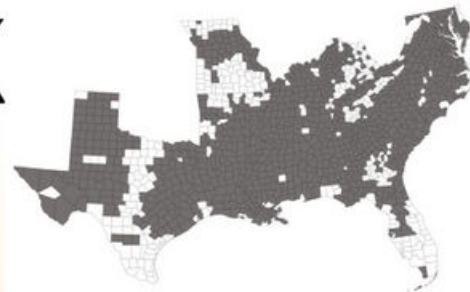


THE BLACK BELT IS AN EQUITY DESERT:

THE FARM BILL CAN BE THE SOLUTION

STATE OF
AFRICAN
AMERICANS IN THE
BLACK
BELT



**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**

**Professional Agricultural Workers Conference
Montgomery, Alabama**

OCTOBER 30, 2023

STATE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE BLACK BELT

OCTOBER 2023 | VOLUME 2:



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The Power and Promise of an Equitable Farm Bill

- 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;*
- This security can only happen if policymakers recognize the racism that has been embedded in the Farm Bill since its inception.
- The Black Farmer profile illustrates the need for policies that exclusively address the unique and historical problems that impact Black farmers.
- Over the years the Federation has built an effort to ensure that every five years there would be a fair and equitable Farm Bill.
- If policymakers recognize and confront the racism that is embedded in this country's production agriculture system;
- We will not only achieve equity – we can help build a prosperous and sustainable Black Belt Region.

***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).**

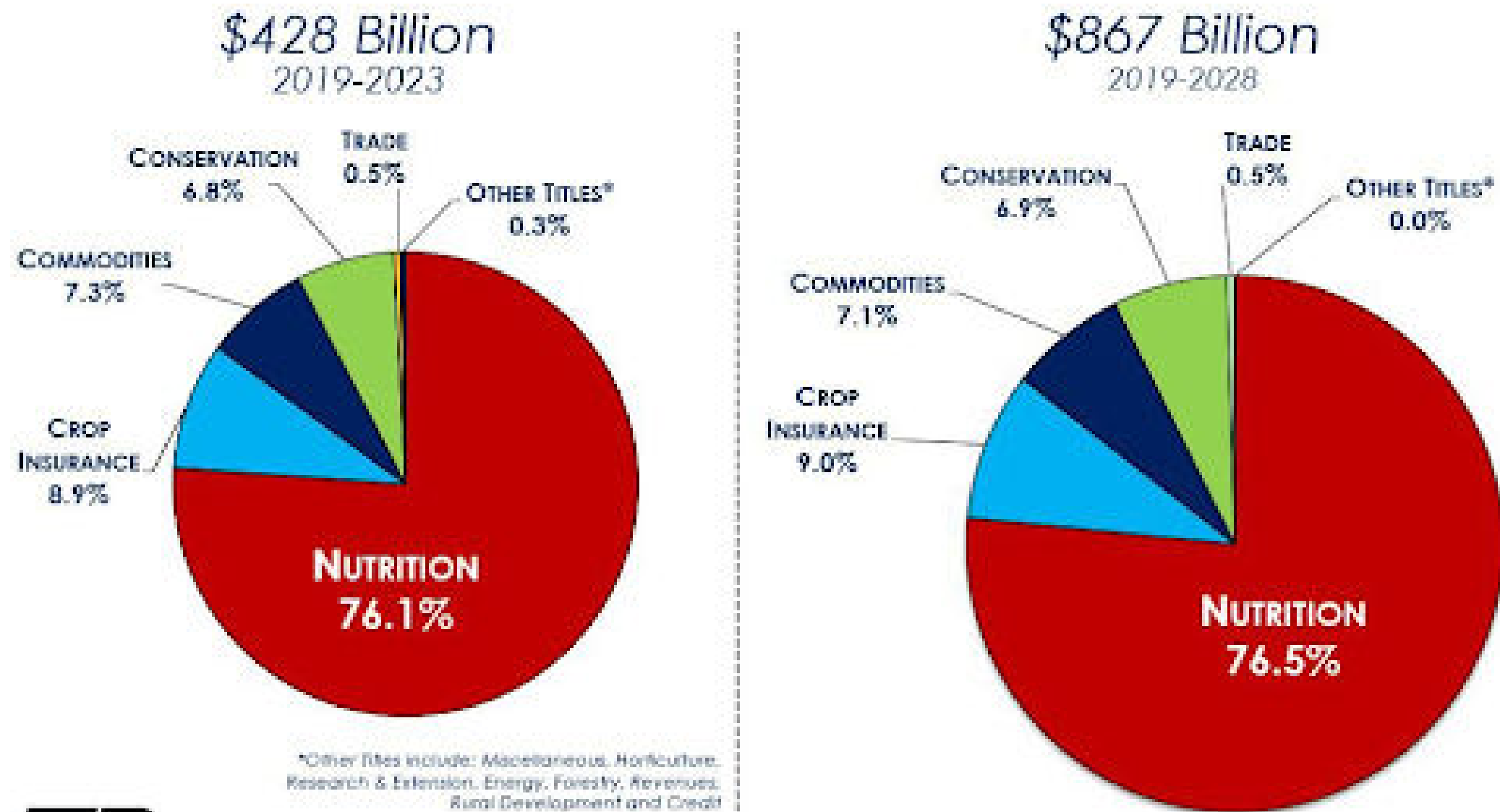
The Black Belt Region as Redefined by SAABB:



