



FEDERATION OF
SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES
LAND ASSISTANCE FUND



ANTIRACIST RESEARCH
& POLICY CENTER
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

**POINTING
THE FARM
BILL TOWARD
RACIAL JUSTICE
TOOLKIT**

2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	3
Understanding the Farm Bill	6
The Inflation Reduction Act: What it has to do with the Farm Bill	8
Title I: Commodities	9
Title II: Conservation	10
Title III: Trade	11
Title IV: Nutrition	13
Title V: Credit	14
Title VI: Rural Development	16
Title VII: Research, Extension, and Related Matters	17
Title VIII: Forestry	18
Title IX: Energy	19
Title X: Horticulture	21
Title XI: Crop Insurance	23
Title XII: Miscellaneous	24
Beyond the Current Farm Bill	25
The Food Bill of Rights	27
Take Action	28
About Us	29



From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs

BACKGROUND

“The burden of disease that this country bears is a consequence of both racism and a fractured, broken food system and our work is to transform both.” - Dr. Gail Christopher

From April 30 to May 2, 2023, a group of farmers, advocates, scholars, policymakers, and students convened outside of Washington DC, at American University’s Airlie Farm and Center to share analysis, research, and first-hand experience of what it would take to advance equity via the 2023—or what has now extended into the 2024—Farm Bill.

This national “Farm Bill Summit” was organized by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF); AU’s Antiracist Research & Policy Center (ARPC) and Center for Environment, Community, and Equity (CECE); and the Berkeley Food Institute (BFI).

It built on two previous American University Farm Bill symposiums in 2012 and [2017](#) (with BFI), and served as the culmination of the [FSC/LAF Advocacy Institute’s](#) two years of listening sessions. The Advocacy Institute helps Black farmers, landowners, and cooperatives to advocate for policies and programs that fit their unique needs and personal experiences.


Organizations participating in the summit included the National Black Food & Justice Alliance, Rural Coalition, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), RAFI-USA, the Intertribal Agriculture Council, and the National Family Farm Coalition—among other grassroots groups. Additional speakers included USDA equity leader Dr. Penny Brown, Mr. James Tillman of the USDA NRCS, and Dr. Gail Christopher, esteemed author and racial healing expert.

Together, participants took a comprehensive look at how the Farm Bill impacts farmers, farmworkers, landowners, cooperatives, and the public at large. We analyzed many aspects of climate justice, food system resilience, fair prices, food sovereignty, trade, land tenure, credit, and farm labor rights.

This toolkit is an outcome of this Summit, and shares its central tenet:

Climate Justice = Racial Justice = Food Justice = Farm Justice

These aspects of equity cannot be separated. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates resources and opportunities as needed to reach an equal outcome. As the FSC/LAF has long argued, racial equity strengthens democracy. It strengthens our national and global food and farming systems, as well as environmental stewardship.



Dr. Gail Christopher addresses the Farm Bill Summit.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) historically has kept farmers of color from benefiting from the resources allocated by the Farm Bill by systematically discriminating against them in the processing of farm credit, loan servicing, non-credit benefits, the disproportionate use and abuse of supervised bank accounts, barriers on heirs' property, over-collateralization, and failure to properly investigate and expedite complaints of discrimination.

This has had an enormous impact on Black and Indigenous farming communities as well as other communities of color. Whereas Black farmers accounted for 14 percent of all farmers in 1910, they now represent just over one percent and have lost over 80 percent of their land in less than a century.

Despite these obstacles, farmers of color continue to play a tremendous role in supporting local food systems and economies and advancing small-scale sustainable agriculture practices; practices that could be essential for increasing resilience in the face of climate crises.

For decades, the FSC/LAF has worked cooperatively to advocate for Black farmers and their ability to continue doing this critical work. While this work remains deeply challenging in the US political atmosphere, the FSC/LAF has been able to achieve remarkable victories through their advocacy work.

One example is the FSC/LAF's work on heirs' property. Heirs' property is created when a landowner dies without a will, or other forms of estate planning for the transfer of ownership of land to another. Subsequently, the owners descendants do not have clear titles to the land they own. Today, it is estimated that over 60% of all Black-owned land is heirs' property. For over five decades, the Federation has provided education and technical assistance to thousands of heirs' land property owners across the South with the goal of reversing the trend of Black land loss and encouraging land-based economic development. In support of this mission, the Federation established its Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center in 2017 to coordinate a collaborative network of partnerships and resources to address the systemic problems associated with heirs' property throughout the Black Belt region. These novel, high-impact partnerships are providing timely, accessible, and crucial opportunities for research and advocacy on heirs' property issues.

It is with the FSC/LAF's rich history, institutional knowledge, and famer-led advocacy that this toolkit was created. This toolkit is a living document, open to ongoing feedback and revision. It is intended to serve as a resource for farmers, land owners, farm worker, and advocates for racial

From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs.



justice in the Farm Bill. First, it gives an overview of the Farm Bill and each of its titles, explaining how each title could advance racial equity and justice. Then, it offers an overarching analysis of the limitations of the Farm Bill's existing titles, and shares collectively produced ideas for transformative change in the next Farm Bill cycle. Finally, this resource aims to cultivate more dialogue, co-analysis, and collaboration for even more in-depth, multimedia, and multilingual advocacy and action on the next Farm Bill—and way beyond.

Our 2023 Summit was the largest convergence of Federation members in DC for agricultural advocacy since the legendary 1992 Caravan for Black Farmers, which catalyzed momentum for the landmark Pigford class action civil rights lawsuit.

