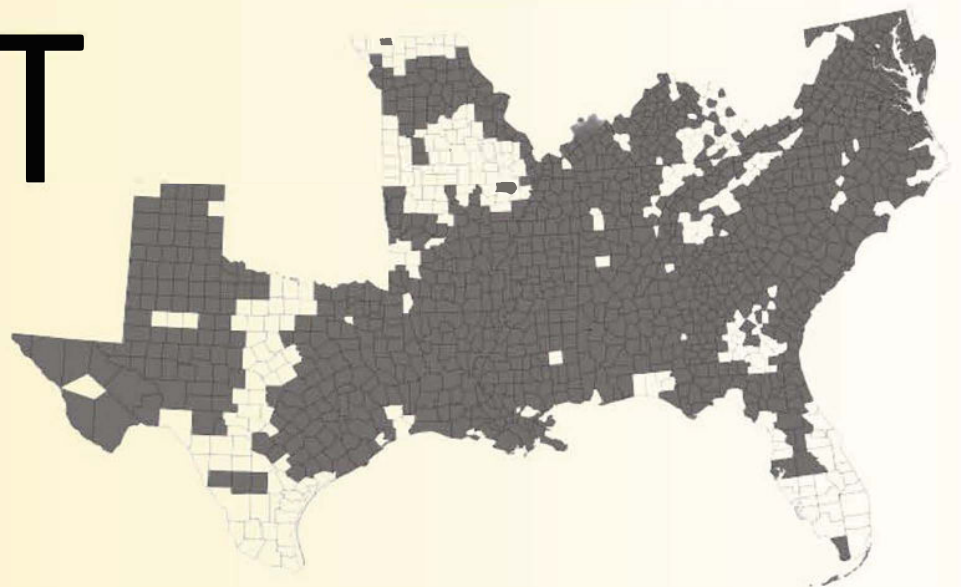


STATE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE BLACK BELT



October 2023 | Volume 2

THE BLACK BELT IS AN EQUITY DESERT:

The Farm Bill Can Be The Solution

State of African Americans in the Black Belt (SAABB)
Carver Integrative Sustainability Center (CISC)
College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences (CAENS)
Tuskegee University, Alabama

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Message from the Carver Integrative Sustainability Center (CISC)

It is with excitement that we share our second year report, “THE BLACK BELT IS AN EQUITY DESERT: The Farm Bill Can Be The Solution.” Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the State of African Americans in the Black Belt (SAABB) is a yearly report founded by Tuskegee University and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. SAABB is a Rural and Community Development program of the Carver Integrative Sustainability Center (CISC) which is a science-based research and resource center that focuses on technologies and policies that impact underserved farmers, ranchers, landowners and the communities.

CISC is dedicated to using innovative and creative methods of improving the condition of men, women and children farthest down.” Similarly, SAABB is designed to address the issues specific to the Black Belt Region while at the same time have national impact. It is a partnership of 1890 Land Grant Universities (LGUs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and community-based organizations led by the Federation.

With the Supreme Court recently overturning the 1978 decision to allow colleges and universities to use Affirmative Action as part of their admissions process, as well as the recent awareness of the underfunding of HBCUs/1890 LGUs, it is our hope that this edition helps to reconcile historic disparities and educate the next generation of Black Belt leaders on the historic inequities in funding of institutions serving the Black Belt Region. In addition to these issues, we still continue to see persistent poverty and hunger, as well as subdued participation in USDA programs in the Black Belt Region, it is our desire that this second edition will serve as a guide for policy makers as they finalize their funding proposals for the 2023/2024 Farm Bill. We also hope that the various commissions and authorities that represent the region will find SAABB of value in their research and deliberations.

As always, we thank all of our partners in this effort: W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, and the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn University. Further gratitude is extended to our SAABB staff: Jerry Pennick (Editor), Dr. Gloria Bromell Tinubu (Senior Research Associate), Kourtney Sherrod (Research Fellow), and Research Associates, Dr. Dalal Alkordi and Dr. Monyai Chavers. We also extend gratitude to our guest authors, Niles Francis and Alicia Netterfield.

We look forward to your feedback on our second volume!



Dr. Raymon Shange, Director

Message from the SAABB Editor

SAABB's second annual report focuses on the Black Belt Region as an equity desert. This year's edition concentrates on three key areas where inequity is contributing to this phenomenon: Food Insecurity, Health Disparities, Environmental Injustice. There are some who believe the term desert is at best misleading when describing the historic crippling inequities that exist in the Black Belt Region. They believe that desert implies a natural occurrence while the inequities in the Black Belt are not natural but are the result of human activity.

This is a valid point only if you believe that all deserts are natural occurrences. We gave the concern serious consideration, and came to the unanimous conclusion that the context in which we use the term "desert" best describes the condition in the Historic Black Belt Region. The term "equity desert" defines both the cause and effect of historic inequities that are so prevalent in the Region. We contend that racism and apartheid are human actions that lead to specific conditions such as an area void of the basic resources required to survive and prosper - an equity desert.

This issue of SAABB defines the cause and effect of certain policies within the Farm Bill and highlights recommendations from diverse sources that could end the inequities that are so prevalent in the Black Belt Region. Naturally some of the recommendations overlap however we found that overall there was a general consensus; what differences exist revolve around priorities rather than substance.

The Farm Bill contains most if not all of the resources necessary to change the condition that is hindering growth and sustainability in the Black Belt Region. The problem is that those resources have never been equitably distributed. The current administration, as well as some others, has admitted as much.

In this report we detail some of the past and current policies that have led to the Black Belt becoming an equity desert. We also list recommendations that could lead to more just and equitable policies. The key to success however is the willingness and commitment on the part of policy makers to make sure that any policies that result from those recommendations are specific to African American farmers and their communities.

Sincerely,

Jerry Pennick

Edward "Jerry" Pennick, Editor

SECTION I

THE POWER AND PROMISE OF AN EQUITABLE FARM BILL

Niles E. Francis¹



A Brief History

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was established under President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. The purpose of USDA was to "provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management." Lincoln called USDA the "People's Department," however "People" did not include African Americans. The first Farm Bill was passed in 1933 by Congress and signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt; it was established as part of the New Deal and meant to help farmers who had been hit hard by the Great Depression. The Farm Bill is supposed to be reauthorized every five years – although that is rarely the case. Over time the Farm Bill has grown to be one of the largest spending packages passed by Congress, second only to defense spending.

The Black farmer profile below illustrates the need for policies that exclusively address the unique and historical problems that impact Black farmers.

Black Farmer Profile

- Black producers are on average older than U.S. producers overall (60.8 versus 57.5 years in 2017)
- Black farmers are more likely to have military backgrounds
- Primarily based in the southeast/mid-Atlantic
- Farms are often smaller than their white counterparts
- 2 in 5 Black farmers are over the age of 65
- Average age of a Black farmer is 61
- Black-operated farms accounted for 4.7 million acres of farmland
- Nearly half of Black farms (48%) specialize in cattle/dairy
- Top 5 states for Black farmers are TX, MS, AL, LA and GA

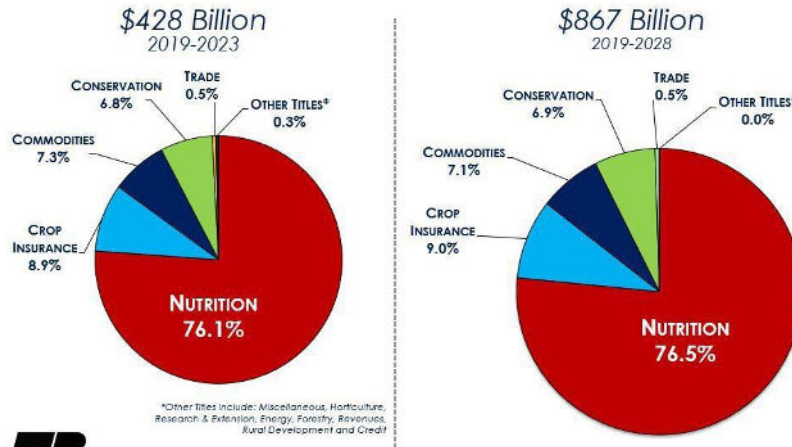
According to NPR, "In 2022, Black farmers were persistently left behind from the USDA's loan system:"

- Farmers of color received less than 1% of coronavirus pandemic farming aid, despite making up 5% of all farmers
- [USDA] granted direct loans to only 36% of farmers who identified as Black.
- 72% of white farmers were approved

¹ Guest Author (Intern with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (the Federation)).

The last Farm Bill was passed in 2018 with a budget of \$428 billion. The Federation, the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center as well as other organizations worked to secure a fair and equitable 2018 Farm Bill. Some success was achieved, but as with prior Farm Bills, it too fell way short of being fair and equitable.

Figure 1. 2018 Farm Bill Spending
5- and 10-Year Baseline



Source: Congressional Budget Office April 2018 Baseline, 2018 Farm Bill, Farm Bureau Analysis

The chart below provides a snapshot of key elements of the 2018 Farm Bill.

2018 FARM BILL PROMISES YOU...

FARM BILL FACTS

1 LAND RETENTION

- Provides a farm number and program eligibility to farm owners and operators farming on heirs property.
- Provides authority to establish a loan program through qualified intermediaries to work on
- Identifies similar alternate forms of documentation in each state as evidence of control of the land, including self-certification.
- Provides authority to the Secretary to collect data and perform analysis on trends in farmland ownership and operation.

4 EDUCATION -HBCU'S

- \$80 million in new funding to land-grant HBCUs for student scholarships
- \$15 million for HBCU cooperative extension and research
- \$10 million a year to support three new HBCU Centers of Excellence to address agricultural workforce development, nutrition and food security, economic development and emerging technologies.

6 PRODUCERS & MARKETING

- Creates the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) and provides the program with \$50 million per year.
- LAMP combines the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) and Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) program creating financial opportunities for farmers and cooperatives.

2 CONSERVATION

- Ensures that all beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers enrolling in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) have the option to receive 50 percent of their cost-share payment up front.

5 CREDIT

- Raises the loan limit on Direct Farm Ownership Loans to \$600,000.
- Raises Direct Operating Loans (DOL) to \$400,000 and guaranteed loans to \$1.75 million.
- Increased public reporting on lending trends for beginning and SD farmers, which will be important to ensure that loan funding remains available for these communities.

7 OUTREACH & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Adopts the Senate's provision to include and provide permanent mandatory funding for the Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) program.
- Provides \$435 million in mandatory funding for FOTO over the next ten years, and establishes permanent baseline.

3 MEDIATION

Expands State Agricultural Mediation Grants to support mediation services:

- Agricultural mediation programs will now be authorized to work on lease issues, family farm transitions, farmer/neighbor conflicts, organic certification issues.

VISIT WWW.USDA.GOV FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Farm Bill is the single piece of legislation that could secure a place for African-Americans in this country's production agriculture system and create a sustainable Black Belt Region;² that can only happen if policy makers recognize the racism that has been embedded in the Farm Bill since its inception.

The Evolution of Advocacy

Over forty years ago the Federation recognized that the survival of Black farmers and the retention of Black owned land depended on fair and equitable policies, especially at the federal level. The Federation has been challenging the USDA and its systemic racism since the Federation's founding in 1967. The USDA has always been one of the primary causes of Black farm and land loss and the Federation has been in constant battle to make the USDA live up to its founding principle as the "People's Department."

In the early seventies the Federation realized that because the USDA received its funding through the Farm Bill (the largest policy initiative that impacts Black farmers and their communities), the battle had to move to another front- the policy arena. It's been said that there are resources within the Farm Bill that could build a town in rural America. With this knowledge, influencing the Farm Bill became one of the primary goals of the Federation.

Over the years the Federation has built alliances, participated in collaborative, protested, and often acted alone- all in an effort to ensure that every five years (the period when the Farm Bill is reauthorized) there would be a fair and equitable Farm Bill.

Following are some of the key recommendations that the Federation played a key role in getting into various Farm Bills. Some did not survive the Farm Bill process, others did but lost their original intent as they made their way through Congress and the rules making process-even so they all represent steps toward justice for Black farmers, landowners and rural communities:

- Originally called the Minority Farmers Rights Act and geared toward Black Farmers. Politics forced a compromise and the MFRA became Section 2501 of the 1990 Farm Bill. Section 2501 has now become open to all Socially disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers thus limiting its impact on Black Farmers
- Receipt For Service-2014 Farm Bill: The RFS requires that all USDA offices issue a receipt for services to everyone who requests assistance. The RFS provides both the USDA and the client with a written record of services or the lack thereof.
- The Federation and its allies have a long history of advocating for the end of the requirement that Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers provide a percentage match to receive certain grants from the USDA. Success has been marginal, but progress is being made.
- Whole Farm Insurance: The Federation has always advocated for a simpler and more equitable crop insurance program. In the late 1990's at a crop insurance conference in

² The State of African Americans in the Black Belt (SAABB) has redefined the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR) as the 15 former slave states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. All uses of the term Black Belt Region in this report refers to SAABB's definition (SAABB, 2022).

the Midwest the Federation suggested that there should be a whole farm insurance program that would cover all crops, equipment etc. Unfortunately it did not get much traction at the time; however whole farm insurance is now available but does not measure up to the Federation's original intent.

