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NOVEMBER
NEWSLETTER

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ISSUE 8

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FREEDMEN HEIRS FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Freedmen Friends and Allies,

As harvest season concludes and we prepare for winter, it serves as a reminder of the resilience, dedication, and passion farmers bring to the fields and our communities daily. Yet, minority farmers continue to face unique challenges and systemic barriers. As November unfolds, it offers a moment of reflection on the profound importance of diversity in the agriculture community. This month, let's amplify our efforts to advocate for policies, resources, and opportunities that level the playing field.

Our commitment to supporting minority farmers isn't just an organizational goal, but a pledge to build a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food system.

Your continued support and engagement are essential in this journey.
Please enjoy this month's issue of the Minority AgVocate.

Warmest regards,

Seanicaa Edwards Herron



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FREEDMEN HEIRS FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS

NEW TEAM MEMBERS



Sedrick Rowe Jr.

FHF Farmer Liaison



Julius Tillery

FHF Farmer Liaison

NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Dr. Loutrina Staley

Plant and Soil Scientist;
Equity and Outreach
Program Analyst for The
National Association of
Conservation Districts



Karl Binns Jr.

Founder and Principal of
KAVO Consulting, LLC



Megan Rock

Vice President,
Sustainability and
Innovation and Chief
Sustainability Officer of
CHS Inc.

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TedIn HIGHLIGHTS

Julius is a fifth-generation farmer and entrepreneur from Roanoke Valley, NC. His business, BlackCotton, was founded in 2016 to honor his family's roots and promote cotton grown on Black-owned farms. Julius has years of experience in the agricultural resources space, working alongside organizations such as RAFI-USA, The Conservation Fund, and the Black Family Land Trust. Julius serves as a member of the Southern SARE Administrative Council, and in recent years was appointed to the NC Forestry Advisory Council by NC Governor Roy Cooper. Aside from his passion-driven work with the farming community, Julius enjoys spending his time with family and his 3 year old son, Acre.

JULIUS TILLERY

FREEDMEN HEIRS
FOUNDATION
FARMER LIAISON



TedIn HIGHLIGHTS

Sedrick Kent Rowe Jr. is an organic hemp, sunflower, and peanut farmer from Albany, GA. Although he has been involved in agriculture since he was a child, Sedrick is considered a first-generation farmer. He has received several accolades throughout his career, including becoming one of only three certified organic peanut farmers in Georgia and the first organic hemp farmer licensed in South Georgia. Sedrick is a graduate of Fort Valley State University, with a B.S. in Plant Science and a Master's in Public Health. He is a community leader, Board member of GA Organics and the National Young Farmers Coalition, and member of various agricultural organizations. Sedrick spends his free time with his family and enjoys hunting and ATV trail riding.

SEDRICK ROWE

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FREEDMEN HEIRS FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS



HELP CREATE CHANGE

EMPOWERING BLACK FARMERS CAN LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS WHILE PROMOTING EQUITY

YOUR SUPPORT **MATTERS**

Fundraising for this year's campaign initiative is underway. With your support, we can continue making a significant impact in advancing social equity for Black farmers in the agricultural industry through our programs and outreach efforts.

OUR PRIORITIES



PROGRAM INITIATIVES

FHF is dedicated to developing premiere resources and tools that cultivate impact and change.



STRATEGIC GROWTH

FHF fosters a culture of excellence while creating opportunities for growth and development.



FARMER SUCCESS

FHF remains focused on supporting farmers through learning and funding, leaving a life-long impact.

Click [here](#) to support our efforts or contact us at give@freedmenheirs.org.

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OP-ED: ESG IN AGRICULTURE

Rooted in Responsibility: The Intersection of ESG and Equity in Agriculture

Written by: Seanicaa Edwards Herron, Freedmen Heirs Foundation Executive Director

In recent years, the intersection of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria within agriculture has taken center stage in the quest for more equitable and sustainable farming practices. The question for minority farmers, who often face systemic barriers and unique challenges, is: Can ESG offer a framework for achieving not only environmental and economic viability but also social justice?

This op-ed delves into the ways ESG can be harnessed to support minority farmers, promote equity, and drive sustainable change in agriculture.

Environmental Stewardship

The environmental aspect of ESG emphasizes sustainable agricultural practices. This component focuses on the need for equitable access to organic/regenerative inputs, soil conservation tools as well as water-efficient and climate-smart commodity technologies. Historically, minority farmers have had less access to the resources necessary to implement sustainable practices. Initiatives aimed at environmental equity can help narrow this gap, providing minority farmers with the means to farm sustainably while ensuring the longevity of their land.