Click the link below to view welcome remarks from convening

WELCOME REMARKS

Click the link below to view the talk on racial healing and application of Dr. Gail Christopher's approach to the farm bill

TALK

Click the link below to view Facilitated Discussion II- Racial Equity Definitions from convening

DISCUSSION



“The Federation has consistently worked at the cutting edges of family farm and rural issues giving leadership and support to coalitions with other groups, often sacrificing funding and acceptance to make our positions known. Starting in the 1980’s, the Federation worked to develop the basic outline of a “minority farmers rights bill” to assist people of color family farmers across the nation. The Federation sponsored a Caravan of Black and Native American Farmers to Washington, DC in September 1992, which included demonstrations at state capitols, the US Capitol and at the US Department of Agriculture. We have participated as plaintiffs in lawsuits and organized in rural communities to build a base for change. With hard work, collaboration with many other groups, and a consistent program of community and civic education, the Federation was able to get portions of this advocacy agenda incorporated in national farm legislation.” From the FSC/LAF’s historical timeline. Read more at www.federation.coop/history-archives

UNDERSTANDING THE FARM BILL

What is the Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill is a sprawling omnibus bill that determines policy and funding for agriculture support programs, food assistance programs, conservation, and myriad other aspects that affect how we grow and consume food. The legislation passed with each Farm Bill lasts five years, and then must be reauthorized.

The Farm Bill is organized in 12 different titles, which are each described below. This toolkit provides direction on how we can point the Farm Bill toward racial justice, while also calling to attention the limitations of the existing structure of the 12 titles.

As each Farm Bill reauthorization approaches, advocates and policymakers work together to introduce marker bills. Marker bills group together policy around key issues. They are not intended to pass as standalone bills, but help to show collective support and build momentum for ideas that could be included in the Farm Bill. This past year, various marker bills that supported corporatization of agriculture and undermined small farmers were introduced, but so too were an unprecedented number of marker bills focusing on equity, labor rights, and benefits for small farmers.¹

¹ <https://www.rafiusa.org/farm-bill-2023-landing/marker-bill-tracker/>




*Audience at the
US Senate Briefing
following the Farm
Bill Summit.*

The 2018 Farm Bill expired on September 30, 2023 when Congress failed to meet its deadline to pass a new Farm Bill. On November 19, 2023, Congress enacted a one year extension. At the time of publishing (March 2024) it is unclear what the timeline and process for a new Farm Bill will be, though we hope to see movement this Spring.

This is not the first time this has happened. In 2012, the Farm Bill was delayed until 2014. When this happens, some major programs are able to continue, but others are affected. Crop insurance will continue because it is permanently authorized in a separate bill. Conservation programs will also continue because they have been extended by the Inflation Reduction Act. Title 1 commodity crop payments and dairy support programs will expire at the end of the year without reauthorization, and many smaller programs that benefit farmers of color and organic farmers are put on pause until reauthorization (although farmers who applied before September 30 could still have their applications processed).

Although the 2023 Farm Bill has been stalled, the remarkable coalition-building and visioning work that groups like [Rural Coalition](#), [National Black Food Justice Alliance](#), the [National Family Farm Coalition](#), [HEAL](#) and others undertook this year were not in vain. These ongoing transformative efforts remain critical for the finalization of this Farm Bill and for creating even further change in the next bill five years from now.



Bonnetta Adeeb of Ujaama Cooperative Farming Alliances poses a question during the US Senate Briefing that took place at the conclusion of the Farm Bill summit.

Listen to Dãnia’s audio files of these FSC/LAF Advocacy Institute’s Farm Bill 2023 Priorities

PODCAST

Listen to SDFR Policy Center at Alcorn State’s podcast on what the farm bill is.

PODCAST

Watch the discussion on racial justice terminology, the limitations of the “socially disadvantaged term” and intersectional matrices.

DISCUSSION

THE INFLATION REDUCTION ACT: WHAT IT HAS TO DO WITH THE FARM BILL

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) put \$369 billion toward energy reduction and climate change. \$20 billion is directed toward helping farmers fight the climate crisis.

The IRA also weakened sections of the American Rescue Plan ACT (ARPA) that promised financial assistance and debt relief, in the form of loan modifications or payments to Black farmers, indigenous farmers, and other farmers of colors through the term “socially disadvantaged” by replacing this language with terms like “distressed” and “underserved.”

The FSC/LAF advocated for the modification of Section 22006 which appropriates \$3.1B for loan modifications for “distressed” direct and guaranteed borrowers. The Secretary must “expeditiously” assist farmers seeking modifications “whose agricultural operations are at financial risk.” This money is available through September 30, 2031.

Section 22007(e) appropriates \$2.2B for one or more non-profit organizations to implement a “program to provide financial assistance” to farmers, ranchers, or forest landowners. To be eligible for this “financial assistance,” a farmer, rancher or forest landowner must prove that they experienced discrimination before January 1, 2021. Only discrimination in farm lending programs can be considered. Financial assistance is capped at \$500,000 per farmer, rancher, or forest landowner who is able to prove their discrimination experience. Any form of discrimination can be proven. This money is available through September 30, 2031.

“Distressed” borrowers were able to submit applications for support through December 31, 2023 and farmers who experienced discrimination could submit applications through January 13, 2024 ([read more](#)).

The FSC/LAF and other organizations are advocating for the Farm Bill (via the conservation title) to support racial equity through set asides in conservation programs and other priorities (see page 10).



*From left to right Dānia Davy,
Dr. Jasmine Jackson, and
Susuyu Lassa.*

Listen to the SDFR Policy Center’s podcast part one on the Inflation Reduction Act.

PODCAST

Listen to the SDFR Policy Center’s podcast part two on the Inflation Reduction Act.

PODCAST

TITLE I: COMMODITIES

When environmental organizations overview this title, they usually take aim at the “subsidies” for commodity crops. However, the original history of this title points us toward ways in which price supports could be reconsidered to support both racial equity and a better market for all family farmers.

