

Title:	Development of Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina		
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Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Recipient Organization

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Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

Many of the farmers we propose to assist are farming land owned by their parents, who are retiring. Others live in farming communities and desire to farm. Both groups realize the need to change the farming approach and techniques their parents and grandparents used for decades because the increasing importance of globalization and corporate farming have undermined the viability of traditional farming. In the 21st century, small farmers are increasingly looking for alternatives to the traditional dependence on row crops, expensive equipment, selling their crops to brokers for a small fraction of their retail cost, and using high tech seed and chemicals to control pests and weeds. Small farmers compete at their peril with large corporate agribusinesses, which have the resources to succeed at this type of agriculture. Small farmers frequently are living on thin margins between revenue and expenses and can lose money under stress from weather and prices over which they have no control. Farmers from socially disadvantaged groups, such as the African-American farmers in the South who are the Federation's reason for existing, often suffer even more from pursuing traditional farming. They start from a limited capital base and have not had equitable access to the financial and commodity markets until recently. The project will have long-term impact because it will eventually become a model for conversion of small farm holdings into intensive, diversified, sustainable operations that employ many more people per acre than factory farms and provide a local alternative to the current system of distributing food across hundreds of miles. Since it will enable beginning farmers to become successful, the project is a way of strengthening the Federation's ability to achieve its original goal, to avoid black land loss, to help minority landowners keep their land in the family or at least to maintain the land as a small farm rather than being sold to a large farming business. We anticipate that the project will serve 40 African-American Beginning Farmers, who will by the end of the third project year: 1) Purchase land: 10 2) Take control of heir property farms: 10 3) Continue to farm heir property: 10 4) Enter into long-term leases: 10 5) Change behavior to enter new markets: 30 6) Other appropriate changes in behavior: 40 7) Prepare their own farm plan with minimal or no assistance: 40 8) Take advantage of one or more federal benefits, such as EQIP, Conservation easements, etc.: 30 9) Utilize at least five sustainable practices presented during the project, such as cover crops, composting, mulching, drip irrigation, specialty and alternative crops, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), water conservation, four season planting schedules, greenhouses and hoopouses, vermiculture, beekeeping, hydroponic cultivation, cut flowers, and small animal husbandry: 40 10) Participate in at least one direct marketing method: 35 11) Join a producer cooperative: 35 12) Utilize computers for communication, record-keeping and/or research: 40 13) Formulate and begin to execute a whole farm that has realistic potential for comfortable farm income: 40

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

The Long-Term Goal of this project is that all participants will by the end of their participation have the knowledge, skills and resources to achieve a comfortable standard of living from farming with minimal risk so that they are able to continue farming as long as they choose. We have established the following core objectives and competencies that all participants should have or demonstrate, through their own farm practices and management, by the end of their participation: 1) Production and management strategies: Ability to prepare a comprehensive, whole farm plan that includes sustainable use of resources Mastery of sustainable farming practices Ability to select from many potential options a combination of crops and products that suits the individual farmer 2) Business management strategies: Ability to use external resources as needed to support farming operations Ability to use computers and Internet for communication, research and record-keeping Mastery of financial management and record keeping 3) Marketing strategies: Marketing plan that includes direct marketing strategies Diversified production scheme to protect the enterprise from market, weather and other risks 4) Legal strategies related to acquisition of land Secure use and control of land needed for farming 1) Intensive Services (one-on-one): Four State Agricultural Specialists will assist the 8-12 farmers in their state with development of whole farm plans, loan applications, conservation practices, EQIP programs, NRCS benefits, cooperative membership, land acquisition, and record-keeping. These services will include monthly contact and staff farm visits. 2) Mentoring: Participants will be able to call or email their State Agriculture Specialist with questions or concerns. 3) Workshops: We will conduct four workshops during each of the three project years on topics such as federal farmer assistance programs, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), cover crops, mulching, drip irrigation, four season planting schedules, whole farm planning, record-keeping, specialty and alternative crops, value-added products and services, water conservation, and other topics. 4) Demonstrations: Provide demonstrations and hands-on experience with the following methods: drip irrigation, composting, vermiculture, beekeeping, plant propagation, hydroponic cultivation, aquaculture, hoophouse construction and use, small animal husbandry (poultry and goats), Integrated Pest Management, alternative crops (e.g., cut flowers and herbs). 5) Farm Plans: The State Agriculture Specialists will ensure that all participants in the beginning farmer program will complete an annual Farm Business Plan. 6) Site visits: Participants will visit at least two successful farmers markets and talk to experienced vendors about crop selection, harvesting and preparation for market, product handling and transport, product display, pricing, and income potential. 7) Networking: All participants will have contact through telephone and email with State Agricultural Specialists and a network of experts assembled from Federation staff and farmer cooperative members.