- Student Loan Forgiveness: For over a decade and a half the Federation has advocated for a student loan forgiveness program to help mitigate the Black brain drain that is negatively impacting rural Black communities. Portions or all student loans would be forgiven if an individual agrees to work for a period of time in critical sectors e.g. agriculture, legal, education. Unfortunately this recommendation has not received a positive response from policy makers but is still a key priority in the Federation's recommendations for the 2023 Bill.
- Heirs Property: Since the early 1970's the Federation has advocated for policies that would address the difficulty that heirs property owners have in securing loans and other services from USDA. The Federation conducted 2 comprehensive studies that defined the extent of the problem and provided possible solutions. With data gathered by the Federation the USDA began to understand the gravity of the problem and is now developing programs to help move this age-old barrier to equitable access to USDA resources. One such program is the Heirs Property Relending Program which was established in the 2018 Farm Bill. The HPRP provides loans (through an intermediary) to lend to heirs property owners who want to resolve barriers that are preventing them from accessing USDA resources.
- Ronald Regan closed the USDA office of Civil rights in 1983-for nearly 14 years the Federation and its allies fought to have the office reopened and adequately funded. It was reopened in 1996.





2023 ADVOCACY Farm Bill Priorities

-  We support Racial Equity in Conservation Programs with no less than 13% of Conservation Program funding set aside for Black farmers and landowners. **This was included in President Biden's Budget.**
-  We support Racial Equity in Credit Access by increasing the Microloan limit to \$100,000 and aligning farm ownership and farm operating loan limit to \$600,000.
-  We support Racial Equity in Credit by prohibiting FSA loan collateralization. (i) of the farmer's primary residence and (ii) to no more than 100% of the loan's value. **This has been introduced as a marker bill, a precursor legislation to the Farm Bill**
-  We support Racial Equity in Credit Access and Conservation Programs with targeted Conservation Program funding incentives to achieve loan forgiveness within the Heir Property Relending Program.
-  We support Racial Equity in Agriculture by creating farm and student loan forgiveness programs for Black farmers and professionals, prioritizing HBCU alum, with a 20% reduction in student loan debt for each year spent working in agriculture or at Community-Based Organizations serving Black farmers.
-  We support Racial Equity in Conservation & Credit by requiring a streamlined program application process with resources set aside for technical assistance by Community Based Organizations or Technical Service Providers with no less than **10 years of documented history of providing technical assistance for Black farmers and landowners. FSA has already released a streamlined loan application.**

Conclusion

Hopefully, the Federation's recommendations as well as those presented throughout this report, will help policymakers live up to the current USDA's stated commitment to achieve equity throughout the department. That can only happen if policymakers recognize and confront the racism that is embedded in this country's production agriculture system. If that happens, we will not only achieve equity - we can help build a prosperous and sustainable Black Belt Region.

SECTION 2

CREATING A FAIR AND EQUITABLE FARM BILL: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Alicia Netterville, MPPA, Esq.³

Inequities in the Black Belt Region

The United States Black Belt Region includes rural counties from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi to North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. These counties have the largest Black population and are systematically, under-resourced, and underserved, explaining the Black Belt's high poverty rate (Black Farmer's Network, 2021). The State of African-Americans in the Black Belt (SAABB) has redefined the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR) as the former slave states, which includes the 11 aforementioned states, plus Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri (SAABB, 2022). For the purpose of this article, SAABB's definition of the Black Belt Region is used.

The Region has a long history of inequities that impact all sectors and disproportionately affect its predominantly African-American population. Some of this region's key inequities include limited access to healthy food, limited agricultural resources, environmental inequities, and educational disparities. Moreover, in some areas of the Black Belt, residents may have limited political representation affecting their ability to advocate for policies that address food and agricultural inequities (Daley, 2022). In a climate where the national discourse centers on fostering opportunities and wealth creation in rural America particularly for farmers, ranchers, and foresters, policymakers should place special emphasis on addressing the challenges faced by the most vulnerable group: Black farmers and their communities (The White House, 2022). This article explores how the Farm Bill can serve as a tool to help rectify some of inequities that are so prevalent in the Black Belt Region.

The Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is an extensive legislative framework encompassing a wide range of matters pertaining to agriculture, food assistance programs, rural development, and conservation. While its primary concentration is on issues related to agriculture and food, it also has the potential to indirectly mitigate disparities across the nation through the implementation of diverse provisions and programs (Johnson & Morke, 2023).

Collaborative Advocacy

Oxfam America and proponents of an equitable Farm Bill acknowledge its potential to address disparities throughout the Black Belt Region. Oxfam America is actively engaged in partnership

³ Guest Author (Oxfam America Consultant).

with Black community-based leaders, institutions, and organizations in the region. As a collaborative, their goal is to grasp the fundamental structural obstacles that perpetuate racial injustices and economic disparities, with a particular emphasis on the agricultural and food system, while also working collaboratively to devise effective solutions.

Partners include:

- Tuskegee University
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
- Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education, Inc.
- Mississippi Association of Cooperatives
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center located at Alcorn

Through collaborative efforts, the partners are currently putting forward their recommendations for the upcoming 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorization to address disparities in the Black Belt Region. They have developed a policy agenda and a framework for policy advocacy. Their shared priorities center around five Farm Bill Titles.

- Title II: Conservation – Encourages environmental stewardship of farmlands and improves management through land retirement programs, working lands programs, or both.
- Title IV: Nutrition – Provides nutrition assistance for low-income households through programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Title V: Credit – Offers direct government loans and guarantees to producers to buy land and operate farms and ranches.
- Title XII: Misc. – Includes other miscellaneous and general provisions.
- Title VII: Research, Extension, and Related Matters - Supports agricultural research and extension programs to expand academic knowledge and help producers be more productive.

How the Farm Bill Can Address Inequities in the Black Belt Region

End Systemic Racism in the Farm Bill

Discriminatory Farm Bill policies and practices are key factors in the almost unabated loss of Black farms and farm land. While Black farmers share common challenges with all farmers, systemic racism within the USDA exacerbates their struggles (Bustillo, 2023). To date, there has never been policies in the Farm Bill that specifically address the unique problems that plague Black farmers and their communities.

Terminology plays a role in and has direct implications of racial disparities in the Farm Bill. As such, the use of the term Historically Underserved Producers should be eliminated, and the use of Socially Disadvantaged should be limited. “The USDA defines Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs) as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice. SDFRs include farmers who are Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander. For some but not all USDA programs, the SDFR category also includes women.” (Keith, 2023) Veteran farmers and ranchers also receive certain preferences under most USDA farm credit and farmland conservation programs (Johnson, 2019).

These ambiguous categories have the consequence of excluding Black farmers from receiving equitable Farm Bill benefits. Therefore, the 2023 Farm Bill reauthorization should establish specific provisions tailored to the needs of Black farmers. This is crucial, especially given that Black farmers are experiencing a decline in numbers, and the absence of such tailored provisions could jeopardize their sustainability. Recognizing the significance of terminology, it is essential to replace "Historically Underrepresented" with "Black Farmers" to guarantee that they fully enjoy the intended benefits of the Farm Bill.

Increase Access to Healthy Food

In many Black Belt communities, residents may have access to a grocery store, but financial constraints prevent them from purchasing fresh, nutritious foods. This lack of access can lead to poor diets and related health issues. Increasing access to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits for eligible individuals and families is a vital solution.

The current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) application and associated processes discourage participants from enrolling and maintaining benefits due to eligibility, participation, enrollment, and recertification barriers. To increase access to fresh, nutritious food and SNAP enrollment, the 2023 Farm Bill reauthorization should update (SNAP) Eligibility, Enrollment, Participation, and Recertification by:

- Including essential expenditures in calculation of gross income, thereby adjusting net income and eligibility;
- Increasing marketing and utilizing participant focused language to support eligible individuals in enrolling;
- Lifting eligibility from 130% to 200% of the poverty line.
- Increasing reimbursement rates to schools;
- Developing a one-stop-shop portal to streamline enrollment and recertification across safety net programs, especially federal nutrition programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, Medicare, and WIC;
- Reducing the burden of recertification concerning frequency and documentation and
- Boosting retention through waivers for interviews and telephonic signatures.

Equitable Access to Farm Bill Resources

African American farmers in the Black Belt too often face limited access to resources such as loans, technical assistance, and markets; making it challenging to compete with larger, more established operations.

The 2023 Farm Bill reauthorization should include policies to increase equitable access to credit for Black farmers. Access to credit is crucial for farmers to invest in their operations and move toward sustainability. Historically, Black farmers have faced significant challenges in accessing credit due to limited collateral, lack of credit history, and discrimination. Equitable access to credit will help level the playing field and ensure that Black farmers have a fair opportunity to access the financial resources they need and deserve to survive and thrive. Specific reforms should include:

Increase in micro-loan program amounts from \$50k to \$100k

Increase in Farm Loan operating limit to \$600k to match Farm Ownership loan

Prohibition on FSA loan collateralization of farmer's primary residence greater than 100 percent of the loan's value.

Rectify Environmental Inequities

The Black Belt Region has many environmental hazards, including landfills and industrial facilities, which disproportionately affect low-income African American communities, exposing them to pollution and health risks. These problems are also common among farmers in the region who deal with soil erosion, water pollution, and climate change.

The 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorization should incorporate policies that guarantee fair access to conservation and climate resources, which are vital for tackling environmental issues and advancing sustainable agriculture practices. Black farmers have historically encountered substantial obstacles in obtaining these resources. The Farm Bill can actively contribute to environmental justice by guaranteeing such access. Specific reforms should include:

1. USDA set-aside of 13% of conservation program funds for Black farmers and Ranchers; and
2. Increased technical assistance funds for 1890 Land Grant Universities and other Black organizations with a history of serving Black farmers.

Rectify Educational Disparities

There are historical funding gaps between 1862 and 1890 Land Grant Universities. As a result, access to agricultural education and training programs may be limited in the Black Belt Region, making it harder for Black youth to pursue careers in agriculture or improve farming practices. These disparities also limit the 1890s' ability to provide the research-based technical assistance necessary for Black farmers to compete in a constantly evolving agricultural system.

The 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorization should include policies to create parity within the Land Grant University System.

Conclusion

The Farm Bill possesses the transformative potential to rectify long standing inequities in the Black Belt Region. A Farm Bill that is committed to equity will have an agenda that includes policies that specifically address the historic inequities that have stymied and targeted reforms; it can serve as a catalyst for equity, justice, and prosperity in these historically marginalized communities. As the 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorization looms, prioritizing the needs of Black farmers and their communities must be a paramount objective, ensuring that the Farm Bill becomes an instrument of positive change in the Black Belt Equity Desert.



SECTION 3

SNAP INEQUITIES IN FOOD RETAILING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BLACK BELT REGION

Gloria Bromell Tinubu, Ph.D.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP and formerly the Food Stamp Program, is the largest of USDA's domestic food assistance programs, in both participation and spending and is administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). It is projected to account for over 80% of the budget in the 2023 Farm Bill according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which is greater than the 76% it accounted for in the 2018 Farm Bill. CBO estimates that of the \$1.4 trillion 10-year outlays for Farm Bill 2023, \$1.2 trillion is expected to fund nutrition with the lion's share going to SNAP.

Hence, the farm bill is a major topic of interest and discussion due to its impending reauthorization in 2023 or 2024. What is not well known or discussed, is the fact that the lion's share of SNAP redemptions goes to large food retailers (big boxes that are not locally owned) rather than to small retailers like food cooperatives, specialty stores, farmers markets, and convenience stores that are typically locally owned. This article addresses this inequity and offers some key recommendations for rectifying the situation. What follows is some background on inequities in our food system, followed by a discussion of inequities with respect to SNAP food retailers. The final section offers some key recommendations with a particular emphasis on the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR).⁴

Background

It is generally accepted knowledge that racial inequities are not a result of individual racists or race-neutral institutions, but rather are the result of "the cumulative impact of multiple institutions" over time. This concept is referred to as structural racism (New York School of Law, 2012). However, when it comes to racial inequities with respect to access to healthy food options, terms like food apartheid, food deserts, food sovereignty, and food democracy come into play. Considered a condition or result of food apartheid, food deserts, according to the New York School of Law, can be understood as follows:

It is not by happenstance that low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are often devoid of affordable and nutritious food choices but have easy access to fast-food

⁴ HBBR states as defined by SAABB are the 15 former slave states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

restaurants, bodegas and convenience stores. Rather, food deserts are a manifestation of structural inequities that have been solidified over time. The structural influences that have resulted in the disparate access to healthy food for minorities are innumerable. Housing policies, financial policies, and government regulations have all interacted over time to contribute to the disparity in healthy food options within cities (New York School of Law, 2012).

In its advocacy to establish a Food Bill of Rights (see Figure A1 in the Appendix), WANDA (Women Advancing Nutrition, Dietetics, and Agriculture) echoes the above sentiments and makes it clear that there is a central role to be played by our national government, and the Farm Bill, in particular:

The government was established to be for ‘the people,’ but the people have become just a few large corporations. The past 50 years of Farm Bills have reinforced a new ‘Standard American Diet’ by subsidizing food that makes Americans sick and agribusiness rich. Every 5 years, Congress supports agricultural policy in prioritizing big businesses rather than health of every American, and every 5 years, we have the opportunity to change and improve this system...Today’s food policies do not address the social inequities that are the result of decades of discriminatory planning and policy decisions...Our country is facing food apartheid. Our current food system has become a system of segregation (WANDA, n.d.).

Even a recent [USDA Economic Report](#) on food security found the following racial, gender, geographical, and ethnic inequities in 2021 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021):

- 24.3% of single-parent households headed by women experienced food insecurity.
- Southern region states experienced food insecurity at a much higher rate than any other U.S. region (7% for the country versus 11.4% for the southern region)
- Black (19.8%) and Latinx (16.2%) households were disproportionately impacted by food insecurity in 2021, with food insecurity rates triple and double the rate of White households (7.0%), respectively.

