

ARKANSAS LAND AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

THE ADVANCER

Fargo, Arkansas

Spring Special Edition 2020

J.C. HALL

PATRIARCH MINORITY FARMER IN MONROE COUNTY



CORONAVIRUS SAFETY

Follow these easy steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Disinfect surfaces around
your home and work.



Wash your hands for at
least 20 seconds.



Sneeze or cough?
Cover your mouth.

J.C. HALL

MONROE COUNTY PATRIARCH MINORITY FARMER

by: Dr. Calvin King



You may say that J.C. Hall experience and history represents the shoulders that today's small black family farmers stand on. He is the oldest farmer in Monroe County, according to USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan officer Amber Shaffer. He represents the second generation for his family as a family farmer and landowner. He learned the art of work and farming under the watchful eyes of his grandmother and a neighboring farmer named Carl Bennet, and other community's leadership. Under the wing of his grandmother, his early years of stratum, she taught him all the responsibilities of operating a farm for your livelihood and survival. At the age of sixteen (16) years old, he began his own farming operation while continuing to work with his family's operation. His farming operation over the years has consisted of diversity with vegetable crops, livestock, and row crops. Doing the early years of the vegetable co-ops, he participated with the community vegetable cooperative efforts, growing and marketing vegetable with the local co-op in Marvell, AR. This enduring work,



love and appreciation of the land helped Mr. Hall endure the struggles through a period of unfavorable support and acts towards African Americans in the deep south. While Halls background is most transparent, conveying his experiences and legacy requires more than these limits. His life encompasses fourteen (14) U. S. presidents, the 1930's Dust Bowl, World War II, Jackie Robinson and the integration of Pro-baseball, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, America's 200th birthday, the 911 attack on the US, the first African American president, and many other historical events. He has been a part of Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation and Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation for over thirty five (35) years

While his experience as a family farmer represents decades of crops, livestock production, and historic experiences, it also represents the next generation of his branch from his family. He and wife married for 56 years, raised a family of seven (7) children on the farm. All the children attended the University of Arkansas at Pine bluff achieving various degrees and successfully pursued their own career fields. His three sons majored in agriculture.



One son is currently working with the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Services in Omaha Nebraska. Through all his past life experiences and his personal circumstances, Mr. Hall continue to maintain his love for family, church, the community, land and being a farmer. His grandmother always taught him always do what you know you can do and do it well and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. His action demonstrates that, once you have an appreciation and love for the land, you will always be in love with it and all its beauty.





USDA REPORTS RECORD ENROLLMENT IN KEY FARM SAFETY-NET PROGRAMS

Producers signed a record 1.77 million contracts for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2019 crop year, which is more than 107 percent of the total contracts signed compared with a 5-year average. USDA also reminds producers that June 30 is the deadline to enroll in ARC and PLC for the 2020 crop year.

“

Producers for several years have experienced low commodity prices, a volatile trade environment and catastrophic natural disasters,” said Richard Fordyce, Administrator of USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). “Farmers looking to mitigate these risks recognize that ARC and PLC provide the financial protections they need to weather substantial drops in crop prices or revenues.

”

Producers interested in enrolling for 2020 should contact their FSA county office. Producers must enroll by June 30 and make their one-time update to PLC payment yields by September 30.

FSA attributes the significant participation in the 2019 crop year ARC and PLC programs to increased producer interest in the programs under the 2018 Farm Bill and to an increase in eligible farms because of the selling and buying of farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers and military veterans with farms having 10 or fewer base acres. Enrollment for 2019 ended March 16.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

For more information on ARC and PLC, download the program fact sheet or the 2014-2018 farm bills comparison fact sheet. Online ARC and PLC election decision tools are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc. To locate the nearest USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator

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WHY AND HOW TO GET A FARM NUMBER

by RAFI Staff | Published July 29, 2011

So, what's a farm number and why should you consider getting one? First, a little background. The farm number is one of the three ways you identify yourself as a farmer for government purposes. It is also how the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) offices identify your farm for all of their programs. The USDA farm programs are administered on the local level through county-based Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices. The FSA office is where you register to get a farm number. You must have a farm number in order to apply for FSA farm loans, disaster assistance, and crop insurance as well as for NRCS programs like Environmental Quality Incentive Program. A farm number identifies yourself as a farmer for government purposes. However, the farm number remains associated with the land, not the farmer. Similarly, the history of production remains connected to the farm number. So if you decide to sell the land, the farm number and production history remain part of the value of the land.

Three Ways to Identify Yourself as a Farmer

A Farm Number is the first way that farmers can identify themselves to the government in order to access various USDA programs, elect FSA County Committee members, and be counted in the Agricultural Census. The second way is Filing your IRS Schedule F on your Federal taxes. On your federal income taxes, filing a Schedule F establishes your farm income. This is important if you ever want to take out a farm loan or participate in revenue-based crop insurance. Unlike the farm number, the business entity EIN goes with the farmer or farm business entity and is set up through the IRS. The third is Agricultural Land Valuation. Agricultural land valuation has to do with your property taxes which are administered through your county-level tax office and is different from tax exemption.