What was accomplished under these goals?

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, completed the following tasks for each of the states:

1. Identify 10 Farmers per state,
2. Soil Sample per farmer,
3. Conservation Plan – NRCS,
4. Take Advantage of one or more federal benefits,
5. Participate in Computer training – email, communication, research
6. Greenhouse and hoop house training
7. Specialty and alternative crops (5 sustainable practices)
8. Join a producer coop
9. Formulate and execute a whole farm plan

The following activities were completed for all fortyone New and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

1. Soil Sample;
2. Contact local NRCS to schedule land assessment for each farmer;
3. Available conservation program enrollments;
4. Aide farmer in applying for FSA Loan or whatever outside funding is available;
5. Aide farmer in joining or participating with a local cooperative;
6. Develop marketing plan for farmers produce or livestock;
7. Identify value added process to increase profit margins for farmer;
8. Take pictures of farmers and their interactions in programs and meetings.

1. Production and management strategies, ability to select from many potential options a combination of crops and products that suits the individual farmer
2. Ability to use external resources as needed to support farming operations, ability to use computers and internet for communication, research, and basic record keeping.

3. Marketing strategies

4. Legal strategies related to acquisition of land secure use and control of land needed for farming.

One on one, internet services, mentoring, workshops, demonstrations, and site visits were the key to success thus far in this

project. More one on one time is needed to complete the development of a strong business plan for all forty one participants.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

This project has provided many opportunities for trainings and professional development. Some participants with the assistance of this project have reached out to FSA, NRCS, and Rural Development just to name a few USDA programs for the first time. Clemson University, Albany State University, Tuskegee University, Alcorn State University, Louisiana State University, and Mississippi State University have all provided assistance and training that has served as a key to the success of this project. Farmers have met with farmer markets, wholesalers, and local restaurants as potential customers. We are currently partnering with the Small Business Administration (SBA) to aide farmers in correct financial management practices to pursue 8 A Certification and HUB Zone Certification.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

The current, as well as future, success of the farmers will provide economic and employment growth in the local communities for all four states. Once success has been achieved, each farmer is looking at value-added practices to increase their potential profit growth. Farm workers, deliver drivers, and equipment operators are just a few of the potential jobs that could be created with the expansion of each farm in each of the four states.

Alabama

Fourteen farmers and ranchers were identified under the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development program in Alabama. Nine males and five females attended workshops, training, demonstrations, and received one on one site visits. The total acreage utilized among these farmers is an estimated 1000 acres. Eight male farmers and two females have applied for a total of eight loans in the amount of \$100,000.00. Two loans were successfully completed and awaiting approval.

Georgia

Twenty farmers and ranchers were identified, however only ten participants actively participated throughout the life of this program. Six participants actively participated with cooperatives in the state of Georgia while other members were attending trainings, workshops, and demonstrations to identify their niche market or farming area of interest. Five farm plans were completed, and four business plans were developed for participants. The fifth participants purchased one hundred and fifty acres of land and is currently reviewing market demands to determine produce type, forestry demand, and future value added production practices.

Mississippi

Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development program participants in Mississippi focused on the demand for fresh seasonal vegetables for local restaurants, farmer markets, and school districts. Five participants participated in credit correction trainings; one participant has passed GAP/GHP Certification and purchased the required insurance to begin sales to Wal-Mart. Seven of the ten participants began researching and learning the necessary steps to sale and market produce

South Carolina

Ten participants received workshops, training, agri-toursim, and site visits. Goat, fruits, and small scale vegetable production were the key produced within South Carolina. After the many training sessions, the ten participants began taking necessary steps, and training to develop a livestock cooperative.