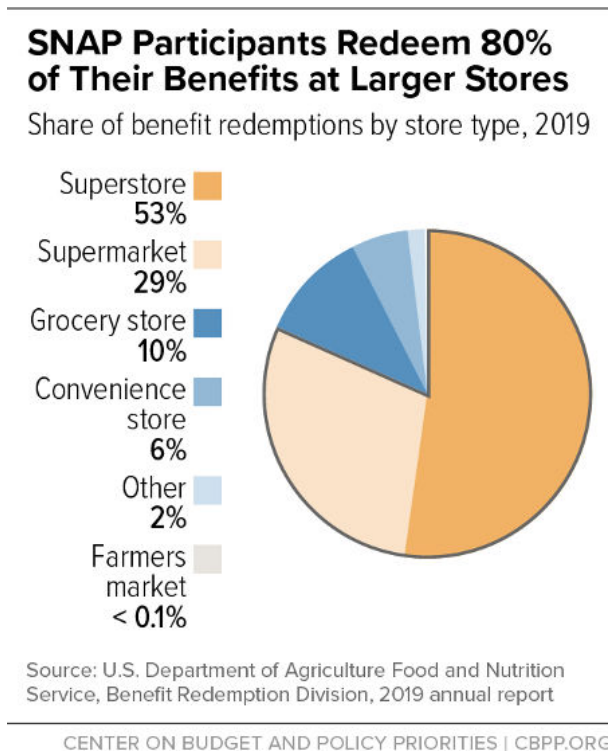
The evidence is pretty clear when it comes to identifying the segment of the American population that bears a disproportionate burden when it comes to food insecurity (Rodman-Alvarez & Colasanti, 2019).

However, federal government-subsidized inequities in our food system described above speak to market demand, and only one part of market supply, that is, production. It does not address the glaring disparities with respect to distribution, i.e the large food retailers who disproportionately benefit from SNAP redemptions. This explains, in large part, the massive lobbying efforts undertaken by these large food retailers when it comes to the Farm Bill (see Appendix, Table A3).

Big Food Retailers Get the Lion's Share of SNAP Redemptions

The statistic that stands out the most regarding SNAP and food retailers is that while large stores (superstores and supermarkets) account for only 15.4% of authorized firms, they account for an astounding 82% of SNAP redemptions by participants (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: SNAP Redemptions⁵



On the other hand, the remaining 84.6% of authorized businesses, which includes grocery stores, convenience stores, specialty stores, and farmers markets, only account for 18% of SNAP redemptions.

To put a finer point on this disparity, big-box stores like Walmart, Costco, Target account for only 8% of all stores, yet they account for over 53% of SNAP redemptions. Similarly, large supermarkets with 10 or more checkout lanes account for a little over 7% of all stores, but account for 29% of SNAP redemptions (See Figure 3 below).

On the other hand, independent stores, dollar stores, and general stores account for nearly 33% of all stores, but only account for 10% of SNAP redemptions.

⁵ Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/snap-retailer-management-dashboard>

The disparity and inequity in the SNAP food retail system rears its ugly head when we examine the smaller retailers. Farmers markets, specialty stores, and convenience stores account for 45%, 6%, 1% of all SNAP retailers, respectively, but account for only 6%, 2%, and less than 0.1%, respectively.

Figure 3: SNAP Participants and Redemptions by Store Type⁶

Redemption by Store Type (2019) ^[1]			
Store Type	Definition	Percent of all stores	Percent of Redemptions
Superstore	Big-box stores, food warehouses, and very large supermarkets.	8.0	53.4
Supermarket	Stores commonly known as supermarkets and grocery stores, typically with 10 or more checkout lanes.	7.4	29.1
Grocery store ^[2]	Stores primarily selling eligible items, though this includes independent drug stores, dollar stores and general stores.	32.8	10.4
Convenience	Self-services stores that offer limited convenience items and typically a large variety of ineligible items.	45.2	5.5
Other	All other stores including specialty stores (like butchers and bakeries), military commissaries, group homes and delivery routes.	5.7	1.5
Farmers market	Single or multi-stall market selling agricultural products to the general public.	0.9	Less than 0.1

[1] Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 2019 SNAP Retailer Management Year End Summary, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-SNAP-Retailer-Management-Year-End-Summary.pdf>.

[2] This category is divided into small, medium, large, and combination grocery stores.

⁶ Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data/snap-retailer-management-dashboard>

Table I: Number and Percentage of SNAP Retailers by Store Type and State in the Historical Black Belt Region, 2019.

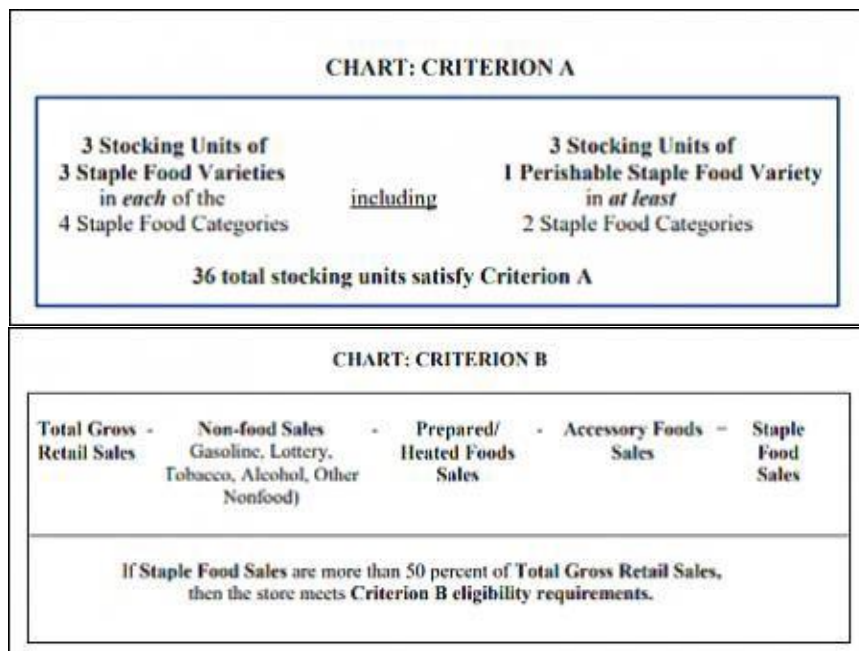
Number and Percentage of SNAP Retailers by Store Type and State in the Historical Black Belt Region, 2019													
State	Superstore		Supermarket		Grocery Store		Convenience Store		Other Retailer		Farmers Market		Total
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
Alabama	326	7%	348	8%	1,730	38%	1,967	44%	139	3%	11	0%	4521
Arkansas	248	10%	132	5%	935	37%	1,135	45%	64	3%	17	0%	2,531
Delaware	46	6%	71	9%	305	40%	302	40%	26	3%	8	2%	758
Florida	927	6%	1,713	12%	5,060	34%	6,491	44%	486	3%	50	0%	14,727
Georgia	625	7%	631	7%	3,009	32%	4,689	51%	259	3%	53	1%	9,266
Kentucky	310	7%	267	6%	1,456	34%	2,159	50%	101	2%	44	1%	4,337
Louisiana	330	8%	261	6%	1,774	42%	1,710	40%	168	4%	23	1%	4,266
Maryland	412	12%	307	9%	1,159	33%	1,481	42%	126	4%	26	1%	3,511
Mississippi	204	7%	139	5%	1,101	36%	1,520	50%	83	3%	14	1%	3,061
Missouri	431	9%	346	7%	1,557	33%	2,247	47%	131	3%	37	0%	4,749
North Carolina	578	7%	983	11%	2,974	34%	3,973	45%	256	3%	65	0%	8,829
South Carolina	282	6%	444	9%	1,554	32%	2,385	49%	153	3%	20	1%	4,838
Tennessee	397	6%	477	8%	2,083	33%	3,121	50%	136	2%	39	0%	6,253
Texas	1,425	7%	1,282	7%	6,417	33%	9,911	51%	505	3%	52	0%	19,592
Virginia	554	9%	566	9%	1,895	31%	2,968	48%	139	2%	90	1%	6,212
Black Belt	7,095	7%	7,967	8%	33,009	34%	46,059	47%	2,772	3%	549	1%	97,451
United States	19,861	8%	18,395	8%	80,715	33%	112,018	46%	7,796	3%	2,500	0%	241,285

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, December 4, 2019

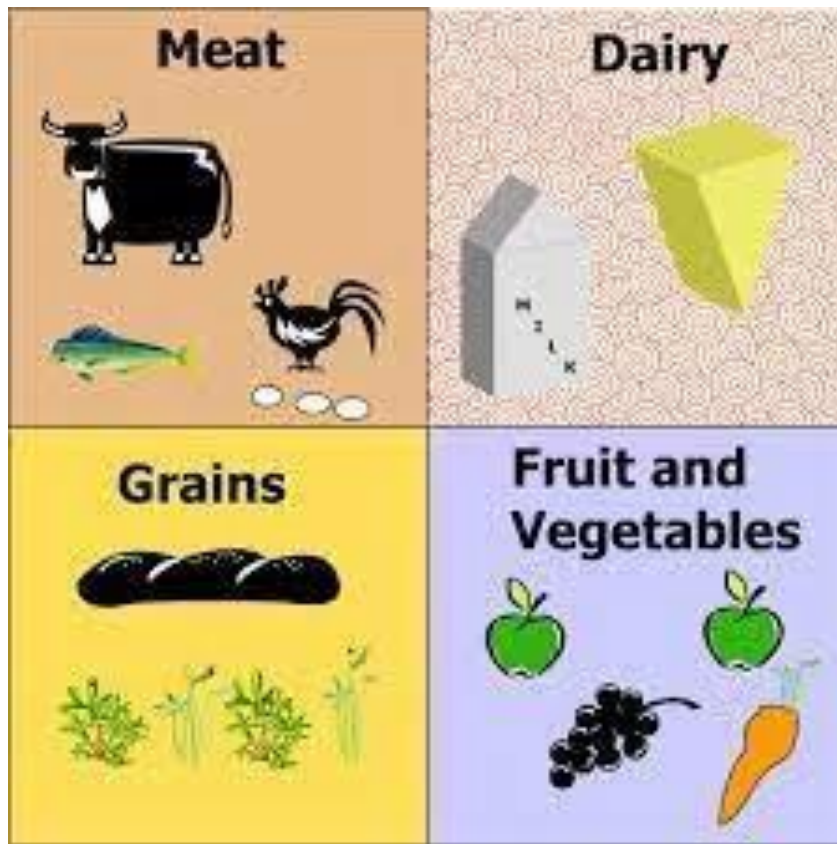
Recommendations to make SNAP more equitable

Recommendation I: Reconsider eligibility standards for small food retailers with respect to the number of stocking units.

A store generally must meet one of two eligibility standards, in order to be SNAP-authorized. Typically, they must either meet Criterion A (staple food stock) or Criterion B (staple food sales).⁸



⁸ Source: [Is My Store Eligible? | Food and Nutrition Service](#); Most authorized SNAP retailers qualify under Criterion A.



Staple foods are the basic food items that make up a significant portion of an individual’s diet and are usually prepared at home and consumed as a major component of a meal. The four staple food categories include: 1) fruits or vegetables; 2) meat, poultry, or fish; 3) dairy products; and 4) breads or cereals.

Recommendation 2: Increase Funding for Food Cooperatives in the Historic Black Belt Region

According to Civil Eats, it is estimated by sources familiar with the situation (no one tracks the number) that there are less than 10 Black-owned supermarkets in the entire country and the number continues to decline with recent closings of three Black-owned supermarkets: Sterling Farms in New Orleans; Apples and Oranges in Baltimore; and several branches of Calhoun’s in Alabama (Perkins, 2018). Given this bleak outlook for Black-owned supermarkets, it’s imperative that the Black Belt Region look to other business models like food cooperatives.

Food cooperatives are food/grocery stores that are owned by the members that use them. In the United States, they serve over 1 million members every year. U.S. grocery and food co-ops have combined sales that exceed \$2.4 billion with 38% of their revenue being spent locally, including 19% on local benefits and wages (NCBA CLUSA, 2023). PCC Natural Markets in Seattle is the largest food co-op in the country serving more than 56,000 members. In describing the benefits of food and grocery co-ops, the National Cooperative Business Alliance/Cooperative League USA (NCBA/CLUSA) had this to say:

Food co-op members take part in a vibrant community resource while enjoying several benefits. One of them is that every member has a vote. Member-owners, not external stakeholders, determine how the co-op operates and spends its money. Active members share in the co-op's profits by receiving a refund based on their purchases. Each coop offers unique benefits. For example, members of the PCC Natural Market in Seattle receive monthly 10% discounts. As customer-owned stores, grocery co-ops stay in tune with their community's needs. These groups reshape local economies through job creation and profit distribution (NCBA CLUSA, 2023).

In addition, some food cooperatives, like Weaver Street Market with four locations in North Carolina, make memberships free to people who are SNAP/EBT recipients through their Food for All Shares, as well as provide grants to local charitable causes.(Weaver Street Market, 2023). Perhaps the Food and Nutrition Service should follow suit and subsidize food co-op memberships for SNAP/EBT users.

Recommendation 3: Prioritize the role of Farmers Markets and provide funding for Delivery Route/Mobile Farmers markets.

A recent AGDAILY article on adopting SNAP/EBT at farmers markets nationwide had this to say:

Over 40 million Americans today use SNAP benefits, mainly at large grocery stores like Target and Walmart, but an underutilized sector of where these Americans can use these benefits is at farmers markets. Until the early 2000s, Americans using SNAP could claim benefits at farmers markets. However, when the government transitioned SNAP to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, farmers markets were left off the list of viable vendors who could accept these cards. As a result, many SNAP/EBT users were unable to shop at farmers markets, which hurt both customers and farmers (AGDAILY, 2023).