The original Farm Bill emerged in the context of the post-World War I farm crisis, Dust Bowl, and Great Depression. During the war, the US government aggressively incentivized commodity crop production to support the war effort. Farmers plowed up prairie land to plant more and cash in on the high demand. But when the war ended, prices plummeted. Farmers tried planting even more acreage to compensate for low prices, leading to the notorious Dust Bowl of the 1930s. In the wake of farmer protests, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 and 1938 combined with the Soil Conservation Act and became the first “Farm Bill.” The concept of “parity” was introduced in order to limit production, balance out the market, and ensure that farmers would earn “en par” with laborers in cities with wage protections.

However, white planter elites in the Delta and other southern constituencies worked to exclude (Black) tenant farmers from parity policies, leaving many of them unemployed altogether. Nonetheless, a 2006 FSC/LAF [report](#) authored by Jerry Pennick and Heather Gray found that Black farmers who were able to secure land made use of parity programs to secure a market and decent prices for their cotton, tobacco, and peanuts, and described that the programs were essential to the survival of their farms. This suggests that a return to parity within a racial justice context could benefit Black, indigenous, and family farms across the country.

In the later 20th century, the US government moved away from parity policies and back toward overproduction (for exportation) as a result of its global strategy (see Trade and Nutrition Titles). This led to plummeting prices and the 1980s farm crisis, and the convoluted commodity title of recent bills has allowed median income from farming to remain below zero (USDA citation).

The 2018 Farm Bill maintains programs introduced in 2014 and before including Price Loss Coverage (PLC, which covers income support), Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC, which provides disaster assistance), and Marketing Assistance Loan Program (MALP, which allows for loans to commodity producers).

The FSC/LAF worked with the National Family Farm Coalition and other grassroots, agrarian justice organizations and scholars on the [Disparity to Parity project](#) (2019-2022), which aims to recall the original history of parity in the Farm Bill, and call for a return back to it; but with equitable benefits to all farmers.

Click the link below to view the commodity talk “Even the Commodity Title Could Be Pointed Toward Racial Justice”

TALK

TITLE II: CONSERVATION

The Conservation title provides assistance to agricultural producers by addressing environmental resource concerns on private land through land retirement, conservation easements, working lands assistance, and partnership opportunities.

The USDA and its Conservation programs have historically been discriminatory, but this year's Farm Bill presents an opportunity for reversing historical wrongdoings. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) conservation programs each have 5% of their funds reserved for farmers of color; however, farmers of color receive less EQIP dollars than allocated due to program access barriers. The most recent US Census data reveals 13.6% of the US population is Black; however, we do not see this level of representation reflected in our agricultural system. The complex history of Black representation in US agriculture and Black farmland ownership has been well-documented as a result of discriminatory laws, policies, and practices reflected at the federal, state, and local levels of public and private entities. Without intervention, we could witness the extinction of Black farming and Black farmland ownership within a generation. The conservation title, especially due to the Inflation Reduction Act funds, now has the possibility to help address these tremendous inequities. To eliminate the disparate representation of Black farmers, landowners, and cooperatives in US agriculture, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives supports dedicating 13% of all Conservation (e.g. EQIP) program funding to Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners. This 13% set aside should include EQIP, CSP, CIG, CRG, and RCPP.

Unfortunately, the current Conservation program application is overly burdensome for all applicants, but has additional challenges and barriers for Black farmers, ranchers, landowners, and cooperatives. Proactive, targeted outreach to Black farmers, ranchers, landowners, and cooperatives including a streamlined program application process would increase program participation by these communities. In particular, the application form should allow farmers to identify their credit and conservation plans and needs while allowing the farmer to be informed about what programs match with their needs. Targeted outreach to Black farmers, ranchers, landowners, and cooperatives will play a key role in effective implementation of Conservation funding. Towards this end, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) must proactively notify every Black farmer, rancher, landowner, and cooperative of the availability of Conservation program funding and work with community-based organizations associated with these communities to ensure successful submission of applications and to conduct follow-up outreach to these communities.

TITLE III: TRADE

The Trade title is the foundation of US agricultural interests abroad. The Trade Title's main provisions are food aid, market development and export promotion, and international agriculture trade laws.

The Trade title began in the post World War II years, primarily as a means of disposing commodity crop surplus in the form of food aid—surplus that had been incentivized and deployed as part of WWII strategy. After the war, through Public Law 480, the USDA shipped grains overseas to newly independent postcolonial countries (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc) and for geopolitical dominance in the Cold War (Egypt, Iran, South Vietnam, Cambodia, etc). For generations, food trade programs have flooded foreign agricultural markets, undercutting local producers from their domestic sales. This has created dependence cycles, wherein countries that were once self-sufficient in agricultural production have become highly dependent on imports from the United States. Food aid programs, which are another cornerstone of the Trade Title, are attached to admirable anti-hunger goals, but they are also linked to longstanding efforts to offload commodity crop surplus and to create and expand new markets abroad. They have also been used as diplomatic leverage in negotiations with nations in need from the mid-20th century Cold War era on through the 21st century.

Allegedly, this exponential increase in US agricultural exports helps US farmers. But in addition to negatively impacting international agri-food systems, the legislation has also hurt small and mid-size farmers in the US—particularly Black farmers who have been forced out of the foreign agriculture market due to unrealistic production expectations. This has, in turn, exacerbated farm and land concentration. Even in the case of larger farms with the necessary economies of scale to capture export markets, they face relentless downward pressure on farmgate prices.