Image Source: [Equity Quotient](#)

Social Equity & Inclusivity

The social pillar of ESG allows the opportunity for the agriculture sector to address historical injustices and social disparities faced by minority farmers. This means advocating for fair labor practices, open access to markets and agribusiness supply chains, and equitable treatment by all agricultural institutions. By ensuring the integration of minority farmers into supply chains with a commitment to fair trade and social responsibility, agribusinesses can be accountable for fair and transparent compensation for agricultural products. Additionally, ESG principles should encourage investments in community

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OP-ED: ESG IN AGRICULTURE

development and education, providing minority farmers with the skills and networks needed to succeed and expand.

Governance

Governance in ESG seeks to ensure that the rules of the game are impartial to all participants. An important factor of effective governance is guaranteeing that minority farmers have a seat at the table where decisions are made. ESG-driven governance should include: advocating for fair representation in agricultural policymaking, enhancing transparency in land ownership and tenure rights, and verifying that minority farmers have equitable access to markets, capital and credit.

Through ethical governance, the agriculture sector can work toward dismantling systemic barriers that have long inhibited the growth of minority-owned farm businesses.

Overcoming Challenges with Targeted Strategies

ESG in agriculture, particularly for minority farmers, is not implemented without challenges. An example of this is the complexity of quantifying and reporting on ESG metrics, specifically for smaller producers. To overcome obstacles such as this, tailored strategies like culturally relevant educational programs,

community outreach, and financial incentives are vitally important. Below are three strategies that could be implemented to overcome challenges.

1. Access to Capital: ESG Investments as a Catalyst. Access to capital is a major hurdle for minority farmers. ESG-focused investing can provide a solution by directing funds toward businesses and projects that support these farmers. Financial instruments, such as social impact loans and ESG-compliant funds, can provide the necessary capital for minority farmers to invest in sustainable technologies, expand their operations, and transition to practices that meet ESG criteria.



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2. Policy Advocacy: Shaping an ESG-Compatible Regulatory Environment.

Advocacy is another powerful tool within ESG frameworks. By advocating for supportive policies, ESG proponents can help shape a regulatory environment that fosters the growth and sustainability of minority farming operations. This includes advocating for protections against predatory lending and legislation that supports rural infrastructure development.



3. Equity in Motion: Implementing ESG for Impact.

The potential of ESG to support minority farmers is clear, but realizing this potential requires deliberate action and collaboration across multiple sectors. Financial institutions, government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and consumers all play a role in advocating for and implementing ESG principles that benefit

minority farmers. By doing so, they not only contribute to a more equitable farming sector, but also support the broader goals of sustainable development and social justice.

Seanicaa's Perspective

ESG has the potential to serve as a tool for overcoming systemic challenges, improving livelihoods, and contributing to the broader goals of environmental stewardship and social justice. However, as the agriculture sector evolves, it is imperative that ESG frameworks are designed and implemented with an eye toward equity and inclusivity, ensuring that all farmers, regardless of background, race, or socio-economic status, can reap the benefits of sustainable farming practices.

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AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

Creating Health-Conscious Solutions Through A Regenerative Approach

Entrepreneur Christa Barfield operates multiple businesses centered around sustainable living

Christa Barfield is a health-care professional turned farmer and lifelong Philadelphia resident. Ten years into her career in health-care administration, Christa realized her work-life balance was unhealthy; she resigned from her job just weeks before her thirtieth birthday to take back her life, health, and happiness. After embarking on a solo trip to Martinique in January 2018, Christa returned home inspired to connect with the land, plant life, and social issues that heavily impact Black and Brown communities and all people's perception of food.



Christa considers her entrepreneurial endeavors a reincarnation of her former career in the healthcare industry, with her businesses focusing on regeneration and nutrition security. Since 2018, she has developed earth-born brands based in regenerative agricultural

values with a goal of traceable and transparent origins of "100% Organically Dope" foods. Christa's business venture, Viva Leaf Tea, offers a farm-to-cup



approach with emphasis on high quality, sustainable farming practices. FarmerJawn Agriculture, another of Barfield's businesses, follows regenerative farming practices that concentrate on soil health and increasing access to organic food to marginalized communities. Christa now also operates a non-profit arm of FarmerJawn, with land totaling 128 acres and a mission to train and educate the nation's next Black and Brown agripreneurs.

In addition to bringing awareness to the matters of food waste and food insecurity through her multi-business platform, Christa has also begun to expand her hemp farming knowledge and aims to destigmatize cannabis and impacting regulation related to unfair incarceration surrounding the plant.

For more information on Christa Barfield and FarmerJawn, visit www.farmerjawnphilly.com.

