



# Minority AgVocate<sup>TM</sup>

**DIGITAL MAGAZINE** 

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#### Freedmen Heirs Foundation Highlights

# In Case You



## 🙎 Lexington, KY

Earlier this month, Freedmen Heirs Foundation had the honor of being the presenting sponsor of the inaugural State of the Soil Conference in Lexington, Kentucky. The conference was hosted by Black Soil KY, a non-profit agribusiness with a mission to reconnect Black Kentuckians to their heritage and legacy in agriculture. The event brought together local, regional, and national agricultural industry professionals and farmers from around the country to discuss and strategize ways to create an equitable and intersectional food system.



**Photo description:** From left to right, Ashley Smith, Dr. Cindy Ayers-Elliott, Seanicaa Edwards Herron, Kellee James, Patrice Lazard, and Ebony Woodruff

The dynamic three-day event featured thought-provoking intensives, panel discussions, networking sessions, and savoring farm-to-table dinners prepared with

locally sourced ingredients by award-winning chefs. The conference began Sunday evening with a spirited welcome from the Black Soil KY team, setting the stage for an immersive experience. Attendees enjoyed a sponsor reception where Ashley Smith, the Founder and CEO of Black Soil KY, introduced the organization and expressed her appreciation to the sponsors. Following this, attendees had the chance to connect and explore the Summit at Fritz Farm.

Day one of the conference was presented by Freedmen Heirs Foundation. Attendees were given the opportunity to hear firsthand insights from farmers and experts in the agricultural industry. The day began with an impactful keynote by Dr. Cindy Ayers-Elliott, USDA Risk Management Agency Ambassador and owner of <u>Foot Print Farms</u>, <u>LLC</u> in Jackson, Mississippi. Dr. Ayers-Elliot shared valuable concepts aimed at advancing Black farmers, highlighting the significance of collaboration and sharing resourceful information. The day's panel discussions provided firsthand accounts of the challenges faced by Black farmers, potential solutions, and strategies to build equitable supply chains. Participants were also introduced to Black Soil KY's latest initiative, Sprout, a refrigerated mobile food market designed to deliver fresh, locally sourced produce to underserved food deserts throughout Kentucky.

#### **Freedmen Heirs Foundation Highlights**



**Photo description:** Renee Smith-Nickelson, Andre Carter, and Victoria Treski during our "Roadmapping an Equitable Supply and Value Chain" panel discussion.

The second day, presented by Black Soil KY, focused on the organization's seed-to-shelf commitment. It began with a special appearance from Jennifer Moffit, United States Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, who announced that applications for the Business Builder Awards in the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center are now open. The day also featured presentations from Cleav's Family Market and Farmer Ken, showcasing their farms and strategies for success. Attendees also engaged in a training intensive and listened to a keynote address from Dr. Bill Releford, the owner of Bloom Ranch in Acton, California, who spoke about the connection between food and medicine. Attendees enjoyed a book signing and received a copy of his book, "5 Colors A Day to Better Health." The day wrapped up with a delightful farm-totable dinner prepared by Chef Isaiah Screetch and his Soulful Creations team.

The final day of the conference, presented by the <u>Farmers' Truck</u>, focused on the theme "Food Is Medicine." The day included a Morning Keynote by Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture, Jonathan Shell, a Fireside Chat, and a Food Is Medicine Cross-Industry Impact Plenary. The day concluded with a Lunch



**Photo description:** From left to right, Amber Fuller, Ashley Smith, and Krysta Callinan in front of Sprout, the latest addition to the Black Soil KY team

Keynote featuring Frederic Laforge, founder and CEO of the Farmers' Truck, and Allison Dehoney, CEO and Executive Director of Buffalo Go Green.

In conclusion, the inaugural State of the Soil Conference was a remarkable achievement! Freedmen Heirs Foundation and Black Soil KY teams are eager to carry this momentum into the second year, aiming to maintain a vital platform for dialogue on an inclusive, intersectional, and sustainable agriculture industry. Registration for the second annual conference, set to take place from September 7-10, 2025, is now open.