Every county in South Carolina and every parish in Louisiana is a Black Belt County. All, except for a handful, of counties in Alabama, Mississippi, Maryland, Arkansas, Tennessee, Delaware, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia are Black Belt Counties. Finally, the vast majority of the counties in Texas and Georgia are Black Belt Counties.

Figure 1. 2018 Farm Bill Spending

5- and 10-Year Baseline



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

Note: 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.



FEDERATION OF
SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES
LAND ASSISTANCE FUND

2023 Advocacy Farm Bill Priorities & Recommendations



We support dedicating 13% of all Conservation program funding (e.g., EQIP) to Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners.



We support a modernized Conservation & Credit program application process with dedicated resources for technical assistance by Community Based Organizations with a successful history of providing technical assistance to Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners.



We support targeted Conservation Program funding incentives to achieve loan forgiveness within the Heir Property Relending Program.



We support increasing the FSA Microloan limit to \$100,000 and the FSA farm operating loan limit to \$600,000.



We support prohibiting FSA from taking as loan collateral (i) a farmer's primary residence and (ii) assets that value more than 100% of the loan's value.



We support a farm and student loan forgiveness program for Black farmers and professionals at Community-Based Organizations serving Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

Creating a Fair and Equitable Farm Bill: A Collaborative Approach

PURPOSE

- Explore Food and Agricultural Inequities in the Black Belt Region;
- Highlight Benefits of Collective Advocacy Efforts
- Support Increased Capacity to Address Black Belt Region Food and Agricultural Inequities through 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorization Policy Priorities; and
- Introduce 2023 Farm Bill Reauthorizations Policy Priorities to address Food and Agricultural Inequities in the Black Belt Region.

INEQUITIES IN THE BLACK BELT REGION

- Limited Access to Healthy Food
- Limited Agricultural Resources
- Environmental Inequities
- Educational Disparities
- Limited Political Representation

THE FARM BILL

- The Farm Bill encompasses a wide range of matters related to agriculture, food assistance programs, rural development, and conservation.
- Potential to indirectly mitigate disparities through diverse programs and provisions.



COLLECTIVE 2023 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION ADVOCACY EFFORTS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

Collective Priorities Focus on five Farm Bill Titles:

- Title II: Conservation
- Title IV: Nutrition
- Title V: Credit
- Title XII: Misc.
- Title VII: Research, Extension and Related Matters



RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

- Rectify systemic racist implementation in the Farm Bill by changing terminology
- Increase access to healthy food by increasing access to snap
- Increase access to agricultural resources by increasing equitable access to credit for Black farmers
- Rectify environmental inequities by guaranteeing fair access to conservation and climate resources
- Rectify educational disparities by removing funding gap between 1862s

CONCLUSION

- The Farm Bill Can be an Effective Tool to Rectify Longstanding Inequities in the Black Belt.
- Collaborative Advocacy Efforts Around Specific Recommendations Increases Capacity and Efficiency.