The Federation has long critiqued the globalized trade model, since it pits farmers around the world against each other in a race to the bottom for farmgate prices. Transnational corporate buyers profit from cheap prices, while local farmers cannot compete with cheap imports. Mr. Ben Burkett, Mississippi State Coordinator for the FSC/LAF and former President of the National Family Farm Coalition, led delegations from the US to Mexico to analyze the impacts of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—their concerns proved true. Immediately upon ratifying NAFTA, Federation farmers lost valuable regional contracts for their produce, as corporate buyers



Pictured from left to right: Freddie Davis, James Tillman, Sr., Willard Tillman, and Sakeenah Shabazz.

switched to cheaper products elsewhere. As he told [In Motion Magazine](#): “There used to be vegetable buyers in our areas but they are not there any more because from 1946 to 1995 we had a contract in there for cucumbers. We grew cucumbers for Vlasik. We grew hot pepper for the Louisiana pepper salt industry, Panola Pepper Company, Tabasco. All of that was contract. We grew bell pepper on contract. But after they signed NAFTA, after '95, all those contracts were gone...We had a canning plant that would buy okra and bell peppers and squash. It's closed, you know, since the signing of NAFTA. I say that's had a lot of impact.”

New programs in the Trade Title will be dependent upon the approval of marker bills and recommendations from the House and Senate Agriculture committees. However, the most discussed components of the 2023/2024 Trade Title to date have been Agriculture Trade Promotion Programs and Market Access Programs, which have led to an exponential trade growth (in 2022, agriculture exports increased by 11 percent or \$19.5 Million) that has benefited only the largest agricultural firms and exporters.

In addition to Market Access and Export Promotion programs, Title III's food aid programs are also receiving a significant amount of attention due to rising global food insecurity and Global South demands for food sovereignty. Global food insecurity has worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic, food supply chain shocks, climate induced events, and global conditions of war.

Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, or AFSA, brings together small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fishers, indigenous peoples, faith communities, consumers, women, and young people from across Africa to create a united and loud voice for food sovereignty. AFSA virtually presented and participated in the May 2023 Summit. AFSA advocated for the following US agricultural trade policies:

- Prioritize food sovereignty and agroecology to support smallholder farms and local food systems—across Africa and beyond.
- Increase congressional oversight of trade negotiations and the transparent release of negotiating texts to the public, so that transnational agro-industry firms aren't authoring legislation.
- Promote sustainable and agroecological farming practices, which can benefit small-scale farmers by reducing their dependence on expensive, environmentally degrading inputs like fertilizers, agrobiotechnologies, and pesticides.
- Protect small-scale farmers' rights to use and exchange their own seeds, which is crucial for maintaining crop diversity and resilience. This benefits small-scale farmers but also contributes to global food security by preserving the genetic diversity of crops, particularly African and African Diaspora agrobiodiversity.

TITLE IV: NUTRITION

The Nutrition title provides food assistance for low-income households through several programs. The majority funding in this title, and the Farm Bill overall, goes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program. Other programs include:

- Nutrition Assistance Block Grants,
- The Emergency Food Assistance Programs (TEFAP),
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR),
- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP),
- Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), and
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

The United States has high levels of household food insecurity, and more alarming, high rates of child food insecurity. Our current food system has become one of segregation and food apartheid with inequitable distribution of healthy, nutritious, and affordable food. These conditions exacerbate the risk of individuals and households becoming food insecure and developing diet-related chronic illnesses, especially among historically underserved populations.

Discriminatory planning and policy decisions, such as red-lining, forced people of color to live in cities and communities, both urban and rural, that had fewer resources, fewer access to grocery stores and other sizable healthy food sources. This disinvestment by local, state, and federal governments are at the root of this issue and 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%).² The programs listed above address some of these issues but have not created wide-spread change that would eliminate issues of hunger and food insecurity altogether. The work of food justice advocates, food sovereignty practitioners, and community leaders must be put at the forefront of efforts with policy-makers to remediate this issue, and to ensure that equitable funding and support are made available through the Farm Bill.

The Nutrition title of the Farm Bill received 73% of all Farm Bill funding after the last reauthorization and is projected to receive 84% of funding over the next 10 years, after the next Farm Bill is reauthorized.³ This increase in funding is tied to inflation, supplemental Covid-19 spending that was made available during the height of the pandemic, adjustments to the Thrifty Food Plan, which informs SNAP benefit levels, and there being a higher demand for food assistance coming out of the pandemic. Existing programs must continue to be funded at levels that adequately address the high rates of hunger and food insecurity in the United States and concurrently, we must think expansively about how our food system, and programs that help to feed people, can be protected and strengthened for years to come.

Click the link below to view the the summit presentation on nutrition.

[PRESENTATION](#)

² <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/interactive-charts-and-highlights/#trends>

³ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12047>

TITLE V: CREDIT

The Credit title covers federal loan programs designed to help farmers access the financial credit (via direct loans as well as loan guarantees and other tools) they need to grow and sustain their farming operations.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized the Heir Property Relending Program (HPRP) Pilot. Heirs' property is a legal term that refers to family land inherited without a will or legal documentation of ownership. It has historically been challenging for heirs to benefit from USDA programs because they could not get a farm number without proof of ownership or control of land. The HPRP is meant to help resolve heirs' land ownership and succession issues on agricultural land. This program works differently than other USDA programs. Rather than USDA providing the loan directly to producers, the loan is provided to intermediary lenders, who then re-lend the funds to producers. However, the intermediary lenders for the program were not selected until 2022. One of the three intermediary lenders, and the only one positioned to assist Black heir property landowners in the South had not started accepting loan applications or making loans at the time of publishing (March 2024). The Federation, through a cooperative agreement with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides outreach and technical assistance to prospective borrowers, existing borrowers, lenders, prospective lenders, and USDA. From the FSC/LAF's vantage point, the Pilot program has not been fully implemented. Heirs property landowners have unique and specific challenges. Their tenuous land tenure is a byproduct of their ancestors' inadequate access to legal services and not a situation they created for themselves. Based on their longstanding experience and expertise, the Federation recommends adapting incentives of the existing debt for nature conservation program to achieve debt forgiveness within the existing Heir Property Relending Program. If this were implemented, farmers and land owners could achieve debt forgiveness of loans taken from the Heir Property Relending program and clear their titles, and then enroll that family land into conservation contracts.