While farmers markets are now able to accept/EBT and many of them are listed as authorized retailers (7,377 out of 8,600 nation-wide), the majority of them have yet to serve SNAP/EBT users for a number of reasons, according to the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC), a national nonprofit dedicated to strengthening farmers markets across the country:

- **Many farmers markets do not have the resources necessary to promote the program and educate their communities.**
- **Many SNAP recipients who live near farmers markets do not know that the market accepts SNAP (Farmers Market Coalition, 2019).**

In order to get more SNAP users to patronize farmers markets, FMC has identified the following priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill:

- **Provide farmers and markets with appropriate and no-cost equipment to process federal nutrition benefits (SNAP, Farmers Market Nutrition Program)**

- **Streamline the application for farmers to process federal nutrition benefits**
- **Designate a role for market managers, and provide funding for farmers market operators for outreach and training associated with SNAP processing**
- **Increase FNS capacity to conduct planning efforts and outreach (Farmers Market Coalition, 2019).**

Conclusion

SNAP inequities that have resulted in big-box food retailers garnering the lion's share of SNAP redemptions can be rectified in the 2023 Farm Bill by revising eligibility standards, increasing funding for food cooperatives in the Black Belt Region, and by prioritizing farmers markets, including delivery route/mobile markets.

SECTION 4

CROP INSURANCE: A PRECARIOUS SAFETY NET

Kourtney Sherrod



Crop insurance is a risk management tool that should act as a safety net for all farmers. Having the option to purchase insurance to protect operations from a large loss, due to natural disasters or crop failure, is a major incentive for farmers to participate. While there are many ways that the Crop Insurance title can benefit farmers and ranchers, it simultaneously produces inequities. This article will discuss a variety of topics associated with the Crop Insurance title of the Farm Bill, such as Whole-Farm Protection Revenue's (WFPR) importance for the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR) and the plight of Black farmers. Crop insurance is a heavily funded title in the Farm Bill, analyzing the provisions and programs, within the context of equity, can benefit Black farmers and communities in the HBBR.

There are four main components of the Crop Insurance title that impact the HBBR: the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), the United States Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency (RMA), the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP), and Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP). In response to hardships faced by farmers during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, the FCIC was created to support the FCIP. From the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 to present-day, the FCIC has become an integral part of the Crop Insurance title. As a government-owned corporation that is managed by the RMA, the FCIC claims to promote the "economic stability of agriculture through a sound system of crop insurance and providing the means for research" (RMA, n.d.). A primary function of this corporation is to underwrite the insurance policies and set premium rates that are administered by the RMA. Through a public-private partnership, fifteen Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) sell and service the policies that are created by the RMA and managed by the FCIP.

The FCIP is another integral piece of the agricultural policies created in response to the Great Depression and Dust Bowl. Financed by the FCIC, the FCIP is a system that allows the federal governments to heavily subsidize premiums as a strategy to increase the affordability for producers. A contract is created between farmers and AIPs for crop insurance. Under this contract, farmers choose their coverage option and “agree to insure all eligible acreage of a crop planted in a particular county” (RMA, n.d.). In turn, the AIP agrees to indemnify the farmer against losses. While the FCIP has continued to evolve, it has yet to reach its full potential.

Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) is a type of crop insurance that is commonly referred to as Whole Farm Insurance. This risk management tool is used as a safeguard for farmers to protect the revenue of their operation. Given that this is the only type of crop insurance that is available across the United States, the expectation for participation in the program was high. The USDA intended for the program to support diversified farmers and increase production efficiency. In their 2023 Farm Bill Platform, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition states that “burdensome paperwork, opaque costs, expense monitoring and penalties, and a lack of education for both producers and insurance agents contributed to the program’s declining enrollment trends” (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, 2022). Ultimately, the structure and implementation of WFRP failed to incentivize participation in the program.

Crop Insurance: The Power of Large Agribusinesses

Although crop insurance does benefit some farmers suffering from a loss, the structure of these programs has been heavily criticized. Crop insurance policies often favor large farmers who have enough resources to manage specific policies. In 2019, a study by Bekkerman, Belasco, and Smith concluded that the largest 10% of farms in the U.S. received 60% of subsidy benefits (Belasco, 2022). The inequitable distribution of benefits leaves smaller farmers vulnerable in the agricultural sector. Ultimately, the structure of the crop insurance system accounts for the bulk of the problem.

The structure of crop insurance programs was not designed within a sustainable and equitable framework. The programs target larger commodity farms, which allows larger agribusiness to benefit more from these programs because they own more acreage and receive a higher value of crop sales. Even if the percentage subsidy is equal between a small and large agribusiness, the structure of the programs was designed for larger agribusiness to receive a greater subsidy amount. Additionally, crop insurance programs do not have a payment limit. This allows large agribusinesses to receive vast sums in subsidy payments. According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the FCIP “is the only farm subsidy program without any means test or payment cap” (Hackett, 2023). Allowing this to continue will only increase the disparity in distribution of subsidy payments between small and large agribusinesses.

In addition to a significant portion of the subsidy payments being distributed to large agribusinesses, the payments are also being distributed to AIPs and their agents for administrative and operating costs to administer the insurance programs. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) released a report that concluded that between 2001 and 2022, \$58.8 billion in subsidy payments were paid out to the AIPs and their respective agents (2023). The criticism behind these payments to AIPs is that the payments are bolstering private corporations instead of being used to support farmers.

The agricultural sector is fundamental to the U.S. economy, therefore ensuring the continuity and stability of this sector is crucial. It is crucial for the many stakeholders that are impacted by

the ongoing food system. With a limited supply of public resources available, there is a continuous debate around policies and funding for the Crop Insurance title. As a result, the concerns regarding the structure of crop insurance programs and the distribution of benefits are why lobbying efforts to influence Crop Insurance policies and regulations are monumental. Aside from large agribusinesses and powerful influencers having the financial resources to undertake lobbying efforts when small agribusinesses cannot, this relationship can produce potential negative outcomes.⁹ Large agribusinesses lobby for policies that benefit their interests, and have the capacity to shift agricultural priorities thereby creating an environment where small agribusinesses struggle to compete and advocate for their needs. While lobbying efforts will continue to influence agricultural policies, it is imperative that future policies do not neglect small farmers.

Crop Insurance: The Plight of Black Farmers

The Supreme Court case of *Pigford v. Glickman* has shown that discriminatory practices can influence government programs and policies. The outcome of this case was an acknowledgment that Black farmers were racially discriminated against by the USDA (SAABB, 2022). The case found that racial discrimination was done by providing “inadequate access to farm loans, disaster payments, crop payments, and other federal aid relative to White farmers” (Teal & Stevens, 2023). Despite *Pigford v. Glickman* confirming that discriminatory practices have disrupted the livelihoods of millions of Black farmers and families, no systemic changes have been implemented to equitably address racial discrimination (SAABB, 2022).

As discussed above, the structure of crop insurance programs has created barriers to entry. There is an inaccessibility issue, with respect to crop insurance programs and Approved Insurance Providers, for beginning farmers and ranchers, organic farms, small farms, and mid-sized farms that has served to perpetuate the disparities found in subsidy payment distribution (National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, 2022). This problem is compounded for Black farmers due to structural racism within the entire system. The HAAS Institute stated that the Farm Bill’s shift from “subsidization of production and consumption to the subsidization of agribusiness” has structurally altered society to position low-income communities at a disadvantage (Elsheikh & Ayazi, 2015). With crop insurance policies targeting large commodity farms, Black farmers are not being prioritized relative to White farmers. For instance, in 2017, Black farmers received almost \$10 million in farm subsidies, whereas White farmers received almost \$60 billion (Hayes, 2021). Though this is connected to a longstanding history of racial discrimination, the lack of prioritization is also due to the fact that Black producers are more likely to operate small and diverse farms (Teal & Stevens, 2023).

The SDFR Policy Research Center states that “with premium subsidies being directly linked to the value of the crop, it is safe to estimate that over 95-97% of crop insurance subsidies have gone to White producers (2021).” Their report uses the 2017 Census of Agriculture to point out the disparities or “subsidy gap” that exists between white producers and Black farmers, with respect to crop insurance policies. The 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture reported that only 2,517 Black farms had a value of sales of \$50,000 or more, leaving 16,891 Black farms with a value of sales at less than \$2,500. In comparison with Black farmers, there are 477,096 White farms that have \$50,000 or more in value of sales, leaving 755,929 White farms with a value of sales less than \$2,500 (see Table 2).

⁹ See Appendix Table A2 and A3 for more information.

Producer Race/Ethnicity	Number of Farms	Less than \$2,500 (Number)	Less than \$2,500 (Percent)	\$50,000 or more (Number)	\$50,000 or more (Percent)
American Indian or Alaska Native	60,083	32,469	54%	5,782	10%
Asian	18,338	5,705	31%	5,610	30%
Black or African American	35,470	16,891	48%	2,517	7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4,341	1,850	43%	637	14%
White	1,973,006	755,929	38%	477,096	24%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	86,278	41,460	48%	13,603	16%

Because premiums are linked to the value of crops, the distribution of larger premiums are directed towards White producers receiving the highest sales. 24% of White producers received more than \$50,000 or more in value of sales, whereas 7% of Black producers received more than \$50,000 or more in value of sales. This gap is not only an example of the inequities that Black farmers face, but it is a testament to the power of well paid lobbyists and a history of discrimination.

In an effort to address the subsidy/equity gap between white and black producers, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ❖ Provide targeted outreach and assistance to Black farmers in the Black Belt Region.
- ❖ Develop training that informs insurance agents on options better suited for nonconventional or diverse farming practices, to include cultural competency training.
- ❖ Reduce the burdens and barriers to entry associated with WFRP.
- ❖ Increase transparency for reporting measures to allow for identifying disparities in service/benefits.

Conclusion

For decades, activists have been calling for change in America’s food and agricultural system. The federal government has continuously advanced the interests of White and large agribusinesses, yet neglected the interests and well-being of Black and small farms. Barriers to entry for these programs, such as opaque costs and burdensome paperwork, need to be addressed in the crop insurance title for the upcoming Farm Bill. Given that the crop insurance title is projected to receive \$101.3 billion in funding for FY 2023-2028, Black farmers should not be overlooked¹⁰.

Ultimately, existing Crop Insurance programs and policies should be shifted in a manner that is efficient and equitable for Black farmers. Any attempt to effectively change the crop insurance

¹⁰ See Farm Bill Primer for more information.

title should begin by taking into account the historic discrimination that has led to a Crop Insurance system with systemic barriers that prevent Black Farmers from full participation. This involves additional outreach and education on programs and policies, an in-depth review of the subsidy structure, and most importantly, the introduction of measures that combat racial discrimination within America's food and agriculture system.



SECTION 5

HOW FUNDING DISPARITIES WITHIN THE LAND GRANT UNIVERSITIES SYSTEM (LGU) CONTRIBUTE TO THE GROWING EQUITY DESERT IN THE HISTORIC BLACK BELT REGION

Dalal Alkordi, PhD

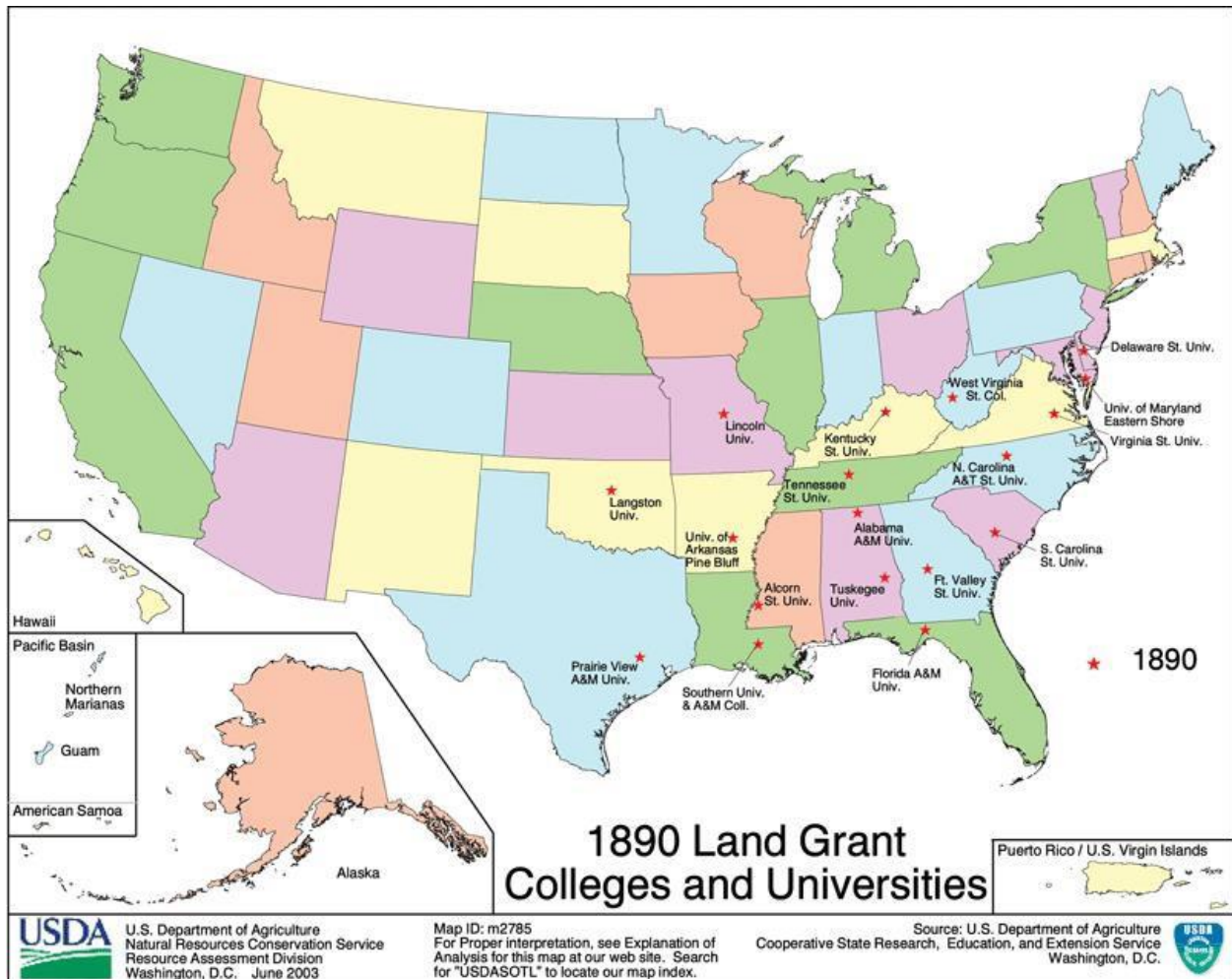


Introduction

1890 Land Grant Universities can play a much greater role in sustainable development throughout the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR); particularly in the areas of nutritious food access and health outcomes. This is especially so, given the fact that appropriate and culturally relevant research in the field of agriculture is thought to be the driving force behind the efforts to solve the world's food insecurity crisis. The Land Grant University (LGU) system is supposed to work collaboratively in a non-biased way to achieve that goal. However, funding for 1890 LGUs is inadequate, which challenges their effectiveness. Much remains to be done to close the increasing funding gap between the 1862, (predominantly White) and 1890s (predominantly Black) LGUs. 1890 LGU's are key to sustainable development in the HBBR therefore they deserve to have the resources necessary to meet that responsibility. This article will address the impact of this funding gap, the importance of 1890s LGUs and policy recommendations that could strengthen 1890 LGU's and make them better able to address the growing equity desert in the HBBR.