SNAP Inequities in Food Retailing and Implications for the Historic Black Belt Region

- Administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP (formerly Food Stamp), is the country's largest domestic food assistance program.
- CBO estimates that of the \$1.4 trillion 10-year outlays for Farm Bill 2023, \$1.2 trillion (86%) is expected to fund nutrition with the lion's share going to SNAP.



BIG FOOD RETAILERS GET THE LION'S SHARE OF SNAP REDEMPTIONS

While SNAP is well known to the general public, what is not well known, 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 explains, in large part, the massive lobbying efforts undertaken by these large food retailers when it comes to the Farm Bill.

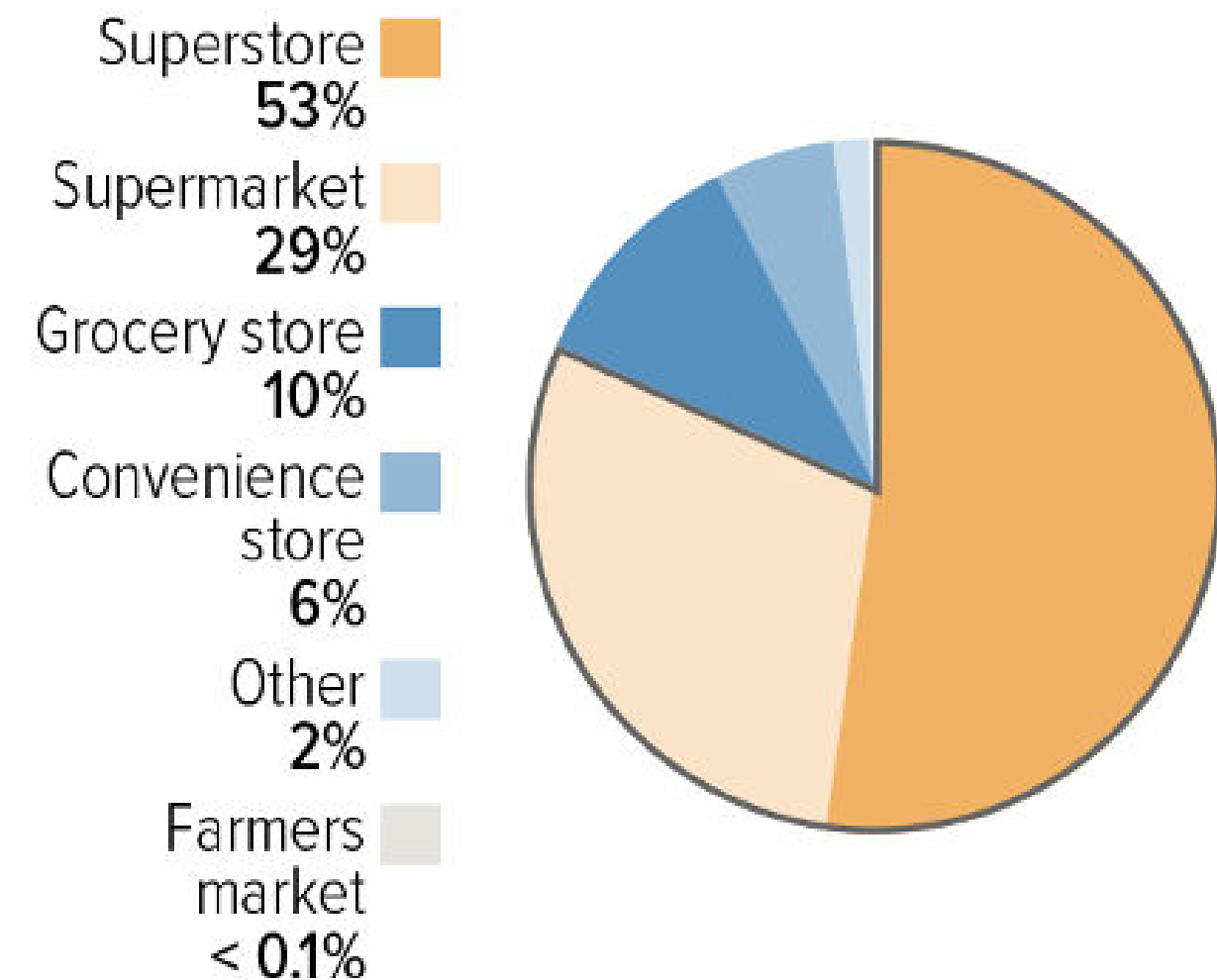


While large stores (superstores and supermarkets) account for only 15.4% of authorized firms, they account for an astounding 82% of SNAP redemptions by participants.