**Photo description:** Produce from Miller Farm and Cleav's Family Market

#### **Agripreneur Spotlight**

#### From Law to Harvest

Read below to learn how Jacqueline Alexander, JD., a lawyer and farmer, is using innovation to drive sustainable business models

Jacqueline Alexander, J.D. obtained her law degree from Lewis & Clark Law School and currently works as a full-time farmer. She owns and manages Morale Orchards, LLC, a 40-acre pear orchard in Hood River, Oregon. She is also the founder and CEO of Morale Food Co., a start-up value-added food manufacturing company, also located in Hood River. The company specializes in producing freeze-dried and individually quick-frozen (IQF) products for both wholesale and consumer markets. In addition to her professional endeavors, Ms. Alexander is a



highly engaged and busy philanthropist who champions black leadership and disaster relief efforts.

Ms. Alexander has been the owner and operator of Morale Orchards since 2006, when she purchased land her ex-husband's family

worked as migrant farm workers in the early 1960s. After taking ownership of the farm, Ms. Alexander has consistently run a profitable operation producing Asian, Bartlett, and D'Anjou pears with yields of over 400 metric tons annually.

In addition to managing the financial and business operations of her orchard, she is a member of the <u>Fair Food Program</u> with 8 full-time employees and up to 23 seasonal workers.

Ms. Alexander is passionate about diversity and inclusion for minorities and received the



Northwest Mountain Minority Supplier Development Council's 2017 Supplier of the Year Award. She was also acknowledged as one of the top 50 Black-owned businesses in the Portland, Oregon area according to the Portland Business Journal.

Ms. Alexander's commitment to building and providing sustainable business models for growers was initiated after learning first-hand the impacts agricultural food waste can have on the bottom line of her orchard.



In 2015, she focused on transforming farm "cull", imperfect produce that cannot be taken directly to markets, into value-added food products.

#### **Agripreneur Spotlight**

Her company's initial venture is a freeze-drying manufacturing facility — The Puff Factory, Hood River. This facility prepares and processes freeze-dried products for both wholesale and retail markets. Know Your Fruit, a single-origin, freeze-dried fruit snack brand was born from this initiative. The brand uses locally grown fruit to create its products. Ms. Alexander is paving new ways to monetize valuable produce that had previously been designated as food waste and is in discussions with other groups about replicating her scalable and repeatable model for financial and business innovation.



In addition to her professional and entrepreneurial activities, Ms. Alexander and her family have made significant contributions to various organizations, including endowing the Lewis & Clark Law School's annual MLKspeaker series and being the lead donor for Lewis & Clark College's York Memorial, raised in honor of the African American slave who accompanied the school's namesake expedition. Additionally, Ms. Alexander is on the board of <u>SBP</u> — formerly the St. Bernard Project — a disaster recovery nonprofit that started after Hurricane Katrina. She is a member of several food industry associations, including serving on the board of the <u>Upcycled Food Association</u>, a non-profit leveraging market forces to prevent food

waste, as well as a member of the Oregon State Business Council's Food and Beverage Task Force.



To learn more about Morale Orchards and Know Your Fruit, follow them on <u>Facebook</u> and <u>Instagram</u> or visit <u>www.knowyourfruit.com</u>.

Click <u>here</u> to view "Expressions In Black: Episode 5," where Jacqueline shares detailed insight into her journey.

#### **Upcoming Events**

## **Webinars and Live Events**

Freedmen Heirs Foundation (FHF), Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR), and Resources for the Future (RFF) are collaborating to conduct a webinar series — Assessing Opportunities and Barriers for Minority Producers Transitioning to Climate-Smart and Regenerative Agriculture Programs — and an in-person convening event in early 2025.

This webinar series and inperson convening will be guided by community insights and will be used to shape a research framework as well as the creation of resources that enhance the impact of climatesmart agriculture investments for minority farmers.

The next webinar will be on Friday, October 11, 2024, at 1:00 pm EST. This session will discuss mapping information networks and understanding barriers to accessing resources and funding.

Click the link below to join the discussion.