Inflation is causing significant rises in the cost of farming, ranching, and maintaining land ownership. The FSA microloan limit has never been increased beyond \$50,000 and that is inadequate given the current rates of inflation. Similarly, while the farm ownership loan limit has been increased to \$600,000, the FSA farm operating loan limit has not been increased. The Federation recommends increasing the FSA Microloan limit to \$100,000 and the FSA farm operating loan limit to \$600,000 in light of rising inflation.

When the American Rescue Plan Act Section 1005 Emergency Debt Relief for Farmers and Ranchers of Color program was repealed, the Federation received numerous calls from members who received foreclosure notices of not just their farming operations, but also of their homes. Farmers are first responders providing critical food and other resources to the communities in which they live. They should never face losing their home for being such critical, necessary

⁴ <https://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/#:~:text=The%20Crop%20Insurance%20title%20provides,revenue%2C%20or%20whole%20farm%20revenue.>

⁵ <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/heirs-property-eligibility/relending>

parts of their communities. Likewise, the FSA Credit Handbook currently allows for assets to be held as collateral at a value of up to 150% of the loan value. This means as the loan's principal decreases as loan payments are made, the value of the collateral actually increases: putting the farmer in an upside-down position. Therefore, the Federation supports 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.

Historical discrimination has fueled a mass-exodus of the next generation of Black farmers. The most recent US Census of Agriculture data reveals that the average age of the Black farmer in the US is 61: signaling an impending mass-retirement of the existing Black farming population. The Federation suggests that one way to improve racial equity in agriculture is to create a targeted farm and student loan forgiveness program. Under this proposal, current and prospective Black farmers would receive farm debt forgiveness for the term of their loan in recognition of their public service work to their communities and the nation. This would mitigate the disproportionate debt burden held by Black farmers which threaten premature departure from agriculture. To incentivize the next generation of Black farmers and Black professionals serving Black farmers, this debt forgiveness program would offer reduction in student loan debt for Black farming professionals who agree to work in the agricultural sector or at community-based organizations that serve Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

Click the link below to watch the summit presentation on this title.

PRESENTATION



TITLE VI: RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Rural Development title covers programs that help foster rural economic growth through rural business and community development (including farm businesses) as well as rural housing, and infrastructure.⁶

Rural Broadband

High-speed internet access is essential in today's economy and culture. About 24 million Americans, mostly those in minority rural areas, lack broadband access. Numerous factors impede rural expansion of broadband access. The interests of rural communities should be put first by codifying in the Farm Bill a minimum service level commitment of 100 Mbps symmetrical broadband service – the level specified in the oversubscribed third round of ReConnect – for any applicant seeking funding through ReConnect. Policies that encourage sustainable networks that meet the needs of consumers now and into the future will be most efficient in responding to consumer demand over the lives of those networks, particularly when compared to short-term solutions that are likely to be quickly outpaced by technological evolution and consumer demands and require substantial re-investment relatively soon thereafter.

Click the link below to watch the summit presentation on this title.

PRESENTATION

⁶ <https://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/#:~:text=The%20Crop%20Insurance%20title%20provides,revenue%2C%20or%20whole%20farm%20revenue.>³ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12047>



From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs.

TITLE VII: RESEARCH, EXTENSION, AND RELATED MATTERS

The Research title supports agricultural research at the federal level and provides support for cooperative research, extension, and postsecondary agricultural education programs.

Access to research evident information is important for farmers of color, and it is even more important for this information to be culturally relevant. Historical discrimination within the United States Department of Agriculture, limited access to resources, limited access to information and technical support, and lack of representation in the agricultural leadership are key reasons for the need and importance of this title.

To add to the importance of this title, **appropriations and guidance for land-grant institutions related to research and extension services are housed under this title.** Minority serving institutions have played a large role in the development of minority farmers and their operations through their research and extension services. Without these institutions, minority farmers and agricultural research minority farmers are often left behind and out of advancements in agriculture.

The inequities in funding between the original 1862 land grant institutions and the 1890 minority serving land grants are stark, and contribute to the additional harm of minority farmers. Along with this, oftentimes the legislation that governs their funding is minutely different, but creates great differences in their ability to function.

This disparity has been evident from the beginning. When the Second Morrill Act was passed in 1890, creating new minority-serving land grant institutions, the equity formula of 30,000 acres of land per representative (used for the original 1862 institutions) was not used for establishment of the 19 historically Black land-grant institutions. Therefore, the 19 historically Black land-grant universities (1890s) never received the minimum 90,000 acres of land nor the monetary value equivalent to the sale of land. Mississippi is a slight exception, since the state did receive 209,000 acres of land to sell. The land was sold for \$0.90 an acres (approximately \$188,000). Sixty percent (60%) of the proceeds was used to purchase a former white male college that did not reopen after the Civil War and the governor, James L. Alcorn, named it after himself, Alcorn University. The remaining 40% of the proceeds was given to the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) because Mississippi State University did not exist in 1871. Had the 1890 land grant institutions received the land grants or monetary value for 90,000 acres plus, they possibly would not need to request infrastructure funding today.⁷

While this example is focused on the 1890s, the present day and history of other minority serving institutions is similar and requires the same amount of focus to create equity for students and the farmers they serve.