The following map (Figure 5) shows the location of 1890 Land-Grant Universities in the United States.

Figure 5: Location of 1890 Land-Grant Universities



A brief history of the LGUs system

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have proven to be one of the most significant sources of higher educational opportunity in the United States, especially for African Americans. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the federal government played a central role in the establishment of Black colleges. The creation of the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 was crucial to this effort. The first Morrill Act of 1862 led to the establishment of higher educational institutions that disproportionately catered to White students as well as White farmers; Black students would gain targeted support under the second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890 (Rose, 2017). Unfortunately, the Act failed to completely resolve the challenges that limited access to higher education for Blacks in the United States.

The Morrill Act of 1890 was passed by congress a full three decades after the Morrill Act of 1862. It was intended to provide African Americans farmers and their communities the same opportunities that had been afforded their White counterparts. It further included the stipulation that African Americans were to be included in the United States Land-Grant University Higher Education System without discrimination. It is important to note that the Second Morrill Act of 1890 prohibited the distribution of federal funds to states with an 1862 LGU unless that state agreed to establish an 1890 LGU (Pennick et al., 2023). That may well have been the first attempt to create a “separate but equal education system.”

Land Grant University Funding Inequities

Racial discrimination challenged the policies of the Morrill Land-Grant Act’s capacity to achieve its original intent of democratizing access to higher education (Rose, 2017). This made the resource inequities between 1890 and 1862 institutions more massive. For instance, the federal government has excluded the 1890s from federal formula payments for research and extension activities for the past eighty years.

In an attempt to achieve equity, the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890, PL. 37-130 stipulated that:

No money shall be paid out under this act to any State or Territory for the support and maintenance of a college where a distinction of race or color is made in the admission of students, but the establishment and maintenance of such colleges separately for White and colored students shall be held to be in compliance with the provisions of this act if the funds received in such State or Territory be equitably divided... (Rose, 2017).

Although imperfect in its implementation the Second Morrill Act helped to establish many of the nation’s earliest Black colleges and universities, however the equitable distribution of funds remains an unkept promise. In other words they were, and still are, separate but by no means equal or equitable when it comes to funding.

Today, nineteen 1890 LGUs educate, by far, the most Black students in the field of agriculture, many of whom engage in significant research that benefits small and under-sourced farmers. Their counterparts (predominantly White 1862’s) still receive far greater funding and other resources from the federal, state, and private sectors (Pennick et al., 2023). According to The Century Foundation (TCF) the research expenditures per full-time student are three times greater at the 1862 institutions than at the 1890 institutions (\$10,774 versus \$3,388).

For example, a Forbes investigation revealed a \$1.9 billion shortfall in the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) funding compared to the state’s predominantly White LGU. Also, the 1890s delivered cooperative extension work with less money from the federal government. Federal funds for 1890 research and extension have fallen far short of levels promised by Congress—a \$436 million shortfall between fiscal years 2008 and 2022 (State Science and Technology Institute, 2023). From 2010-2012, 1890 land -grant institutions did not receive almost \$57 million in federal matching funds for research and extension activities (Lee & Keys, 2013). This funding disparity is due to systemic racism which leads to double standards, and scrutiny that 1890 LGU’s endure when competing for federal and state research dollars. The matching funds requirement for federal funds is also an impediment because 1890 LGU’s do not have equitable access to the state or private resources afforded 1862 LGU’s.

The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) administers federal capacity and competitive grants to partner institutions for research, education, and extension activities. The Agriculture Appropriations for NIFA is \$1,094,121,000 for Research and Education Activities which is \$42 million above the 2022 Enacted level, and \$119 million below the FY 2023 President’s Budget request (see Table 3 for NIFA discretionary appropriation details and Table 4 for Select Federal Research Funding by Institution Type in 2018).¹¹

Table 3. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Discretionary Appropriations (in \$millions)

Research and Education		Extension Activities	
Hatch Act	\$265	Smith-Lever 3(b)(c)	\$325
McIntire-Stennis	\$38	Extension Services at 1890 Institutions	\$72
Evans Allen	\$89	Extension Services at 1994 Institutions	\$11
1994 Institutions	\$7	Women and Minorities in STEM	\$2
1890 Institutions	\$30	Smith-Lever Act, Section 3(d)	\$91.30
Other research and education	\$600.60	Food and Agriculture Service Learning	\$2
		Other extension	\$62.16

Table 4 . FY2018 Select Federal Research Funding by Institution Type¹²

Institution Type	Funding Program	Number of Institutions	Total Appropriation	Average Per Institution
1862	Hatch Act	53	\$243.7 million	\$4.6 million
1890	Evans-Allen Act	19	\$54.2 million	\$2.9 million
1994	Tribal Colleges Research Grants Program	35	\$3.8 million	\$0.1 million

According to the National Education Statistics , supported by the White House; due to decades of racial discrimination 1890 LGUs are owed \$13 billion.

The HBBR food and Health Desert

In the Historic Black Belt, the systems and practices of racism have left the area a food and health desert. Unfortunately, children are often the most impacted. The food desert issue continues to gain importance as more people understand the link between nutrition and health. Based on the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), there are currently 19 programs that

¹¹ National Institute of Food and Agriculture (2022), “NIFA Analysis - Agriculture Appropriation.” <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/FY%202023%20Enacted%20NIFA%20Analysis%20-%20Agriculture%20Appropriation.pdf>

¹² Source: NIFA Analysis of 2023 Enacted Omnibus

are charged with addressing the food desert issue; these programs are distributed amongst the United States Departments of Treasury, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture. Additionally, there are some organizations working toward increasing access to food in the region and developing sustainable food systems. Unfortunately, none of these organizations are adequately funded and seem to be making minimal progress at best.

There is no doubt that Research and Extension at 1890 LUG's provide the community with an educated workforce and support critical needs in food security. In 12/22/2022, the AMS and the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) announced a cooperative agreement to support the establishment of farmers markets in 1890 LGUs. Direct marketing outlets serve as small incubators and spur new economic development that provides opportunities for small farmers to sell their products and help meet the demand for locally produced food, particularly fresh fruits, and vegetables.

Although the American public, for the most part, supports massive investments in food assistance programs to vulnerable populations and to a lesser degree, an investment in nutrition education, many eligible households still lack access to nutrition education that is culturally sensitive. The results are that these individuals and families continue to suffer from poor health outcomes. 1890 LGU's are working to fill that gap through their various extension programs including technical assistance to family farmers that is based on appropriate research.

Several studies have attempted to measure the health impacts of living in a food desert. It has been found that people who do not have adequate access to nutritious foods tend to maintain a diet that is less healthy than those who have access. Research and Extension points to the health inequities and how they affect communities through adverse health outcomes, lost productivity, and increased health care costs. Health outcomes, tied to behaviors and health care, also are rooted in location and social status. A history of promoting justice through education makes 1890 Extension uniquely positioned to address health inequities and foster greater equality among groups that experience hardships because of differences in social, economic, and environmental determinants of health. The increasing incidence of diet-related health problems (obesity, type II diabetics, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension) signals an approaching crisis in the health status of American households. These problems are stratified by region, race and ethnicity, income, and place of residence (urban vs. rural). Low income, racial minorities living in the rural South are more likely than other Americans to be affected. This has long been a crisis situation in the HBBR and requires comprehensive policies to address it.

Impact of 1890s LGUs in the HBBR

Studies of HBCUs show that these institutions acted as empowering centers that supported educational, social, political, and cultural advancement for citizens who were often excluded from mainstream institutions, especially those living in the southern region of the United States (Jackson et al., 2003). It is also argued by others that HBCUs represent the nearest thing to reparations provided in the wake of slavery (Arnett, 2015; & Brown et al., 2001).

After the 1890 Second Morrill Act, Black farmers became very proficient in the production of cotton, tobacco, and peanuts. During the decade between 1920 and 1930, there were more than 900,000 Black farmers in the U.S. They owned more than 15 million acres of farmland. However, today African Americans, collectively, own fewer than four million acres of farmland.

Examples abound of how this country's unique food and agriculture system has negatively impacted the Black community. But the 1890 Land Grant Universities offered opportunities to obtain degrees and shift the paradigm and allow African Americans to obtain careers in the food, agricultural, and engineering professions (Magee, 2021). In addition they continue to build a cadre of experts dedicated to solving the food insecurity problem that the Black Belt continues to struggle with.

Despite the lack of equitable federal and state financial assistance, Black LGU's have contributed \$5.5 billion annually to local, state, and national economies and have generated over \$52 billion in lifetime earnings for each graduating class, while providing greater access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups, including Black and low-income students. Of the more than 117,000 students enrolled full-time at Black land-grants, 75% are Black (Georgetown University, 2023).

Research shows that 1890s have achieved successes in producing Masters and Ph.D. 's in Plant Science and Related Sciences. For instance, Alabama A&M University graduated 70 M.S. and 40 doctorate students since about 1988. Florida A&M University graduated 35 M.S. since 1993. While Delaware State University graduated 3 M.S. since 2005 (Onokpise, 2009). of 1890 LGUs can be measured by the expansion in the enrollment pattern of these colleges. In Table 5 below, enrollment is identified for five universities; Alabama A&M University, Florida A&M University, North Carolina A&T State University, Prairie View A&M University, and Tennessee State University.

Table 5. Fall enrollment of five 1890s universities from 1996 to 2018¹³

University	Alabama A&M	Florida A&M	North Carolina A&T State	Prairie View A&M	Tennessee State
1996-1998	101	483	268	316	449
1998-2000	79	550	215	281	393
2000-2002	7	520	195	303	439
2002-2004	7	493	207	401	403
2004-2006	457	468	281	496	390
2006-2008	536	481	300	372	381
2008-2010	427	554	324	341	338
2010-2012	463	774	350	380	372
2012-2014	383	854	375	471	356
2014-2016	460	667	431	458	375
2016-2018	645	602	470	529	378

For the most part 1890 LGU's still follow the model of research and extension developed by Dr. George Washington Carver: that model emphasizes research that is culturally relevant and technology that is appropriate. The focus then and now is on family farms that support the community. "He also developed techniques to improve soils depleted by repeated plantings of cotton. Carver teaches farmers how to examine, prepare, and fertilize soils and encourages

¹³ Source: International Journal of Scientific Advances ISSN: 2708-7972

them to grow alternative crops” (Kremer, 2011). Today the 1890 LGU’s ,with limited resources, are making research more accessible to Black farmers while also working with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to create locally controlled food and marketing systems aimed at shrinking the food and health desert.

Recommendations

- Eliminate the funding gap between 1890 and 1862 LGU’s
- Establish a Black Belt Equity Commission that will focus on solutions (research has already been done). The commission should be led by 1890LGU’s and CBOs. A baseline budget to implement solutions should be in place prior to forming the commission
- Support a consortium of 1890 LGU’s and CBO’s to further develop a Historic Black Belt regional production and marketing system
- Support the development of Cooperatively owned grocery stores strategy located throughout the HBBR.

Conclusion

There has to be increased investment in programs to help address the historical systemic racism and neglect within America’s food and agriculture system especially in the Historic Black Belt Region; that investment needs to be commensurate with the problems racism and neglect have and continue to cause such as an expanding food desert and poor health outcomes. The investment should begin by building the capacity of 1890 Land Grant Universities in a way that capitalizes on their experience, expertise, and commitment to the region.

Most, if not all, of the above recommendations can be funded through a fair and equitable Farm Bill. The Farm Bill funds a plethora of programs including land acquisition land use, food access, food production and economic development. What has always been lacking is a long- term commitment from the USDA to solve the problem and the willingness to fight for the resources it will require. Given the enormity and seriousness of the problem- piecemeal solutions will not work.



SECTION 6

ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUITIES IN CONSERVATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Monyai Chavers, Ph.D.