**REGISTER HERE** 

Join us for FHF's next webinar session — **We're Bonded In The Soil** — on **October 15, 2024**, via **Zoom** at **1:30 pm CST/2:30 pm EST.** 

Our guest speaker, Ashley Smith, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Black Soil KY, will delve into her organization's impactful mission and vision, highlighting their transformative work within the community.

Together, we'll also discover how direct-to-consumer farming serves as a powerful tool for intervention and community empowerment. We'll also recap the key insights from the inaugural State of the Soil conference held earlier this month and share ultimate goals for 2025's conference!

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

#### **REGISTER HERE**



#### **Webinars and Live Events**

## Scaling for Success: Supplier Development Tools for Farms and Food Businesses

The Chicago Food Policy Action Council is hosting its Scaling for Success: Supplier Development Tools for Farms and Food Businesses Buyer/Supplier Mixer Series. This complimentary two-day virtual event is designed to equip early-stage small-scale farmers and food business owners who have operated for 1-10 years with essential tools, resources, and actionable strategies to responsibly scale their businesses and achieve wholesale readiness. The sessions will concentrate on three main areas: Business Development, Operations, and Capacity Building, which will be presented in partnership with community collaborators and supply chain experts.

For more information, please visit the link below.

**REGISTER HERE** 



#### **Upcoming Events**

## **In-person Events**

#### 2024 Regenerative Food Systems Investment Forum

The 2024 Regenerative Food Systems Investment (RFSI) Forum will take place October 9-10, 2024 in Denver, Colorado. With 450+ attendees, 45+ speakers and 9+ hours of networking, the RFSI Forum is the ONLY event that exclusively brings together investors, food and agriculture entrepreneurs, and critical stakeholders working to build resilient food systems.

Click below to learn more and to register.

#### **MORE DETAILS**





#### **In-person Events**

#### 9th Annual Black Sustainability Summit

<u>Black Sustainability, Inc.</u> will host its 9th Annual Black Sustainability Summit from October 11-13, 2024, in East Point, Georgia, expecting 200 sustainability practitioners of African descent. The Summit will feature plant-based cuisine to promote healthier eating in Black communities, a three-day agenda with member presentations, participatory impact funding, and a zero-waste mixed-media art exhibit showcasing the inaugural State of Black Sustainability Report. Click the link below to learn more and to register for this exhilarating event.

#### **MORE DETAILS**



#### **In-person Events**

#### **Esther Manor Farm-to-Table Experience**

Join <u>Esther Manor Farm</u> on **October 19, 2024**, at **2:00 pm EST**, for an exhilarating afternoon, celebrating African culture through food, fashion, music, and games! Savor a mouthwatering barbecue feast featuring authentic African dishes while enjoying vibrant Afro-beats music. Feel the pulse of traditional African drums and witness a captivating fashion show. Gather around the bonfire for storytelling sessions, all in support of Esther Manor Farm programs.

Don't miss this unforgettable event celebrating Africa's rich heritage and a worthy cause! Click the link below to register.

#### **REGISTER HERE**





#### **In-person Events**

## 2025 The State of the Soil Conference

Mark your calendars for the 2nd Annual State of Soil Conference! This year's event was a tremendous success, and we eagerly anticipate sustaining that momentum at next year's gathering.

**REGISTER HERE** 

Click the link below to secure your seat.



## **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** 

#### September 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** 

#### Southern University AgCenter Certification Programs Available

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

**LEARN MORE** 

#### **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 September 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** 

## **Additional Information**

## Missed One of Our Webinars?

If you missed any of our webinars, don't worry we've got you covered! Click the link below to access our YouTube channel to catch up on the sessions you missed. Be sure to check your email and follow us on social media for updates on upcoming webinars and events

**WATCH NOW** 



## **USDA Recently Launched Its Online Debt Consolidation Tool for Farmers and Ranchers**

Last month, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the launch of an innovative online tool designed for farmers and ranchers. The debt consolidation tool allows users to input their farm operating debt and assess the potential savings they could achieve by obtaining a debt consolidation loan through Farm Service Agency (FSA) or a local lender.