⁷ 1890 Foundation, Preamble to 2023 Farm Bill Recommendations, Dr. Charles Magee (Florida A&M University)

TITLE VIII: FORESTRY

The Forestry title covers forest-specific conservation programs that help farmers and rural communities to be stewards of forest resources.⁸

Forest landowners who have an average holding of 40 acres or less have historically been underserved by federal programs. These forests face the highest risk of loss to development and deforestation. The upcoming Farm Bill could target these lands and offer tactics to landowners for maintaining them. Federal programs that incentivize landowners to maintain their forestland already exist. The 2023 Farm Bill can bolster these programs, including through market incentives. Flagship programs such as the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP) and the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) under the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) support on-the-ground forest management. These programs have funding to assist landowners with practices that promote healthy forests. As the population of forest managers in the United States has decreased, forest management expertise has disappeared. Programs under the 2018 Farm Bill have helped by providing technical assistance and training programs to forest owners. The new legislation can augment this funding, particularly for historically underserved groups. The 2023 Farm Bill can provide benefits and incentives to landowners to maintain working, healthy forests.

Click the link below to watch an interview with Freddie Davis III, Registered Forester and Director of the Rural Training and Research Center of the FSC/LAF.

VIDEO

⁸ <https://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/#:~:text=The%20Crop%20Insurance%20title%20provides,revenue%2C%20or%20whole%20farm%20revenue.>



From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs.

TITLE IX: ENERGY

The Energy title covers programs that encourage growing and processing crops for biofuel, help farmers, ranchers and business owners install renewable energy systems, and support research related to energy.⁹

There have increasingly been pushes for the production and combustion of manure biogas from industrial agriculture. Factory farm gas entrenches the polluting factory farm system, and its massive climate impact, with a false solution to methane emissions that, in reality, is just another source of dirty energy. The liquefied manure management system commonly used by industrial hog and dairy operations creates football field-sized lagoons of manure, which contain high concentrations of nitrogen, phosphorus, pathogens, and heavy metals. The run-off from land-applied waste creates toxic wastewater that runs into nearby rivers, lakes, and streams. The risk of contaminating surrounding water and soil increases when biogas producers cover unlined lagoons to increase the amount of methane they capture. The anaerobic digestion process makes the nitrogen more water soluble and increases the risk of contaminants seeping into groundwater.

Surrounding communities experience higher cases and severity of respiratory illnesses, as well as nausea, headaches, and other health conditions. The ammonia and hydrogen sulfide emissions from industrial animal facilities have been linked with higher rates of infant mortality and surrounding communities suffer from decreased life expectancy. Volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and ammonia act as ozone and PM2.5 precursors, which inflict significant harm on polluted air basins like the San Joaquin Valley in California where CAFO dairy operations are the largest source of VOC and ammonia. Methane digesters do nothing to limit these emissions (and in fact, can increase ammonia emissions), while incentivizing operations to expand in size or to use inferior manure management practices in order to generate more manure and profit from producing biogas.

The USDA energy programs found under this title are intended to “incentivize research, development, and adoption of renewable energy projects, including solar, wind, and anaerobic digestors.”¹⁰ The first energy title was in the 2002 Farm Bill. Since then, this title has primarily prioritized the promotion of US biofuels, and many of the programs have been underfunded. Historically, small-scale, POC farmers and landowners have not been able to gain significant benefit from the energy programs, due to their focus on large, industrial farms. However, the IRA has brought new funds to this title, including supplementary grants for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to support “underutilized renewable energy technologies.” The 2023/2024 Farm Bill could move in the direction of racial and climate justice if it shifted incentives to farmers who can capture carbon and produce renewable energy on small plots of land. For example, USDA investments could be made for the sustainable collection and conversion of forest biomass into bioenergy. Forest biomass is harvested from forest underbrush and directly combusted

⁹ <https://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/#:~:text=The%20Crop%20Insurance%20title%20provides,revenue%2C%20or%20whole%20farm%20revenue.>

¹⁰ <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45943.pdf>

for usable heat or converted into bioenergy and biofuel and used to generate heat and power. From an environmental standpoint, bioenergy from sustainable forest biomass significantly [reduces CO2 emissions](#). From an [economic standpoint](#), investing in landowners' forest management in the production of biogas will generate jobs, income, and development in rural communities.

As stated in the previous section, few financial incentives exist for landowners to manage their forests. If the USDA were to provide tax credits or to expand programs such as the [Community Forest Program](#) to promote the sustainable production of forest biofuels, then there would be financial incentives for Black landowners to actively manage their forests while also being at the forefront of clean energy for our country.



From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs.

TITLE X: HORTICULTURE

The Horticulture title supports specialty crops—as defined in statute, covering fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and nursery products—through a range of initiatives, including market promotion, plant pest and disease prevention, and public research. The title also provides support to certified organic agricultural production and locally produced foods.

According to 2018 estimates, the Farm Bill of this year was project to invest [less than 0.5%](#) of total Farm Bill spending under this title. Considering that many small farmers across the country focus on these crops, including Black farmers in the South, whose land access and ownership is currently under threat from the increased movement of the financial sector into farmland investment (as outlined in [Selling Out the Delta](#)), this low investment has a significant impact farmers of color.

One area that the 2018 Farm Bill did focus on under this title was the legalized production of industrial hemp. This has created new economic opportunities for farmers in the United States. However, the benefits of this new industry have not been equally distributed, and farmers of color have faced a number of challenges in accessing and benefiting from this emerging market.

Hemp cultivation requires a license.¹¹ Licensing requirements vary by state or tribe, and applicants must visit the state’s website to obtain a license application and view specific requirements. However, people who have been convicted of a felony involving a controlled substance within the last ten years, are ineligible to obtain a hemp production license from a state, tribe, or the USDA. This policy disproportionately affects individuals from marginalized communities, such as people of color and indigenous groups, who have historical knowledge of hemp production but are more likely to have been arrested for it. Such arrests are often racially biased, and the resulting criminal record can prevent them from obtaining the necessary permit. As a result, this background check requirement has a negative impact on farmers from these communities, who may also face accessibility issues during the application process, ranging from language barriers to internet access to knowledge of the bureaucratic process.

