual-meeting/>

In-person Events

2025 The State of the Soil Conference

Save the date for the 2nd Annual State of Soil Conference hosted by Black Soil KY. Next year's conference will take place on **September 7-10, 2025** in **Lexington, Kentucky!** Registration is open now through August 25, 2025.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Click the link below to reserve your seat.



Farmer Resources

Programs and Reports

Welcome to our Farmer Resources section, a dedicated space to provide you with valuable tools and information. Explore comprehensive reports and programs as well as funding opportunities designed to provide support for a variety of farming projects and initiatives. Additionally, for those seeking to grow their team or find new career paths within the agriculture industry, we've included a section on employment opportunities that span a range of roles and expertise.

USDA
Program
Deadlines

Learn more about important dates and deadlines for USDA programs and events.

LEARN MORE

Farmers.gov |
Local
DashBoard

Click below to find your state and view local data and USDA resources.

EXPLORE

AgPlan

Click below to explore this free resource created by the Center for Farm Financial Management at the University of Minnesota.

EXPLORE

November 2024
Lending Rates

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides loans to agricultural producers to help start or expand their farming operations, purchase equipment and storage structures, or meet cash flow needs. Click Explore to view this month's interest rates for loans offered through FSA.

EXPLORE

Models and
Opportunities for
Financing Grain Chains
in the Midwest Report

The Croatan Institute recently published a report that highlights funding practices suitable for entrepreneurs across the grain value chain. Click the link below to read the report.

VIEW REPORT

Programs and Reports

The State of Food and Agriculture 2024 Report

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations released The State of Food and Agriculture 2024: Value-Driven Transformation of Agrifood Systems report which explores the true cost of food on a global scale. This report expands on the 2023 edition by exploring the implementation of true cost accounting within agrifood systems and highlights policy interventions designed to facilitate transformation. Click the link below to read the full report.

[READ REPORT](#)

GA FarmLink Business Education Program

Athens Land Trust is currently recruiting for their GA FarmLink Business Education Program. This program aims to enable Georgia farmers to strengthen the foundations of their farm businesses and increase their receipt of federal funding in order to ensure long-term resilience and sustainable profits. Click the links below to learn more about the program and to apply.

[LEARN MORE](#)[PROGRAM OVERVIEW](#)

Southern University AgCenter Certification Programs Available

Southern University AgCenter is offering free technical assistance certification programs to farmers and small business owners. Certification programs currently available are Food & Farm Food Safety, Small Business Development, Master Small Ruminant, and Sustainable Urban Agriculture. Click the link below for more information.

[EXPLORE](#)

Programs and Reports

USDA NASS Crop Production Report

This monthly report contains crop production data for the U.S., including acreage, area harvested, and yield. The report also contains a monthly weather summary, a monthly agricultural summary, and an analysis of precipitation and the degree of departure from the normal precipitation map for the month. Click below to view current and archived reports.

[VIEW REPORT](#)[ARCHIVED REPORTS](#)

USDA World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Report

The World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report is prepared and released by the World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB). This report is released monthly and provides annual forecasts for supply and use of U.S. and world wheat, rice, coarse grains, oilseeds, and cotton. The report also covers U.S. supply and use of sugar, livestock & meat, poultry, eggs, milk, and dairy products; as well as Mexico's supply and use of sugar. Read November's report by clicking the link below.

[VIEW REPORT](#)

Secretary of Agriculture Briefings on WASDE and Crop Production Reports

The WASDE and Crop Production briefings can be watched every month beginning at 12:05 pm ET on [NASS' Youtube Channel](#). The briefings are streamed live just moments after the reports are made public. Click below to watch the most recent briefing.

[EXPLORE](#)

Farmer Resources

Additional Information

Our “We’re Bonded in the Soil” Webinar Is Now on YouTube

Last month’s webinar — **We’re Bonded in the Soil** — is now available on our YouTube Channel.