Click the links below to read the full announcement and to access the tool.

**LEARN MORE** 

**DEBT CONSOLIDATION TOOL** 

## **Funding Opportunities**

## **Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program (SPMGP)**

Grant applications are still being accepted for the Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program (SPMGP) administered by the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center (NSIIC). Eligible entities include those that promote the betterment of U.S. sheep industries and include LLCs, partnerships, corporations, cooperative organizations, associations, a federally recognized Indian Tribe, and public or quasi-public agencies.

Applications can be requested by emailing the Sheep Center at <a href="mailto:sheepgrants@nsiic.org">sheepgrants@nsiic.org</a> or <a href="mailto:stevelee@nsiic.org">stevelee@nsiic.org</a>. A phone number must be included in the email. The Sheep Center will send a fillable application and The Center will contact you to answer any questions or give advice. The deadline for applications is <a href="mailto:september30">September 30</a>, 2024.

Click the links below to learn more about this funding opportunity.

**LEARN MORE** 

**APPLICATION INTRUCTIONS** 



#### **West Michigan Farmers of Color Land Fund**

Applications are still being accepted for the West Michigan Farmers of Color Land Fund. The goal of this fund is to address past generational injustices by empowering the creation and expansion of BIPOC-owned green growing spaces in urban and rural settings of West Michigan.

The deadline to apply is **October 31, 2024**. Click Explore for more information about this funding opportunity.

**EXPLORE** 

#### **Funding Opportunities**

## USDA Appalachia Regional Food Business Center Business Builder Grant

The USDA Appalachia Regional Food Business Center is now accepting applications for the Business Builder Grant. This opportunity aims to support local food businesses by providing essential funding to enhance operations, increase capacity, and foster economic growth in the region.

The deadline to submit applications is **November 1, 2024** at 12:00 p.m. EST. Click the link below to learn more and start your application today.

**EXPLORE** 

# 2025 Southern SARE Producer Grant Call for Proposals

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) is accepting proposals for its 2025 Producer Grants. This funding opportunity provides farmers and ranchers the ability to implement research projects aimed at developing sustainable production and marketing practices. Funding is available to fulltime or part-time farmers and ranchers or farm cooperatives.

The application deadline is **November 8, 2024**. Click below for more information about this opportunity.

**EXPLORE** 

#### 2025 Extension Risk Management Education Request for Applications

The Southern Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) Center, alongside the North Central, Northeast, and Western Centers, is pleased to announce competitive funding opportunities for educational initiatives. These projects aim to assist agricultural producers in enhancing their economic viability.

Click the link below to learn more about these funding opportunities. Applications are open until **November 14, 2024.** 

**EXPLORE** 

#### **Funding Opportunities**

## Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta 2024 Heirs' Property Family Wealth Protection Fund (FWP)

Starting October 1, 2024, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta (FHLBank Atlanta) will begin accepting applications for its 2024 Heirs' Property Family Wealth Protection Fund (FWP). This funding will enable organizations to support property owners in low-to-moderate income areas within the FHL Bank Atlanta district who are facing heirs' property issues.

The deadline to apply for this funding is **October 31, 2024.** Click the link below to read the full press release.

**LEARN MORE** 



## **Employment Opportunities**

#### Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA)

RAFI-USA is looking for a Farm Services Director to join their team. In this position, the Farm Services Director will supervise key program staff, manage program planning and evaluation, oversee grants, encourage collaboration, and coordinate regranting efforts to effectively support farming communities.

Click below to learn more 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** 

#### **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 Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Human Foods Program (HFP) seeks to fill two vacancies within the program. Applications for these roles. are being accepted now through **October 2, 2024**.

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

**APPLY** 

#### **Employment Opportunities**

## International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is seeking an Administrative Coordinator I to join their organization. Duties and responsibilities of this role include but aren't limited to providing support in the following areas: project logistical and meeting coordination, accounting, and travel.

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 <a href="mailto:info@freedmenheirs.org">info@freedmenheirs.org</a>.



## **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!

## 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.



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