Environmental injustice in America, particularly in the Historic Black Belt Region, stems from a history of racism in social, political, and economic realms. Consider the confiscation of indigenous lands through mass genocide and displacement to the exploitation and depletion of natural resources for the financial industry at the expense of enslaved African labor in the 19th century. Moreover, the idea to preserve and protect these stolen and depleted lands in the name of conservation throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Even though climate change exacerbates the need to conserve land and mitigate climate risks, the conservation movement's core principles stem from racism and discrimination. First, this article briefly explores the historical and racial origins of the American conservation movement and how it influences contemporary conservation practices. Second, it provides a specific overview of the United States Farm Bill's conservation programs and their relevance to the Historic Black Belt Region. The article concludes with implications and recommendations to support land access and inclusion in contemporary conservation science and practice.

Origins of Conservation Movement

Historically, conservation consciousness emerged as a political and cultural movement at the expense of indigenous communities in the United States. For instance, the origins of the Tuskegee National Forest, previously owned by the Creek Indians, until their violent removal from the Macon County area in 1836. By the time Alabama assumed statehood, the Creeks had ceded at least fourteen million acres, with six thousand enslaved Africans replacing the six

thousand Creeks to exploit natural resources for capital (Warren, 1998). Throughout the late 19th century, the colonization of the West continued, and the booming timber industry exploited the forests, contributing to destruction and devastation. The continued loss of biodiversity, land consolidation, and fragmentation due to resource extraction induced forest conservation efforts by policymakers. Still, the reorientation in public policy and awareness immortalized the eviction of indigenous communities from ancestral lands in the name of conservation and preserving pristine natural forests.

For these reasons, conservation science and practice mirror racist notions of colonialism, perpetuating a cycle in which policies and programs disregard systemic land access and inclusion barriers. Policymakers and wealthy elites believe that effective conservation models protect biodiverse ecosystems by isolating these areas from human disturbance. Many revered the conservation policies of President Theodore Roosevelt as the President's administration established the Forest Reserve Act, developing the National Park System and reserving millions of acres under the government's protection. However, protected areas resulted in human rights abuses and forced removal of local Black and Indigenous communities, claiming them undeserving of land due to their lack of "civilization." Consider the published essays by John Muir, the Sierra Club's founder—one of the largest U.S. Conservation organizations—describing Black people and Native Americans as uncivilized and lazy (Breen, 2020). In the end, many conservation leaders operated from a culture of land exclusion, generating wealth at the expense of enslaved African labor. Furthermore, the domination of the regional land economy through sharecropping practices solidified plantation geographies that restricted land access to Black people. Ultimately, the "save the forest" ideas from wealthy White American elites and policymakers solidified racist views in the environmental movement and laid the foundation for global conservation practices steeped in racial exclusion.

From a contemporary standpoint, The Groton Plantation, which The Nature Conservancy, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Clean Water Fund, the South Carolina Conservation Bank, five other local water utilities, and private foundations and corporate donors like Walmart provided 12 million dollars to establish a partnership for the protection of 14,000 acres in South Carolina represents a solid example for the ways racialized histories impact conservation practices (Van Sant et al., 2021). Wealthy descendants of John Winthrop obtained the former slave plantation in 1906 and used the grounds for sharecropping and elite recreational activities well into the 1950s (Van Sant et al., 2021). Due to the established easement, the Groton Plantation's owners receive tax deductions, a decrease in property taxes, and the ability to use at least 900 acres for commercial operations that do not disturb water quality. Unfortunately, because the Groton Plantation remains strictly private property and researchers lack knowledge of the conservation practices on the Plantation, it is difficult to determine the ecological benefits of the water quality in the region. Ultimately, the Groton Plantation exemplifies the role of racial politics and plantation geographies in conservation practices. Throughout the Historic Black Belt Region, plantation geographies of elite white landholdings continue to hinder the push toward a more equitable and just environmental system.

The Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia also exemplifies the persistence of plantation geographies in Black Belt conservation politics. The 2,800-acres once appeared as a self-reliant community and home to nearly 75 African-American families (Harris Neck Land Trust, n.d.). The Gullah Geechee's descendants used the land in harmony and enjoyed the wild game and seafood provided by the land in abundance. However, the United States Army stole and evicted the residents, claiming eminent domain to develop an airfield in 1942 (Harris Neck Land Trust, n.d.). The U.S. government unjustly destroyed the lives, homes and livelihoods of the once vibrant community without proper compensation and the failed promise to return the land at the war's end. Although the government transformed the area into the Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge in 1962, the descendants of the African American families continue to push for reclaiming the land. In fact, the displaced residents established the Harris Neck Land Trust in 2005, demanding to reclaim their stolen land. Unfortunately, prominent conservation organizations do not agree with the position to return the land to Harris Neck descendants, with the regional director of Fish and Wildlife proposing an annual homecoming instead of returning the land, maintaining that it is crucial to the national refuge system (Dewan, 2010). Ultimately, it is common for conservation organizations to overlook the possibility for humans, especially Black and indigenous people, to coexist with nature.

Conservation in the Farm Bill

Under the historical backdrop of exclusion, the conservation movement persisted with the 1981 Uniform Conservation Easement Act, legally codifying tax deductions for private land easements. By the turn of the twenty-first century, government conservation policies compensated private actors and groups for voluntarily adopting market-based mechanisms aimed at land conservation. The Food Security Act of 1985, signed by Ronald Reagan, represents the first Farm Bill to specify conservation as a title, ultimately establishing one of the most extensive private lands conservation programs in the United States. Over time, the evolution of conservation programs has allowed Congress to reserve 22 million acres under the United States Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program (Pratt, n.d.). The Conservation Reserve Program, unlike previous conservation programs, designated funding for incentives to farmers targeting natural resource protection (McGranahan et al., 2013).

In addition to the Conservation Reserve Program, the USDA currently offers various conservation programs administered through the Natural Resource Conservation Service or the Farm Service Agency, with funding representing 7% of the 2018 Farm Bill budget (Stubbs, 2019a). Although conservation programs have become the dominant source of public funds for private land conservation, the plethora of programs directly or indirectly available stirs confusion regarding the programs' purposes, participation, and policies. Nonetheless, the Congressional Research Service categorizes Farm Bill conservation programs as easement

programs, working lands programs, partnership and grant programs, land retirement programs, and conservation compliance (Stubbs, 2022b). Eligible landowners with eligible landholdings may receive technical or financial assistance for voluntarily entering selected conservation programs that either permit production while incorporating certain conservation practices, temporary changes in land use or management, or permanent restrictions on the land.

Despite the emergence of various conservation programs, the data shows that White Americans primarily benefit from federal payments. Based on the 2017 United States Census of Agriculture, farmers who identify as White alone receive 99% of payments for Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, Farmable Wetlands, or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (USDA, 2019). Table 6 shows that White Americans receive nearly \$1.6 billion to support conservation practices. The funding disparity perpetuates the existing racial disparities in environmental justice, indicating the need to devise programs that focus on land access for Black farmers and landowners.

In an effort to appeal to socially disadvantaged farmers and entice them to enroll in its Conservation Reserve Programs, the USDA developed the Conservation Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP) that provides landowners with two additional annual rental payments on land enrolled on the condition they sell or rent to a beginning socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. However, the landowners' willingness to rent or sell to socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers has to be viewed in the context of the structural racism within America's agriculture system. Additionally, since the CRP-TIP program is relatively new, it is unclear if it benefits Black farmers.

Table 6: Conservation Programs and Payments by Race, 2017

Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, Farmable Wetlands, or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Farms & Payments (2017)		
RACE	Sum of Farms	Sum of Payments (\$1000)
WHITE	235,584	\$ 1,649,081
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	1,519	\$ 5,264
MULTI-RACE	1,096	\$ 7,817
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	859	\$ 8,175
ASIAN	413	\$ 3,165
NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	62	\$ 284
Grand Total	239,533	\$ 1,673,786

Source: *U.S. Census of Agriculture 2017, Selected Farm Characteristics by Race*

Implications and Recommendations for the Black Belt Region

Notwithstanding the evolution of policies and practices for conservation continue to represent a predominately White elite class program rather than land protection. The fact that nongovernmental organizations primarily conduct easement governance complicates efforts to trace the direct effects of public subsidization of private conservation easements (Villamagna et al., 2017). As more scholars deem conservation areas critical to the protection of ecosystem services, they also stipulate the need to expand evaluation metrics and assessment data to effectively gauge the impact of conservation areas on distributional justice (Van Sant et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the conservation title authorizes most mandatory spending for working lands and land retirement activities rather than longer-term easement programs like the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Although some conservation practitioners highlight the flexibility of short-term land retirement programs rather than permanent or long-term easements, the Agricultural Land Easement component under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program may directly benefit Black farmers due to its focus on land trusts and local entity eligibility requirements. As previously shown, Black farmers represent less than 1% of government conservation payments, which exemplifies a history of racial inequity in agriculture. The following recommendations could lead to a more just and equitable government conservation program.

- ❖ Develop a council to provide technical and financial assistance for Black heirs' property holders to transition land into land trusts for enrollment in USDA conservation programs.
- ❖ Provide funds explicitly to 1890 Land Grant Universities and community-based organizations to conduct outreach that spreads awareness of the Conservation Reserve Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP) and connects Black land seekers to landowners.
- ❖ Deliver transparent data reports of CRP-TIP program performance measures annually to assess the impact on Black farmers and landowners.

The fragmentation of Black land ownership (heirs property) provides the opportunity for the USDA to give financial and technical resources to those seeking to develop a land trust and engage in conservation practices through easements. Black farmers in the Black Belt Region have long understood the benefits of holding land in trust and community control over land. In fact, Black farmers and activists established the first community land trust in Albany, Georgia, in 1969. The inability to obtain technical and financial assistance from the Farmers Home Administration due to systemic racism resulted in New Communities losing the land (SECT Community Land Trust, n.d.). Despite the systemic challenges, land trusts allow Black

communities to establish community control over land while promoting wealth creation and asset building.

Conclusion

Engaging Black farmers in conservation programs provides the opportunity to increase farm income and improve social and financial well-being. Black and indigenous communities are prone to exist in harmony with nature and deserve the financial incentive the government provides for conservation techniques that are embedded in Black farm and land culture. Without fully acknowledging the racism in conservation through the practices of prominent conservation organizations and government policies, the conservation movement will continue to further environmental injustice.



SECTION 7

HOW THE FARM BILL CAN FURTHER THE UNITED NATIONS' TOP THREE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Gloria Bromell Tinubu, Kourtney Sherrod, Dalal Alkordi, Monyai Chavers

Background

In 2015, world leaders adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the goal of leaving no one behind (see goals below). The expectation was that these goals would be achieved by 2030. As of this writing, the United States, along with most of the industrial countries, is woefully behind in realizing any of the SDGs by 2030. Hence, at the 2023 high-level meetings held in New York City in September, world leaders adopted a political declaration to accelerate action to achieve the 17 goals.

Figure 6: UN Sustainable Development Goals



Source: United Nations Department of Global Communication, 2023.

New UN President, His Excellency Dennis Francis, of Trinidad and Tobago, expressed serious concerns at the 78th Session of the General Assembly. He indicated that, globally, 1.2 billion people are still living in poverty and 680 million are facing hunger, and that these numbers are unacceptable. Furthermore, he indicated that the political declaration to accelerate action is the mechanism that could enable the world to reach a significant percentage of the 2030 goals:

With concerted, ambitious action, it is still possible that, by 2030, we could lift 124 million additional people out of poverty and ensure that some 113 million fewer people are malnourished (UN News, 2023).

With respect to the United States, a Brookings Institution report had this to say about the lack of progress:

The analysis of 49 SDG targets using 56 indicators based on data through 2019 shows that even before the pandemic, the U.S. was not on track to fully achieve a single SDG. For 75 percent of the trajectories analyzed, the U.S. must completely reverse trends that were moving in the wrong direction or greatly alter its approach to cross the relevant threshold by 2030...Flashing red warning signs suggest the future status and well-being of America's youth, women, and minority racial and ethnic groups require urgent attention (Pipa et al, 2022).

While the Brookings report offered a number of promising recommendations such as establishing a cabinet-level SDG Council and creating a national roadmap for achieving the SDG goals, none of their recommendations involve the role that the farm bill might play. Since the farm bill funds the country's largest domestic food assistance programs, it makes sense that attention should be given to the role these food and nutrition programs can play in meeting the SDG goals of ending poverty, ending hunger, and ensuring healthy lives. Hence, this article focuses on the first three of the 17 SDGs goals and the role that the farm bill might play in achieving those goals.

No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well Being

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of ending poverty and hunger, as well as ensuring healthy lives are pertinent to the equitable economic development agenda for the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR) as defined by SAABB. In addition, these three SDGs are consistent with the goals as defined in the farm bill as goals articulated by the USDA. Hence, in the tables below, we simply present the various farm bill titles and programs that could enable the United States to at least achieve, to some significant level, the first three SDGs, if they are sufficiently funded.