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.

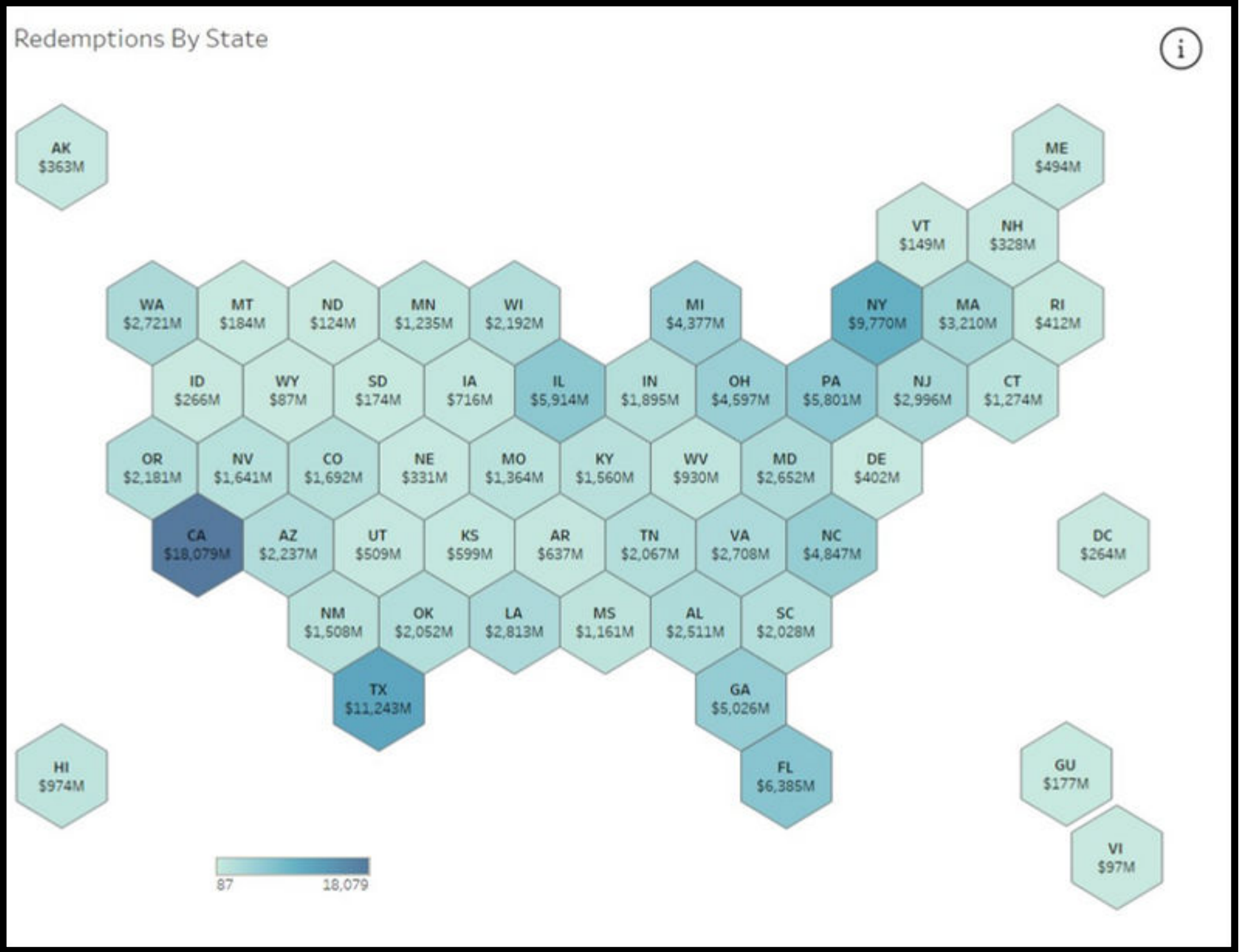
SNAP Participants Redeem 80% of Their Benefits at Larger Stores

Share of benefit redemptions by store type, 2019



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, Benefit Redemption Division, 2019 annual report

Nationally, for fiscal year 2022, there were roughly 259,000 SNAP authorized retailers benefiting from \$130 billion in SNAP redemptions. Over 40% of these authorized dealers were located in the Historic Black Belt Region (HBRR) and accounted for 86% of SNAP redemptions.