Following the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, the US hemp market experienced a significant crash.¹² Factors for this included an oversupply of hemp, a lack of infrastructure to process and distribute hemp products, low demand for hemp products, and unclear government regulations. This created a difficult market for hemp farmers, many of whom experienced significant financial losses. However, large private companies had certain advantages that helped them overcome the challenges posed by oversupply and regulatory uncertainty.¹³ One of these advantages was their ability to withstand the financial losses associated with the crash. Larger companies had more resources to invest in infrastructure and supply chains, giving them a competitive advantage in the marketplace and further pushed small farmers out.

¹¹ <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/hemp/information-producers#:~:text=To%20produce%20hemp%2C%20you%20first,of%20your%20hemp%20growing%20facility>.

¹² <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/25/hemp-farmers-275046>

¹³ <https://www.pressherald.com/2022/01/03/when-hemp-prices-crashed-two-oil-and-gas-tycoons-gobbled-up-market-share-now-they-expect-100-million-in-revenue-this-year/>

Further, the hemp industry is subject to several regulations¹⁴ that make it difficult for farmers and businesses to operate. To ensure compliance with the law, farmers are required to test their crops to ensure that THC levels do not exceed 0.3%. Hemp products must also be labeled with specific information, including the name of the product, its ingredients, and the amount of THC present. In addition, marketing restrictions prohibit the marketing of hemp products as a treatment for ailments. These regulations and ambiguous policies increase costs for farmers and businesses, which may force them to leave the industry.

The 2023 Farm Bill has the power to improve these issues by reducing regulatory costs, improving access to financing, increasing access to markets, managing the supply, increasing research and development, and removing barriers to access for small farmers.

¹⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-farm-bill-hemp-and-cbd-explainer/>



From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs.

TITLE XI: CROP INSURANCE

Crop insurance has historically been difficult for Black farmers to acquire, due to the fact that their farms are often small and family-run. The title also provides USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) with the authority to research, develop, and modify insurance policies.¹⁵

Until recently, there were no insurance products available to meet the needs of small, family-run farms. Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) is a crop-neutral revenue insurance policy designed to protect a farmer's entire operation, not just one crop. Under this policy, diversified and diversifying farms that might not have access to separate crop or revenue insurance policies for each crop they grow can insure all their crops and livestock under one policy.

Insurance for farmers typically comes in two forms – yield insurance and revenue insurance. Yield-based insurance policies provide indemnity payments when crop yields drop below an insured amount, as long as the reason for the low yield is an insured cause of loss (e.g., drought, excess rain, etc.). Revenue insurance is similar but insures against drops in price *as well as* yield (since prices can drop when yields are high). Most policies sold today are revenue policies. Traditional crop-based policies insure individual crops, including some organic crops, but are not available for every crop in every county. WFRP, by contrast, insures all crops and livestock grown or raised on a given farm in every county in the country.

The US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) develops crop insurance policies, sets premium rates, and subsidizes the costs for farmers and approved insurance providers. The federal policies are then administered through private crop insurance agents who sell the policies to individual farmers. The WFRP policy was first made available in the 2015 insurance year.

For diversified specialty crop growers, mixed grain and livestock producers, and other diversified and organic producers – and producers looking to diversify their operation – WFRP provides an insurance option that recognizes and rewards the risk management inherent to diversified operations. Farmers can also find more information on RMA's [Whole-Farm Revenue Protection policy website](#).

¹⁵ <https://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/#:~:text=The%20Crop%20Insurance%20title%20provides,revenue%2C%20or%20whole%20farm%20revenue.>

TITLE XII: MISCELLANEOUS

The Miscellaneous title is often considered to be a catch-all title, due to the inclusion of multiple issue areas that are not addressed by other titles. However, the topics included are anything but minor. The current title brings together six advocacy and outreach areas, including beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers, agricultural labor safety and workforce development, and livestock health.¹⁶

For these reasons, the often overlooked miscellaneous title might be one of the more important titles for advocates, especially for those who advocate for farmers of color. The 2008 Farm Bill is a perfect example of this. While the term “socially disadvantaged farmer and rancher” was first defined in the 1990 food bill and the 2002 Farm Bill made changes to USDA farm credit programs and the 2501 program, the 2008 Farm Bill was the first time there were separate subtitles within the miscellaneous title with multiple provisions addressing SDFRs. This subtitle related to SDFRs ranged from the creation of a minority farmer advisory committee to the Office of Advocacy and outreach.

Section 14006, Transparency and Accountability for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, was meant to create an annual requirement for the Secretary of Agriculture to compile and make publicly available the grant program application and participation rate data regarding socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. To date, this section has not been implemented, and caught the attention of advocates for this population of farmers in 2022. Advocates have called on their members of Congress to ensure that the transparency and accountability section of the 2008 Farm Bill be implemented as soon as possible.

The miscellaneous title of the 2014 Farm Bill was used to create the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center, which is currently housed at Alcorn State University. This authorization created an entity that conducts policy research to improve the success of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through a transparent management structure focusing primarily in research, policy development, stakeholder engagement, and outreach. It is only through the miscellaneous title that allows such a wide variety of things to be accomplished, proving that it is one of the hidden gems of the Farm Bill and a key to creating change and building equity within agriculture.

Click on the link below to watch the panel on this title.

DISCUSSION

¹⁶ <https://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/#:~:text=The%20Crop%20Insurance%20title%20provides,revenue%2C%20or%20whole%20farm%20revenue.>



BEYOND THE CURRENT FARM BILL

As grassroots coalitions continue to strive toward a new Farm Bill, it is useful to point to ways in which the existing Farm Bill titles could achieve greater equity and racial justice. But we are also approaching a place in the cycle where we can start to think more expansively about how to transform the very structure of the Farm Bill Before the next Farm Bill cycle in 2029.