SDG Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

TITLE	USDA Procurement Programs and Practices
Title IV: Nutrition	Ensure the equitable distribution of funds through awarding contracts that are proportionate to the number of households and individuals living in poverty in the State, territory, or Tribal entity.
	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Provides low-income households electronic benefits redeemable for SNAP-eligible foods at SNAP-eligible retailers. The benefit amounts vary depending on household size and calculation rules.
	The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

SDG Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Title VII: Research, Extension, and Related Matters	Urban, Indoor, and Emerging Agricultural Production, Research, Education, and Extension Initiative: Authorizes the USDA to make competitive research and extension grants that facilitate the development of urban and indoor agricultural production systems and emerging harvesting, packaging and distribution systems, and new markets. These grants can be awarded to universities, federal agencies, and other types of organizations and individuals.
Title VII: Research, Extension, and Related Matters	Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI): Adds soil health, automation, collaboration with biomedical researchers, and removal of entry barriers for young, beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran, and immigrant farmers and ranchers to existing priority areas.
Title XI: Crop Insurance	Federal crop insurance program (FCIP): offers subsidized crop insurance to protect farmers against financial losses from crop price declines and poor harvests due to natural causes.
Title XI: Crop Insurance	Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) to fund innovative projects designed to invest in processing and distribution capacity to build resilience across the middle of the supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems.
Title XI: Crop Insurance	Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

SDG Goals 2 & 3: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture & Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Title IV: Nutrition	Community Food Projects
Title IV: Nutrition	A Reformed Food System: Improving and expanding nutrition, rural development, and urban agriculture programs creates resilient communities and ensures food security and food sovereignty for all.
Title IV: Nutrition	The 2008 Farm Bill included the first effort to incentivize the purchase of healthy food in the SNAP program through the Healthy Incentive Program (HIP).
Title IV: Nutrition	The 2014 Farm Bill expanded HIP through the creation of the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program (FINI), a competitive grant program that provides SNAP families with incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables.
Title IV: Nutrition	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Provides low-income households electronic benefits redeemable for SNAP-eligible foods at SNAP-eligible retailers. The benefit amounts vary depending on household size and calculation rules.

Title IV: Nutrition	Community Food Projects competitive grant program: Provides competitive grants to nonprofit organizations for programs that improve access to local produce for low-income households.
Title IV: Nutrition	Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP): Provides vouchers/coupons to low-income seniors for purchasing fresh produce at farmers' markets and other direct-to-consumer venues.
Title IV: Nutrition	Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): Provides supplemental monthly food packages, primarily to low-income elderly persons.

SDG Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Title II: Conservation	Advancing Land Stewardship Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Title II: Conservation	On-farm conservation programs
Title II: Conservation	Help farmers and ranchers keep drinking water clean for urban and rural communities, build soil resilience, limit the impacts of severe drought and flooding, provide healthy habitats for wildlife, mitigate agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions, and support farm operations that are productive and sustainable long-term.
Title II: Conservation	Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQUIP): Allows farmers to enhance water quality, strengthen wildlife habitat, and reduce soil erosion and sedimentation. Through this program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides funding and assistance directly to producers, and works with them to develop conservation practices that are tailored to their property.

Conclusion

The farm bill, if passed in 2023, will be up for reauthorization again in 5 years, namely, 2028, which is 2 years before the SDGs 2030 deadline. It is imperative that the United States takes this opportunity to use the farm bill as a mechanism for realizing the first three SDGs, at a bare minimum. Because of centuries of structural racism, which is the result of the cumulative impact of multiple institutions over time, the Historic Black Belt Region must take center stage of the United States' efforts to meet the top three SDGs.

SAABB FARM BILL PRIMER

Kourtney Sherrod, Dalal Alkordi, Monyai Chavers, and Gloria Bromell Tinubu



The main focus of this report is inequity as it relates to food insecurity, health disparities, environmental injustice, Black farmers, and the potential impact of the 2023 Farm Bill in the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR). While the farm bill provides the means needed to eliminate the difficulties facing Black farmers in the HBBR, inequity is still a massive issue that needs to be addressed. The following section is a Farm Bill Primer that summarizes each title that was authorized through September 30, 2023 by the 2018 Farm Bill or the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). Each title includes a brief overview, 5-year estimated funding level, specific programs that are important to the Historic Black Belt Region, and recommendations from the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center.

Programs that are authorized by the farm bill fall into two spending categories, namely, mandatory and discretionary, with mandatory programs dominating farm bill debates. According to the Congressional Research Service, programs “with mandatory spending generally operate as entitlements, and the farm bill provides mandatory funding for programs based on multiyear budget estimates (baseline)... Farm bills have both 5-year and 10-year budget projections”(CRS Reports, 2023, p. 1).

Four titles accounted for 99% of the 2018 farm bill’s mandatory spending and is expected to account for roughly the same proportion of mandatory spending in the 2023 Farm Bill: Title IV - Nutrition (primarily SNAP), Title I - Commodities, Title XI - Crop Insurance, and Title II - Conservation with all other programs accounting for 1% of mandatory spending. The farm bill traditionally provides opportunities for policymakers to comprehensively and periodically address agricultural and nutrition issues. Approximately every five years, the farm bill is reauthorized by Congress. Without reauthorization, some programs would expire, such as the nutrition assistance and farm commodity support programs. Other programs have permanent authority and do not need reauthorization (e.g., crop insurance) and are included in a farm bill to make policy changes or achieve budgetary goals.

It is imperative that the 2023 Farm Bill prioritizes policies and programs in each title that address the historical injustices and subsequent challenges that Black farmers continue to face, particularly in the Historic Black Belt Region. To assist policy-makers, SAABB concludes each title with research-based recommendations provided by the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn University. These are recommendations that promote equity in agriculture, and seek to ensure the sustainability of Black farmers in the HBBR. Incorporating recommendations that target Black farmers allows the foundation for creating a more equitable and resilient agricultural landscape for all communities. Ultimately, the 2023 or 2024 farm bill can play a more pivotal role for Black farmers if policymakers choose to focus on equity and restorative justice.

TITLE I: COMMODITIES	
OVERVIEW:	The commodity title includes several programs that aim to protect farmers against sharp fluctuations in the prices of primary commodity crops. It provides farm payments when crop prices or revenues decline for major commodity crops.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$35 Billion
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Price Loss Coverage (PLC): issued when the effective price of a covered commodity falls below the effective reference price—a price determined by the 2014 FB that allows for market fluctuations. ❖ Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC): is an income support program that provides payments when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. ❖ Market Access Program (MAP): is the authorized subsidy for industry efforts to promote USA farm products in export markets. This program is heavily used by the otherwise minimally subsidized commodities, providing matching funds for industry promotions overseas.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Eliminate the FSA State and County Committee System. Transfer functions performed by County Office employees to a full Federal system. Include new legislation and language that defines the roles and responsibilities of all employees impacted by the change. Require that FSA employees, specifically those transferring from the County Office system to adhere to performance, hiring, and diversity standards required for current Federal employees. ❖ Require that USDA streamline the FSA program application process and increase resources set-aside for technical assistance by CBOs or TSPs.

TITLE II: CONSERVATION	
OVERVIEW:	The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Forest Service administers conservation programs to encourage environmental stewardship and improved management of farmlands. Conservation programs aim to engage farmers to voluntarily implement measures that conserve private lands and wetlands for financial and technical incentives.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$30 Billion
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<p>The Conservation Title includes programs relevant to the Black Belt region due to its focus on preserving land by working with local communities and land trusts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ❖ Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) ❖ Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) ❖ Transition Incentives Program ❖ Agricultural Conservation Easement Program ❖ Environmental Quality Incentives Program ❖ Soil Health and Income Protection Pilot Program (SHIPP)
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A catch-up provision that allows the installation of measures to improve farms to the level of past non-socially disadvantaged farms. ❖ USDA set-aside 10% of conservation program funds for SDFRs with increases for the inclusion of women to 20% and historically underserved producers at 50%. ❖ Permit cost-share of 90% of actual cost rather than payment schedule average and a broader interpretation of “stewardship” to increase minority farmer participation.

TITLE III: AGRICULTURAL TRADE	
OVERVIEW:	The Agricultural Trade title of the farm bill reauthorizes International Food Assistance, Export Credit Guarantee Programs, Export Market Development Programs, Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation Program, International Science and Technology Programs and Provisions, and Trade Missions.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$2.5 Billion
MOST RELEVANT TO HBRR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Farmer-to-Farmer Program (FFP Title V) ❖ Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT) ❖ Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Program (LRP Program) ❖ Priority Trade Fund ❖ Market Access Program (MAP) ❖ Foreign Market Development (FMD) Cooperator Program ❖ E (Kika) de la Garza Emerging Markets Program (EMP) ❖ Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) ❖ Global Crop Diversity Trust ❖ Borlaug Fellowship ❖ Cochran Fellowship ❖ International Agricultural Education Fellowship Program ❖ Trade Missions
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Export Market Development Programs: Add language— a) Facilitating organizations like the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA) and producer groups (e.g., USAPEEC) ensure SDFR and minority business participation in trade promotion activities. b) EMP funds shall be used to support 1890 activities to develop foreign markets for SDFR. c) Promote connections between African American ag/food/beverage businesses and African markets. That is, increased trade shows in African countries and dedicated slots and financial support for Black ag/food/beverage companies. ❖ Export Credit Guarantee Programs: Ad USDA, coordinating with other agencies, shall work with Black farmer representations on U.S. trade missions to increase the inclusion of Black Farmer food products in trade-related activities.

TITLE IV: NUTRITION	
OVERVIEW:	The Nutrition title of the farm bill reauthorizes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) and other nutrition or domestic food assistance programs. SNAP is the largest of USDA’s domestic food assistance programs, in both participation and spending. USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers all of the programs except for GusNIP, which is administered by USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$332 Billion
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ❖ Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservation (FDPIR) ❖ Nutrition Assistance Program grants for several territories ❖ The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) ❖ Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) ❖ Commodity Food Projects ❖ Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) ❖ Gus Schumacher Nutrition Program (GusNIP) grants
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Improve Food Access and Affordability: End hunger by making it easier for everyone — including urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities to access and afford food. For example, expand eligibility for and increase participation in food assistance programs and improve transportation to places where food is available. ❖ Update Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligibility, Enrollment, Participation, and Recertification. ❖ Integrate Nutrition and Health Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure that our healthcare system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.

TITLE V: CREDIT	
OVERVIEW:	The Credit title provides technical assistance and finances to improve international food security programs.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	Baseline for the credit title is likely negative since payments into the Farm Credit System Insurance fund reflect a debit to the system.
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ USAID’s Farmer-2-Farmer Program ❖ Equitable Relief ❖ Use of Additional Funds for Direct Operating Microloan ❖ State Agricultural Loan Mediation Programs
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Transparency in data reporting under the Governmental Accountability Office for the Farm Credit System to foster sustainable and equitable operational and performance factors in agriculture. ❖ Adding language to extend direct loans to the maximum extent for Subtitle A- Farm Ownership Loans and Subtitle B-Operation Loans. ❖ An increase in equity per the Farm Loan Programs by prohibiting loan collateralization of a farmer's primary residence and to no more than 100% of the loan value.

TITLE VI: RURAL DEVELOPMENT

<p>OVERVIEW:</p>	<p>Provide support for rural housing, community facilities, business, and utility programs. These programs seek to improve health outcomes in rural communities, connect rural Americans to high-speed broadband, support rural communities, business development, and infrastructure.</p>
<p>FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:</p>	<p>The rural development title has no current programs with baseline.</p>
<p>MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rural Housing ❖ Community Facilities ❖ Business ❖ Utility Programs ❖ Rural Access to High-Speed Broadband ❖ Rural Health ❖ Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant Program ❖ Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development
<p>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rural Development will increase grants to rural communities with low employment of 50 percent or less. These grants will support improvements to infrastructure and employment creation There are a number of small towns across the USA, where the majority population are minority people. Improvements in farm equipment and agricultural chemicals have reduced labor needed for crop production and harvest. Employment is often at 50 percent or less. ❖ The Department of Agriculture (USDA) should work with these towns to provide grants and assistance to correct infrastructure concerns, food security concerns, job creation and assistance to address other rural development concerns. Most of these towns have concerns with food security, health, education, jobs, environmental and other concerns. They need upgraded infrastructure for the city’s aging water and wastewater system, streets, and sidewalks, but due to no tax base or business in the city to assist with these issues, they look and depend on federal assistance just to maintain. They need drainage improvements, flood control, sewer refurbish, trained people to manage water and sewer projects, funds for training, operators, and police departments.

TITLE VII: RESEARCH, EXTENSION, & RELATED MATTERS

<p>OVERVIEW:</p>	<p>The Research and Extension Title remains crucial for scientific progress, agricultural productivity, and farmer education. Federal research programs help farmers learn which crops will do well in their soils, which varieties and breeds are best suited for their climates, and how they and their communities can drive innovation and market opportunities.</p> <p>Extension Service helps ensure that services adapt regularly to the needs of counties. Under this title, the federal government seeks innovative solutions to complex agricultural issues, disseminates research results to farmers, and educates groups and individuals on topics involving agriculture.</p>
<p>FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:</p>	<p>\$625 Million</p>
<p>MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Nutrition Education Programs. ❖ Food Safety Outreach Program. ❖ Extension Service. ❖ Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. ❖ Tribal College Research Grant Program. ❖ Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).
<p>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center</p>	<p>To reduce the gap between 1862 and 1890 Land grant Universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reauthorize 1890 Extension, the Centers of Excellence, the Evans Allen Research Act. ❖ Change language related to use of funds for research activities in the 1890 HBCU Evans Allen Research Act to be consistent with 1862 universities in the Hatch Act. ❖ Reauthorize the 1890 Capacity Building Grants Program and Scholarships for Students, 1890 Facilities Improvement Program, and the Research Facilities Act and remove the matching requirement. ❖ Eliminate the waiver application and make all federal funding contingent upon states granting 1862 and 1890 Institutions an equal percentage of the matching funds. ❖ Require USDA to withhold federal funds which authorize capacity grants. ❖ Create a student loan forgiveness program.