Plastic culture, hoop-house, and irrigation were the main cost share programs participants applied for and received. The knowledge shared throughout the life of this project could not be measured by dollar value or hours of learning.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants

{Nothing to report}

Target Audience

Our target audience during this project served forty one African-American Beginning Farmers, purchased land, took control of heir property farms, continue to farm heir property, enter into long-term leases, changed behavior to enter new markets, other appropriate changes in behavior, prepared their own farm plan with minimal or no assistance, took advantage of one or more federal benefits, such as EQIP, Conservation easements, etc. Thirty participants utilized at least five sustainable practices presented during the project, such as cover crops, composting, mulching, drip irrigation, specialty and alternative crops, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), water conservation, four season planting schedules, greenhouses, and hoop houses, vermiculture, beekeeping, hydroponic cultivation, cut flowers, and small animal husbandry, participated in at least one direct marketing method, join a producer cooperative, utilize computers for communication, record-keeping and/or research, formulate and began to execute a whole farm that has realistic potential for comfortable farm income.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products**Product Type**

Models

Description

Sample Matrix on how this Project was completed:
Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program Completed
YES NO

- 1 Acceptance Letter
- 2 Base Line Assessment
- 3 Site Visit Field Report
- 4 Production Workshop Organic
 - Soil Building
 - Composting
 - Mulching
- 5 Production Workshop II Crop Selection
 - Scheduling
 - Drip Irrigation
- 6 Agricultural Credit
- 7 Production Workshop III NRCS
 - EQIP
 - Conservation Benefits
- 8 Production Workshop IV Diversification Strategies
 - January - March

Product Type

Models

Description

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program Completed
YES NO

- 1 Site Visit Field Report
- 2 Preparation of Annual Farm Plan
- 3 Prodcution Workshops Marketing
- 4 Conservation Planning
 - Cover Crops
 - Composting
 - Value Added
- 5 Production Workshop II Hoop House /Green House
 - Production/ Use
 - Small Animals (Poultry/Goats)
- 6 Marketing
- 7 Production Workshop III Farm Safety
 - Forestry Management
 - Farmers Market
- 8 Production Workshop IV Diversification Strategies
 - April - June

Product Type

Models

Description

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program Completed
YES NO

- 1 Site Visit Field Report

- 2 Preparation of Annual Farm Business Plan
- 3 Production Workshops Risk Management
- 4 Specialty Crops
 - Bees
 - Herbs
 - Cut Flowers
- 5 Production Workshop II Plant Propagation
 - Nursery
 - Hydroponic Cultivation
- 6 Legal Environmental Compliance
- 7 Production Workshop III Aquaculture

- 8 Marketing Agrotourism
 - July - August

Changes/Problems

To assure consistent farmer participation we developed a contract of agreement between all forty one farmers.
LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE TO THE BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
 (Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, sponsored by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund)

In return for training and laptop computer provided as part of the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program, I agree to the following:

- Attend all quarterly workshops scheduled for the program. (Lodging and meals are provided, plus some travel reimbursement)
- Complete "homework" assignments that are part of the instructional program.
- Attend state meetings held by the Federation or State Association of cooperatives in my state.
- Adopt practices described in the program workshops as appropriate for my farming operation.
- Schedule farm site visits by Agricultural Specialists.
- Provide feedback to the program staff as part of the evaluation of this program.
- Learn how to use a computer, through instruction provided by the program for communication and information retrieval.
- Subscribe to internet service at my expense.

Signed

To assure that all farmers needs were met each week we followed this program schedule:
 Weekly Schedule for Consultants and Project assistance is as follows:

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program Helpful Hints to Success

- Monday: Any phone calls or conference calls related to program please schedule for Mondays.
- Tuesday: Visit three (3) different farmers for a maximum of forty five minutes.
- Wednesday: Visit three (3) different farmers for a maximum of forty five minutes.
- Thursday: Visit three (3) different farmers for a maximum of forty five minutes.
- Friday: Visit one farmer for a maximum of forty five minutes.

Please utilize the remainder of this day to complete paperwork, email supply request, or schedule next workshop.

FSC/LAF advertised each workshop two weeks or at least ten business days before the day of the event. We maintained a copy of the following for each workshop we organized:

Flyer

Agenda

Sign in sheet

Our focus was on hosting workshops for our farmers.