Recommendations and Conclusion

- Recommendation 1: Reconsider eligibility standards for small food retailers with respect to the number of stocking units.
- Recommendation 2: Increase Funding for Food Cooperatives in the Historic Black Belt Region.
- Recommendation 3: Prioritize the role of Farmers Markets and provide funding for Delivery Route/Mobile Farmers Markets.

Conclusion: The 2023 Farm Bill can be the solution to the SNAP inequities that have resulted in big-box food retailers garnering the lion's share of SNAP redemptions, while locally owned small and medium-size retailers are woefully underrepresented.



Crop Insurance: A Precarious Safety Net

Crop insurance is a risk management tool that should act as a safety net for all farmers. 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. There are four main components of the Crop Insurance Title that impacts the HBRR:

Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC)

United States Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency (RMA)

Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP)

Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)



Whole Farm Revenue Protection

WFRP is a type of crop insurance that is commonly referred to as Whole Farm Insurance. The USDA intended for the program to support diversified farmers and increase production efficiency.

- Participation in the program quickly declined in the years following its launch. This could be attributed to a few reasons:
 - burdensome paperwork, opaque costs, expense monitoring and penalties, and a lack of education for both producers and insurance agents.

Ultimately, it was the structure and implementation of WFRP that failed to incentivize participation in the program.



The Power of Large Agribusinesses

Crop insurance policies often favor large farmers who have enough resources to manage specific policies. The structure of crop insurance programs was not designed with a sustainable and equitable framework.

- Crop Insurance subsidies do not have payment caps.
- The largest 10% of farms in the U.S. received 60% of subsidy benefits (Belasco, 2022).
- \$58.8 billion in subsidy payments were distributed to AIPS and their agents for administrative and operating costs between 2001 and 2022 (Environmental Working Group).

The Plight of Black Farmers

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.

The structure of crop insurance programs has created barriers to entry. 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.

Table 1. Farms by Value of Sales in the United States

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%

Recommendations

- 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, including 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.

Any attempt to equitably change the crop insurance title should begin by taking into account the historical discrimination that has led to a Crop Insurance system with systemic barriers that prevent Black Farmers from full participation.



How Funding Disparities Within the Land Grant University System (LGUs) Contribute to the Growing Equity Desert in the Historic Black Belt Region

The Land Grant University (LGU) system can play a much greater role in sustainable development throughout the Historic Black Belt Region (HBBR), however:

- Funding for 1890 LGUs is inadequate, which challenges their effectiveness. For example, they did not receive almost **\$57** million in federal matching funds for research and extension activities (Lee & Keys, 2013).
- 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.”

Impact of 1890s LGUs in the HBRR

- After the 1890 Second Morrill Act, Black farmers became very proficient in the production of cotton, tobacco, and peanuts.
- 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).



THE HBBR FOOD AND HEALTH DESERT

- There are some organizations working toward increasing access to food in the HBBR and developing sustainable food systems.
 - **Unfortunately**, none of these organizations are adequately funded and seem to be making minimal progress at best.
- 1890 LGUs are working to fill that gap through their various extension programs including technical assistance to family farmers.
- Research and Extension points to the health inequities and how they affect communities through adverse health outcomes, lost productivity, and increased healthcare costs.

Land Grant University Funding Inequities

- Racial discrimination challenged the policies of the Morrill Land-Grant Act.
- **For instance**, the federal government has excluded the 1890s from federal formula payments for research and extension activities for the past eighty years.
- 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**).

TABLE 2. 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

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

- Eliminate the funding gap between 1890 and 1862 LGUs.
- Establish a Black Belt Equity Commission that will focus on solutions (research has already been done). The commission should be led by 1890 LGUs and CBOs.
- Support a consortium of 1890 LGUs and CBOs to further develop a Historic Black Belt regional production and marketing system.
- Support the development of Cooperatively owned grocery stores strategically located throughout the HBBR.