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives supports:

- Dedicating 13% of all Conservation program funding(e.g., EQIP) to Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners.
- 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.
- Targeted Conservation Program funding incentives to achieve loan forgiveness within the Heir Property Relending Program.
- Increasing the FSA Microloan limit to \$100,000 and the FSA farm operating loan limit to \$600,000.
- 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.
- A farm and student loan forgiveness program for Black farmers and professionals at Community-Based Organizations serving Black farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

*From the FSC/LAF's
archive of historic
photographs.*



BEYOND THE CURRENT FARM BILL

Participants of the Farm Bill summit have identified the following areas for intervention:

- The exclusion of US territories from the Farm Bill
- Treatment of indigenous land and farmers
- The lack of a labor title
- The need to move beyond counterproductive definitions, such as “socially disadvantaged” that can be manipulated to move money away from Black farmers and other farmers of color.
- The need for a food bill of rights

From the FSC/LAF's archive of historic photographs.



THE FOOD BILL OF RIGHTS

The Food Bill of Rights, proposed by [Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture](#) (WANDA) Founder Tambra Raye Stevenson, is a unifying, intersectional framework that centers food access, land, and culturally appropriate, nourishing food as fundamental rights in this nation.

It recognizes that food is connected to our health, economy, and environment; that food should be safe, affordable, and nourishing; that food can create livelihoods in alignment with the planet; that food is an expression of reclaiming culture and dignity.

Food Bill of Rights

We proclaim the Declaration of the Food Bill of Rights as a guiding framework for food policies, programs and practices toward the betterment of nutritional, economic, and health status of Americans. The Food Bill of Rights informs, advocates, and promotes respect and dignity of every individual and every family.

- **Article 1:** We have the right to food that values biodiversity, sustainability, and wellbeing to achieve optimal wellness.
- **Article 2:** We have the right to equitable access to safe, cultural, affordable, nourishing foods and nutrition education.
- **Article 3:** We have the right to civic and economic participation in the food system as part of a democracy.
- **Article 4:** We have the right to a fair food environment in alignment with health, livelihood, and the planet.
- **Article 5:** We have the right to reclaim and reproduce our heritage foods, values, history, and knowledge.
- **Article 6:** We have the right to resist any narratives and social, economical, health, and labor conditions that limit our food freedom.
- **Article 7:** We have the right to receive and give food with respect and dignity.

*From the FSC/LAF's
archive of historic
photographs.*

TAKE ACTION

Click the links below to learn more, sign up for mailing lists, and find out how to get involved.



FEDERATION



RURAL COALITION



HEAL FOOD ALLIANCE



UJAAMA



ARPC



NFFC



BFI



RAFI



ALCORN SDFR
POLICY CENTER



HEAL OUR
COMMUNITIES



ALIANZA NACIONAL
DE CAMPESINAS



AFRICAN FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE



ABOUT US



The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF)

The FSC/LAF is a 57-year-old regional cooperative and rural economic development organization serving a membership of Black farmers, landowners, cooperatives, and other low-income rural people in the South with co-op development, land retention, and advocacy.

FSC/LAF's mission to be a catalyst for the development of self-supportive communities through cooperative economic development, land retention and advocacy. The Federation provides land retention education and development, especially for African Americans, but essentially for all family members.



The American University Antiracist Research and Policy Center (ARPC)

The Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University generates scholarly research, educational tools, and policy analysis geared towards dismantling racism in its many forms. We build multidisciplinary initiatives for fostering racial justice, decolonial politics, and intersectional liberation by forging relationships across AU and with external changemakers in the DC region and beyond.



The Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University

The Policy Center specializes in policy research impacting socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Through collaboration with universities and organizations inside and outside the land grant community, Alcorn State University leverages Alcorn State University employees' expertise and increases personnel capacity with contractual partnerships with other universities and agencies. The mission of the Policy Research Center is to make policy recommendations that will improve the success of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and will be accomplished through a transparent management structure focusing primarily in three areas: research, stakeholder engagement, and outreach.

ABOUT US

And thanks to the knowledge and expertise of all summit participants and speakers:

Organizations: African Food Sovereignty Alliance, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, UDC CAUSES, Intertribal Agriculture Council, National Black Food and Justice Alliance, National Family Farm Coalition, National Sustainable Agriculture Alliance, National Young Farmers Coalition, Oxfam, RAFI USA, Rural Coalition, Soul Fire Farm, Ujamaa Cooperative Food and Farming Alliance, and Virgin Islands Good Food Alliance, The Berkeley Food Institute (BFI), Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural.

Individual Speakers: Bonetta Adeeb, Mchezaji “Che” Axum, Briar Blakely, Dr. Penny Brown, Ben Burkett, Darnella Burkett-Winston, Dr. Gail Christopher, Mark Clack, Tandelyn Daniels, Dãnia Davy, Abi Fain, Karla Gibson, Alberto Gonzalez, Garrett Graddy-Lovelace, Billy Hackett, Eric Hilton, David Howard, Nina Ichikawa, Dr. Jasmine Jackson, Sara Clarke Kaplan, Margaret Krome-Lukens, Susuyu Lassa, April S. Love, Lorette Picciano, Sommer Sibilly-Brown, Jordan Treakle, Mily Treviño-Sauceda, Sakeenah Shabazz, Tambra Raye Stevenson, Bobby Wilson, Ebony Woodruff, Tamara Veal, and John Zippert.

Toolkit authors: Isis Amusa, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Lily Cuellarsola, Tandelyn Daniels, Dãnia Davy, Garrett Graddy-Lovelace, April S. Love, Sakeenah Shabazz, and Justine Williams with guidance from Freddie Davis, Darnella Winston Burkett, and Cornelius Blanding.

This toolkit was produced thanks to our sponsors.