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AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

Cultivating Connections to Promote Market Access

A Chicago-based supermarket creates a shoppable experience to promote Black farmers

Ena Jones is the Founder and CEO of Roots & Vine Produce and Café, a grocery market located in Chicago, IL that focuses primarily on Black-grown food products. Roots & Vine Produce and Café provides its local community with bulk dry goods and fresh produce, with missions to open and create new markets for Black farmers, co-ops, and urban growers, while assisting them in increasing their economic threshold.

Through the support of a strong network of farmers and agricultural community members, Ms. Jones is committed to eliminating food deserts within the Chicago area and bringing healthy foods to at-risk, food-insecure neighborhoods.

Ms. Jones leads Roots & Vine with a firm belief in the values of the organization and inspires her peers to rally behind its mission. She champions that together, through strategic thinking, significant partnerships, and sharing innovative ideas, the Roots & Vine team can push boundaries



and find creative solutions to the complex challenge of food insecurity and lack of market access for Black farmers.



For more information on Roots & Vine Produce & Café, visit their [Facebook](#) page.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



**National Black
Growers Council
2023
Annual
Meeting**

**Honoring our Past, Growing
our Future**

December 12-15, 2023

**Hilton Memphis
939 Ridge Lake Blvd
Memphis, TN 38120**

Registration available now at:
<https://nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com/>



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Regenerative Food Systems Investment in partnership with Sirona Ventures is hosting the **Women Transforming Food & Finance Conference** on **November 14-15, 2023** in Atlanta, GA. The 1 ½ day program will include time for peer learning, professional development, and deep, authentic dialogue between leaders in agriculture, food, and finance. To learn more about this groundbreaking event, click [here](#).

Croatan Institute Racial Equity, Economics, Finance, and Sustainability (REEF) Program is hosting a Diverse Leaders in Climate and Agriculture Summit on **November 17-18, 2023** in Durham, NC. The Summit will be an opportunity for BIPOC leaders in agriculture and climate justice to engage with value-aligned partners while elevating their voices in spaces that are perceived as lacking inclusivity. Visit their [website](#) to learn more and to register.

The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR), Clif Bar, Tuskegee University, and The Organic Center are hosting a virtual event on **December 1, 2023** from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm ET. This event is specifically focusing on the Southeast region of the US with objectives aimed at 1) gathering information about the current organic regional landscape, 2) engaging with stakeholders, 3) creating a dynamic space for discussion among a wide range of stakeholders, and 4) identifying barriers to organic production in the Southeast as well as opportunities for organic research, with a focus on BIPOC farmers. Click [here](#) to register.

Field to Market and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy are hosting the ninth annual **Sustainable Agriculture Summit** on **December 6-7, 2023** in Charlotte, NC. The Summit is an inclusive platform for agricultural stakeholders to convene, exchange knowledge from expert speakers, and discuss challenges and triumphs. It's also an opportunity to establish and develop cross-sector partnerships that promote sustainability in the industry. For more information and registration details, click [here](#).

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Upcoming Deadlines

County Committee Elections. Election ballots were mailed to eligible voters on November 6, 2023. The deadline to submit ballots to your local USDA Service Center is **December 4, 2023**. For more information on the election, election timeline, and frequently asked questions, click [here](#).

Inflation Reduction Act Assistance for Distressed Borrowers is accepting requests for Cash Flow-Based Assistance and Extraordinary Measures Assistance. Section 22006 of the IRA provided \$3.1 billion for USDA to provide relief for distressed borrowers with certain Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct and guaranteed loans and to expedite assistance for those whose agricultural operations are at financial risk. Learn more about the programs [here](#). Requests for assistance must be received by **December 31, 2023** and can be submitted in person at a local Farm Service Agency office or online.

Inflation Reduction Act Assistance for Producers Who Experienced Discrimination in USDA Farm Loan Programs application deadline is approaching. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides \$2.2 billion in financial assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA's farm lending programs prior to January 1, 2021. The application process is open until **January 13, 2024**. Applications for this program are **free**. The program **does not require a lawyer**, and **program staff are available to provide free help**. Visit [www.22007apply.gov](#) to find out more information regarding this program and locate available assistance in your area.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP) is available. ELAP assistance is provided for losses not covered by other disaster assistance programs authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, such as losses not covered by the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). More information regarding this assistance can be found in the Programs and Resources section of this newsletter. The deadline to request all ELAP assistance for 2023 calendar year losses is **January 30, 2024**. For more information regarding the ELAP program, click [here](#).

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USDA's Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC) is accepting applications. This program assists specialty crop operations that incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 and 2023. The deadline to apply for FSCSC assistance for calendar year 2023 is **January 31, 2024**. If you believe you meet the criteria for this program, click [here](#) to learn more about eligibility requirements or to submit an application.