Conclusion

- Investment is needed in programs to help address the historical systemic racism and neglect within America's food and agriculture system especially in the HBBR;
- 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUITIES IN CONSERVATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- CONSERVATION INVOLVES PROTECTING, MAINTAINING, AND RESTORING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY TO ENHANCE THE ECOSYSTEM.
- CONTINUED LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY, LAND CONSOLIDATION, AND FRAGMENTATION DUE TO RESOURCE EXTRACTION SPARKED FOREST CONSERVATION EFFORTS BY POLICYMAKERS.
- CONSERVATION SCIENCE AND PRACTICE MIRROR RACIST NOTIONS OF COLONIALISM, PERPETUATING A CYCLE IN WHICH POLICIES AND PROGRAMS DISREGARD SYSTEMIC LAND ACCESS AND INCLUSION BARRIERS.



CONSERVATION HISTORICAL ORIGINS

- PROTECTED AREAS RESULTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND FORCED REMOVAL OF LOCAL BLACK AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.
- “SAVE THE FOREST” IDEAS FROM WEALTHY WHITE AMERICAN ELITES AND POLICYMAKERS SOLIDIFIED RACIST VIEWS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT.



CONSERVATION CONTEMPORARY 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 GROTON PLANTATION
- THE HARRIS NECK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



CONSERVATION IN THE FARM BILL

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*



RECOMMENDATIONS



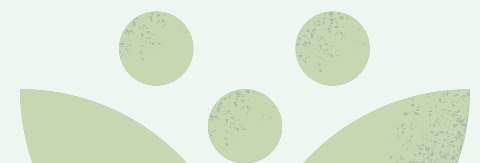
DEVELOP A COUNCIL TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR BLACK HEIRS' PROPERTY HOLDERS TO TRANSITION LAND INTO LAND TRUSTS.



PROVIDE FUNDS EXPLICITLY TO 1890 LAND GRANT UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO CONDUCT OUTREACH AND CONNECT BLACK LAND SEEKERS TO LANDOWNERS.



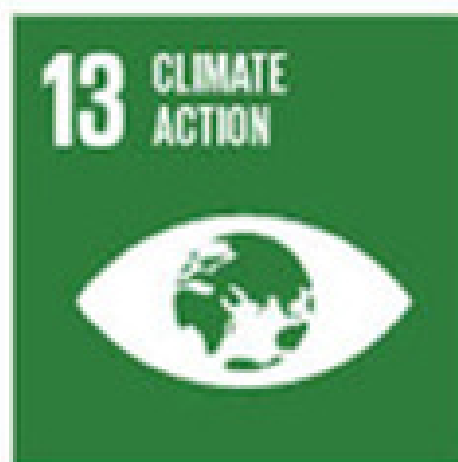
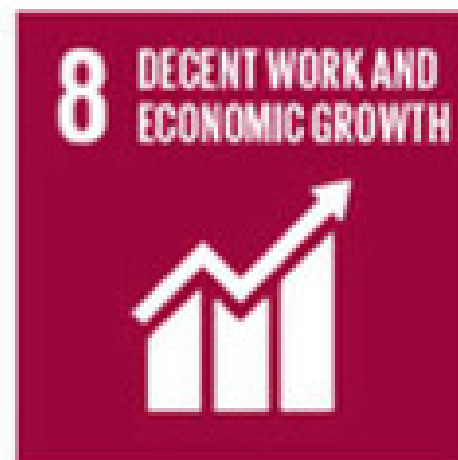
DELIVER TRANSPARENT DATA REPORTS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES ANNUALLY TO ASSESS THE IMPACT ON BLACK FARMERS AND LANDOWNERS.



How the Farm Bill Can Further the United Nations' Top Three Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

- In 2015, world leaders adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the goal of leaving no one behind.
- According to the new UN President, 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).



- The focus is on the first three of the 17 SDGs goals and the role that the farm bill might play in achieving those goals.
- The farm bill, if passed in 2023, will be up for reauthorization again in 5 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, the HBBR must take center stage of the United States' efforts to meet the top three SDGs.

ACTION!



SAABB FARM BILL PRIMER

The SAABB Farm Bill Primer 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 for the 2023 farm bill.



Closing Remarks



THANK YOU

**FOR
LISTENING**

contact SAABB at pennick3@gmail.com