TITLE VIII: FORESTRY	
OVERVIEW:	The Forestry title supports forest management projects administered by the U.S. Forest Service.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$5 Million
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Landscape Scale Restoration Program: Provides competitive grants large-scale forest restoration projects that utilize existing federal land management authorities to engage in restoration activities across jurisdictions, allowing for more effective implementation of land management practices. ❖ Good Neighbor Authority (GNA): allows the U.S. Forest Service to enter into agreements with state and local land management agencies to engage in joint forest management. The 2018 Farm Bill expanded GNA to counties and federally recognized tribes, allowing for the use of GNA agreements on tribal land. ❖ Federal Stewardship Contracting: allows the Bureau of Land Management to contract with state land agencies to promote more effective management of federal forests and rangeland.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	

TITLE IX: ENERGY	
OVERVIEW:	The Energy title supports the integration and production of renewable energy from forestry and agricultural related sources. The title provides funding through grants, loans, and loan guarantees specifically catered to renewable energy systems and innovative technologies. Along with the support for renewable energy, the title places an emphasis on supporting the use of bioenergy and renewable energy for rural development projects.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$250 Million
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Rural Energy for America Program provides assistance to producers and small businesses that seek to adopt renewable energy practices. In the hopes of improving efficiency, the program offers loan guarantees to producers that install energy efficient systems for production purposes. ❖ The Rural Energy Savings Program was implemented to increase cost-efficient energy measures by providing loans to rural utilities that provide “energy efficiency” loans to qualified consumers. ❖ The Repowering Assistance Program aims to incentivize biorefineries to transition from fossil fuels to renewable biomass for conducting heat and/or power. ❖ The Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Program strives to encourage the installation of community wood energy systems, in addition to encouraging the development of innovative wood energy systems.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	

TITLE X: HORTICULTURE

<p>OVERVIEW:</p>	<p>In 2008, United States policymakers included the Horticulture Title in the Farm Bill, which established programs for farmers and producers to transition into organic agriculture through resource expansion for specialty crops and cost-share programs. The horticulture title accounts for less than 0.5%, or 1.0 billion, of total project spending in the 2018 Farm Bill.</p>
<p>FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:</p>	<p>\$1 Billion</p>
<p>MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) encourages the transportation of products within 400 miles of their origin. These programs increase access and available funds to farm-fresh food for rural and urban areas by strengthening rural access to urban markets for fruits and vegetables. ❖ National Organic Program (NOP) develops and enforces national standards for organically produced agricultural products, accredits third-party certifiers to inspect production facilities . . . and enforces adherence to the labeling requirements. ❖ Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) allows producers to expand market competitiveness concerning fruits, vegetables, nursery crops, and horticulture. ❖ The National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program provides funding to assist organic producers and handlers with the cost of organic certification.
<p>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Enhance the system of agriculture and food sovereignty in the Black Belt region, mainly since the area includes some of the most food-insecure people. ❖ Establish locally controlled food systems through the FMLFPP program with an intentional focus on socially disadvantaged farmers in underserved communities. ❖ Allow small-scale farmers to diversify their income and improve the overall community wellbeing by certifying organic produce for purchase on snap benefits at farmer’s markets nationwide.

TITLE XI: CROP INSURANCE	
OVERVIEW:	This title of the Farm Bill is to provide farmers with confidence in their capacity to recover from market fluctuations and natural disasters. This is vital for farmers not only because it serves as a form of income support, but it stabilizes the economy while acting as a safeguard for food security.
FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING LEVEL:	\$50 Billion
MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Federal Crop Insurance Program indemnifies producers against losses in yield, crop revenue, margin, whole farm revenue, and other types of losses. ❖ The Noninsured Crop Disaster Program provides financial assistance to farmers that produce crops ineligible for the traditional types of insurance that are typically offered. NAP also offers coverage for losses due to natural disasters on specialty crops. ❖ The Multiple Peril Crop Insurance is the primary type of insurance available to farmers. MCPI provides coverage against yield losses due to natural disasters, including but not limited to drought, wind, frost, pests, diseases, etc. ❖ The Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) is an insurance option that provides coverage based on revenue of the entire farm, as opposed to a specific crop. This type of insurance was designed to support diversified farming operations.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Require USDA to disclose all subsidy recipients, which includes but not limited to crop insurance subsidy recipient's race. ❖ Require (Noninsured Assistance Program) NAP to provide streamline crop pricing. In many circumstances, FSA State Committees have the flexibility to use whatever information and data they can find, but they are often hesitant to take advantage of this flexibility and use all information available for fear of a negative audit or other repercussions from USDA headquarters (or Congress). Staff implementing the program at the county and state levels are therefore reluctant to take some calculated risks that would result in better assistance to the most vulnerable farmers. ❖ Require NAP to provide trained personnel in all FSA County offices to help assist farmers with the NAP application process. ❖ Require NAP to develop and test conservation assistance, adoption, and management models for diversified, specialty crop, and/or beginning farmers. ❖ Require NAP to increase payment limitation for assistance from \$125,000 per farmer and close loopholes that hinder SDFR from receiving the full amount of the assistance.

TITLE XII: MISCELLANEOUS

<p>OVERVIEW:</p>	<p>The Miscellaneous title of the Farm Bill addresses a variety of issues that were left uncovered by the eleven previous titles. Therefore, many of the provisions and programs under Miscellaneous vary each farm bill. For the 2018 Farm Bill, the Miscellaneous title included programs covering food insecurity, livestock production, 2501, and beginning farmers and ranchers.</p>
<p>FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATED FUNDING</p>	<p>\$400 Million</p>
<p>LEVEL:</p> <p>MOST RELEVANT TO HBBR:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides a variety of services that aim to assist beginning farmers and ranchers. Services such as training, education, and outreach are offered to assist beginning farmers and ranchers enter the market and succeed in production. ❖ The Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program, also known as the 2501 program, provides services that support minority groups, women, and veterans. The services provided include technical assistance, resources, and outreach programs that support this demographic of farmers and ranchers. ❖ The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative provides funding for research and extension-related activities that focus on improving the production and marketing of organic farming products. ❖ The Hemp Production provision legalized the production of hemp as an agricultural commodity. This offers a new economic opportunity for Black farmers in the region looking to diversify their farm income sources.
<p>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Eliminate use of the term Historically Underserved Producers and limit the use of the term Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers to describe “a group of individuals whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.” ❖ Use the appropriate socially defined term for race or ethnic origin, i.e., Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Alaska or Pacific Islander farmers and ranchers, where appropriate to define the targeted services or benefits that are proposed along with the specific case for action. When the term Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers is used, it should be based on the 1990 Farm Bill definition.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1: Farm Bill Timeline

Timeline for Farm Bill			
Title	Year	Administration	Main Changes
The Agricultural Act of 1933 (Pub. L. 73-10)	1933	President Roosevelt	Production adjustments Moved agriculture in a market-oriented direction Enhanced the financial safety Established the emergency food assistance program Made changes in the Federal farm programs
Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (Pub. L. 74-46)	1936	President Roosevelt	Provided control and prevention of soil erosion Promotion of the economic use and conservation of land Prevention of agricultural related pollution
Agricultural Act of 1938	1938	President Roosevelt	Raising crop prices Crop insurance was included
Agricultural Act (Pub. L. 81-439)	1948	President Truman	Control commodity price and production
Agricultural Trade Development Assistance Act (Pub. L. 83-480)	1954	President Eisenhower	Prevented hunger and malnutrition and to stimulate economic growth and supported U.S. trade and foreign policy goals.
Agricultural Act (Pub. L. 84-540)	1956	President Eisenhower	The announcement of the acreage reserve program which offers compensation for participants in the program
Food and Agricultural Act	1962	President Kennedy	Farm income increased Improvement in the economic health of rural communities
Food and Agricultural Act of 1965	1965	President Johnson	Deemphasizing indirect subsidies Favoring direct subsidies as a means of supporting farm income
Agricultural Act of 1970	1970	President Nixon	Designed to protect and improve farm income, it gives producers a greater opportunity to expand and improve their farming operations.
Agricultural and Consumer Protection Act (Pub. L. 93-86)	1973	President Nixon	Adopted a new system of price guarantees that would support farm income.

TABLE A1: Farm Bill Timeline (continued)

Food and Agricultural Act of 1077	1977	President Carter	Increased price and income supports and established a farmer-owned reserve for grain.
Agriculture and Food Act	1981	President Reagan	Modified commodity programs It set specific target prices for 4 years, eliminated rice allotments and marketing quotas, lowered dairy supports, and made other changes affecting a wide range of USDA activities.
Food Security Act (Pub. L. 99-198)	1985	President Reagan	Established a comprehensive framework within which the Secretary of Agriculture will administer agriculture and food programs from 1986 through 1990
Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act (Pub. L. 101-624)	1990	President Bush	Revised agricultural price support and provided for agricultural export, resource conservation, farm credit, and agricultural research and related programs
Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (Pub. L. 104-127)	1996	President Clinton	It replaced the earlier target price deficiency payment system for grains and cotton with predetermined and capped annual contract payments
Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (Pub. L. 107-171)	2002	President Bush	Directed approximately 16.5 billion dollars of funding toward agricultural subsidies each year.
Food Conservation & Energy Act	2008	President Obama	Governed the majority of Federal agriculture and related programs for the next 5 years. Mandated a study on electric power generation needs of rural areas
Agricultural Act of 2014	2014	President Obama	Made major changes in commodity programs, added new crop insurance options, streamlined conservation programs, modified some provisions of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and expanded programs for specialty crops, organic farmers, bioenergy, rural development, and beginning farmers and ranchers.
Agricultural Improvement Act 2018	2018	President Trump	Made a few major changes in agricultural and food policy.
	2023 /2024	President Biden	

Table A2. FARM BILL INFLUENCERS & ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Major Players	Black Belt Region	National	Global	Major Players	Black Belt Region	National	Global
AARP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Bankers Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fertilizer Institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Farm Bureau Federation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food and Agricultural Climate Alliance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Seed Trade Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consumer Brands Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Veterinary Medical Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	McDonald's	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Archer Daniels Midland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National Association of Counties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Association of American Railroads	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	National Cotton Council	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bank of America	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National Council of Farmer Co-ops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bayer AG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National Farmers Union	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bunge Limited	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cargill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nestle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ceres' Climate-Smart Agriculture and Healthy Soil Working Group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NextEra Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CNH Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nutrien Ltd	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Corteva Agriscience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Othering & Belonging Institute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CropLife America	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PepsiCo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Deere & Co.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rural Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DuPont	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sugar Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic Research Service, USDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Texas Farm Bureau	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exxon Mobil	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wells Fargo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Table A3: Lobbying Efforts

Lobbying Spent on Agricultural Services/Products Totaling more than \$1 million from 2021 to 2023¹⁴	
Clients in 2023	Total in 2023
Corteva Agriscience	\$2,208,308
Archer Daniels Midland	\$1,210,000
Deere & Co.	\$1,000,000
Clients in 2022	Total in 2022
Corteva Agriscience	\$3,139,072
Nutrien Ltd	\$2,390,000
American Farm Bureau	\$2,120,000
Archer Daniels Midland	\$1,980,000
CropLife America	\$1,784,777
Deere & Co.	\$1,660,000
National Council of Farmer Co-ops	\$1,488,800
CNH Industrial	\$1,470,000
Fertilizer Institute	\$1,358,979
Texas Farm Bureau	\$1,290,000
American Veterinary Medical Association	\$1,140,000
Client in 2021	Total in 2021
American Farm Bureau	\$2,530,000
Nutrien Ltd	\$2,070,000
CropLife America	\$1,693,986
Archer Daniels Midland	\$1,570,000
CNH Industrial	\$1,420,000
National Council of Farmer Co-ops	\$1,396,170
Deere & Co.	\$1,200,000
Fertilizer Institute	\$1,158,764
Corteva Agriscience	\$1,157,908

¹⁴ OpenSecrets. (n.d.). *Agricultural Services/Products Lobbying Profile*. <https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/industries/summary?id=A07&cycle=2022>.

Figure A1: WANDA: A Food Bill of Rights



Women Advancing
Nutrition Dietetics
and Agriculture



A FOOD BILL OF RIGHTS: A Framework for a National Nutrition Security Plan

The government was established to be for “the people”, but “the people” have become just a few large corporations. The past 50 years of Farm Bills have reinforced a new “Standard American Diet” by subsidizing food that makes Americans sick and agribusinesses rich. Every 5 years, Congress supports agricultural policy in prioritizing big businesses rather than the health of every American, and every 5 years, we have the opportunity to change and improve this system. Our food is making people sick and our food system is keeping people hungry. We must see our food as medicine, not only in its ability to heal our bodies, but in its potential to heal the unsustainable and inequitable system that Americans rely on. Enacting a Food Bill of Rights that protects our right to food is our first step in creating generational wealth in the form of generational health.

BACKGROUND

Today's food policies do not address the social inequities that are the result of decades of discriminatory planning and policy decisions. This compounds with the current farm bill's implementation of agricultural policies that prioritize these “junk” food options that act as catalysts for chronic diet-related illnesses that plague Americans and consume 85% of the nation's healthcare spending.

Our country is facing food apartheid. Our current food system has become a system of segregation. Current policies are fostering deep divides among those with access to nutritious food, and those in low income areas who have been denied the same access at the hands of systematic injustice and structural inequities. Risk of food insecurity and diet-related chronic illnesses are higher for historically underserved populations.

The USDA has reported that Black (20%) and Latinx (16%) households are disproportionately

impacted by food insecurity at nearly three times the rate of White households (7.0%). Our children are paying the price for these policies with increased rates of cavities, diabetes, obesity, and malnutrition which all contribute to poor academic performance. If we value our future as a nation, we must invest in human capital and address the state of our food systems that are harming the health and wellness of ourselves and our children.

NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

The United States upholds national security as evident by the Second Amendment's right to bear Arms and our extraordinary military budget. But what of nutrition security and our right to nutritious and accessible food? Nutrition is foundational in all aspects of national security. We cannot feed or protect the health of our people with only our armed forces, guns, and defense spending, but we can by improving nutrition security and arming ourselves with nutrition education and equitable access to healthy foods. As a nation, food is our democratic birthright, and we must have the right to protect it.



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