During this session, our guest speaker, Ashley Smith, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Black Soil KY, delved into her organization's impactful mission and vision, highlighting their transformative work within the Kentucky community. Ashley also discussed how direct-to-consumer farming is a powerful tool for intervention and community empowerment. Click the link below to view the discussion.



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WATCH NOW

Decision Tools Available

The Fryar Risk Center with the University of Arkansas has developed tools to help farmers and agribusiness managers with the decision-making process. Click the link below to explore the resources available.

LEARN MORE



Farmer Resources

Funding Opportunities

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Grants

The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is accepting applications for its Education and Workforce Development and Foundational and Applied Science Program grants. The deadline to submit applications for these opportunities is **December 5** and **December 31, 2024**. Click the links below to learn more and to submit your application(s).

[FOUNDATIONAL AND APPLIED SCIENCE PROGRAM GRANT](#)[EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANT](#)

2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program

Applications for the 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program are now open. This grant supports the planning and implementation of farm to school programs at various levels. Three grant types are available: Implementation, State Agency, and Turnkey. The application deadline is **January 10, 2025**. Click the link below for more information and to apply.

[EXPLORE](#)

Sustainable Food Systems Initiative

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture (FFAR) has partnered with Danone Institute of North America to support projects for sustainable food systems aimed at improving human health and nutrition in the community. The deadline to submit proposals is **February 14, 2025**. Click the link below to learn more about this funding opportunity.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Funding Opportunities

Kiss the Ground Regenerative Transition Grants

Kiss the Ground recently announced funding for its regenerative transition grants. The purpose of these grants is to provide farmers and ranchers of diverse backgrounds with assistance as they transition to regenerative agricultural practices. \$500K in funding is available for farmers and ranchers to support the following: 1.) training (\$1,000 toward in-person trainings) and 2.) equipment, infrastructure, & supplies (\$10k-\$50k grants). Click the link to learn more and to apply.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Farmer Resources

Employment Opportunities

Great Lakes Regional Food Business Center

The Great Lakes Regional Food Business Center is hiring a Partnership Specialist and Grants Support Specialist to help contribute to its initiative of building more sustainable farm and food businesses enterprises for historically underserved farmers and food business entrepreneurs in the Great Lakes region.

Click below to learn more about the roles and to apply.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Leading Harvest

Leading Harvest is searching for a Chief of Staff to work closely with the President and CEO. This role will involve overseeing operations, with a focus on enhancing time management, information flow, and decision-making processes across all disciplines and departments across the organization.

Click the link below to learn more about the role and to apply.

[LEARN MORE](#)

The Soil Health Institute

The Soil Health Institute is looking to fill multiple positions within their organization.

Click the link below to explore positions available.

[LEARN MORE](#)

United States Department of Agriculture

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking applicants to fill several County Program Analyst positions in their Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices located in the US.

To learn more about these positions, click the link below.

[APPLY](#)

Employment Opportunities

World Food Policy Center

The World Food Policy Center looking to hire a full-time Research Scientist to join their team. In this role, the Research Scientist will develop a research portfolio focusing on food policy issues in North Carolina and/or in the U.S. The candidate will also serve as a mentor for students and will be responsible for co-teaching an upper-division food policy course.

Click the link below to read the full job announcement and to apply.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Do You Have Resources or Information You Would Like to Share?

If you wish to contribute an event, program, funding or employment opportunity, please send us an email with your resources to info@freedmenheirs.org.

Support Freedmen Heirs Foundation!



Scan the QR code above or click [here](#) to make a financial contribution to our organization. Your generous donation will help support our mission and make a positive impact on the agricultural community.

Thank you for your continued support!

Follow Us on Social Media



Nominate an Agripreneur

Help us recognize Agripreneurs who are making a difference!

If you know someone deserving of recognition, nominate them to be featured in our magazine by [completing this form](#) or sending us an email at info@freedmenheirs.org. Self nominations are also welcome.



To learn more about Freedmen Heirs Foundation, visit our [website](#).