Programs and Resources

Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP): LFP provides compensation to eligible livestock producers who have suffered grazing losses due to drought or fire on land that is native or improved pastureland with permanent vegetative cover or that is planted specifically for grazing. Click [here](#) for more information and eligibility requirements.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP): LIP provides benefits to livestock producers for livestock deaths over normal mortality caused by adverse weather or by attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the Federal Government. For more information, click [here](#).

Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP): NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. Visit this [link](#) for more details.

November 2023 Lending Rates Announced for Agricultural Producers: 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 [here](#) to view this month's interest rates for loans offered through FSA.

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Producers can Apply for FY2024 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Assistance.

USDA has made more than \$3 billion in funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. Applications for NRCS conservation programs are accepted year-round, but producers interested in this cycle's funding are urged to apply as soon as possible. Producers interested in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) should apply by their state's ranking dates for consideration this year and contact the NRCS at their local USDA Service Center.

The Tennie Agricultural Group, LLC: Offers agricultural, payroll, and corporate structure with the commitment to providing clients with information and resources that will help them build a sound future. Various agribusiness insurance policies are also available. Visit www.tennieagriculturegroup.com and www.agribusinesscropinsurance.com to learn more.

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. Link to current and archived reports can be found [here](#).

USDA Supply and Demand 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, meat, poultry, eggs, milk, and dairy products; as well as Mexico's supply and use of sugar. The WAOB chairs the Interagency Commodity Estimates Committees (ICECs), which include analysts from key USDA agencies who compile and interpret information from USDA and other domestic and foreign sources to produce the report. Link to current and archived reports can be found [here](#).

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Secretary of Agriculture Briefings on the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report and the Crop Production report can be viewed live each month starting at 12:05 pm ET, following the release of the WASDE report, on [NASS's YouTube channel](#).

Funding Opportunities

Farm Labor Stabilization and Protection Pilot Program (FLSP): Applications are currently open for the FLSP Program which provides support for agricultural employers in implementing robust labor standards to promote a safe, healthy work environment for both U.S. workers and workers hired from northern Central American countries under the seasonal H-2A visa program. The application period closes **January 3, 2024**. For more information, click [here](#).

Rural Development Community Facilities Technical Assistance and Training (TAT): Applications are being accepted for the Community Facilities Technical Assistance and Training Disaster Repair Grant Program to provide technical assistance for repairing essential community facilities damaged by Presidential declared disasters in calendar year 2022. Applications must be submitted by **November 29, 2023**. For more information, view this [fact sheet](#) and the [Notice of Funding Availability](#).

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE): Proposals are being accepted for an on-farm research grant opportunity available to agriculture professionals who regularly work with farmers and ranchers on farm production and marketing problems. The deadline to submit proposals is **December 1, 2023** at 12 p.m. ET. For more information, click [here](#).

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Employment Opportunities:

Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI-USA): RAFI-USA is searching for a Federal Grants Manager and a Grassroots Engagement Lead to join their team. Applications will be accepted until the positions are filled. Click [here](#) to learn more about these job opportunities and to apply.

The Soil Health Institute Internship Program: The Soil Health Institute is accepting applications for its 2024 internship program . The program is designed for students interested in soil health, regenerative agriculture, agricultural economics, and technology. Click [here](#) for more information on this program and to apply.



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NEWSLETTER UPDATES

November 13, 2023

RE: Important Errata - Correction for October Newsletter

Dear Minority AgVocate Readers,

We would like to bring to your attention an error that was inadvertently included in our October newsletter, which we published on October 12, 2023. Our commitment to providing accurate and reliable information is of utmost importance to us, and we sincerely apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused.

The error is as follows:

**Developing a Succession Plan Without A Family Successor - References and Resources, Links 1-4;
page 7.**

We would like to provide the corrected information as follows:

MSU | The Michigan Farm Succession Study: Findings and Implications

American Farm Bureau Federation | Capital Gains Taxes

National Young Farmers Coalition | 2022 National Young Farmers Survey Report

**American Farm Bureau Federation | U.S. Agricultural Land Values and Cropland Cash Rents
Reach New Highs**

We understand the importance of maintaining the highest standards of quality and accuracy in our communications, and we have taken immediate steps to prevent such errors in the future. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this errata or any other aspect of our newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@freedmenheirs.org.

Again, we apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused, and we appreciate your understanding and continued support. Thank you for being a valued member of our community.

Respectfully,

The Freedmen Heirs Foundation Team

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deserving of recognition,
nominate them to be
featured by [completing
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