Tax Exemption

Registering for a farm number, filing your Schedule F and getting an agricultural land valuation all establish you and your farm. Doing them will help you establish that you are a farmer to be able to get an agricultural sales tax exemption. However, getting a farm number is NOT the same as getting agricultural tax exemption. To do this, you need to register with the NC Department of Revenue.

Are you a hobby farmer or is this a business?

One important factor in establishing yourself and your farm with the appropriate agencies is the distinction between being a farm business or a hobby farmer. "Hobby farmer" is an official IRS distinction with significant financial implications. If it's a hobby farm rather than a business, none of your farm expenses are tax deductible. For instance, if you are a horse breeder or trainer who sells or trains horses as a business then any feed expenses are tax deductible. However, if you keep horses for non-income deriving reasons, then expenses are not tax deductible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a minimum acreage? There is no minimum acreage to register as a farm. What if it is a recent land purchase? If you purchased your land in the past few months, you must bring your registered property deed to the FSA office, as the system may not be updated to recognize your name associated with the property. Do they check? If you sign up for a program, be prepared: FSA will perform random spot checks to verify that you are doing what you claim to be doing on your farm. Is there a cost? Getting a farm number is free! Thanks to Kate Brun of Lucky Leaf Gardens, whose question inspired us to write this post, and Claudia Austin, County Executive Director for the Chatham County, NC office of the USDA Farm Service Agency for her great assistance and information.

Benefits of Obtaining a Farm Number

- Registering your farm means that when programs become available that could be useful to you, you will already be in the FSA system and ready to apply. If you join FSA's mailing list, you can also be one of the first to know when a new program is announced.
- With a farm number, your farm will be counted in the Agricultural Census. Accurate data on the number of farms in your county could translate into more resources to support farms in your area.
- A farm number makes you eligible to elect FSA County Committee members. FSA County Committees help prioritize programs for your county.

How to Get a Farm Number

- Make an appointment with your local FSA office. The office is usually in the same building as the Cooperative Extension. Look here for county office info.
- Prepare to spend 30 minutes to an hour with the office.
- Bring along documentation of your identity and, if applicable, your farm business identity, like your driver's license, social security card and EIN#.
- Bring along proof of control of the land, which can be a deed, a lease or rental agreement, or other land tenure documents.
- The FSA staff will locate your farm parcel through the county GIS system, check to see if it already has a number, and if not – issue you a number. Farm numbers are issued for free.

FARMERS AND SMALL BUSINESS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR SBA EMERGENCY COVID-19 ASSISTANCE

As small businesses of all kind struggle to stay afloat and cope with the intensifying impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Congress has taken important steps to provide desperately needed relief to small businesses struggling to stay afloat. And while farms are eligible for much of this relief, it remains to be seen whether or not farmers will receive the kind of assistance they need, or if additional Congressional action is needed.

SBA and the CARES Act

Congress recently passed two bills that provide much needed, urgent relief to our nation's small businesses – including farmers. Together, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act include nearly \$700 billion in forgivable loans to help small businesses cover expenses like payroll, rent, mortgage, utilities, and other obligations that cannot be met due to the unexpected losses in revenue associated with the ongoing pandemic.

While none of these programs are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and therefore not exclusively targeted to farmers, many in the farm community are looking to the Small Business Administration (SBA) – who operates these programs – to make sure farmers are treated just like any other small business and are able

to receive emergency assistance during this prolonged economic crisis.

The CARES Act dramatically expands SBA loan programs by creating the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) Emergency Grants. Both of these programs aim to provide urgent relief for small businesses, many of whom have temporarily closed their doors or



have had sales otherwise disrupted due to “shelter in place” and similar “social-distancing” directives.

Nearly a month after these programs were signed into law, there are still many questions regarding how these new programs will support our nation's farmers and farm businesses. This post includes background information, frequently asked questions, and resources for where farmers and small

businesses can find more information on these emergency loans. We will continue to update this post as more information becomes available.

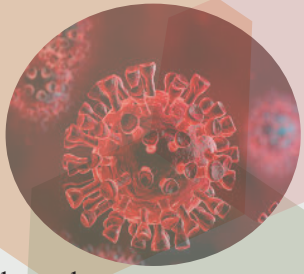
Paycheck Protection Program

The CARES Act provided an initial \$349 billion for SBA's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which provides forgivable loans of up to \$10 million to help businesses (including farm businesses) rehire or retain workers during the COVID-19 crisis. By mid-April, this funding was exhausted, and SBA ceased accepting PPP loan applications. Congress replenished this funding last week and provided an additional \$321 billion to PPP. We expect SBA to resume accepting PPP loan applications effective April 28th.

Of the additional PPP funding provided, \$60 billion will be dedicated for small businesses lacking access to large financial institutions. Congress included specific funding set-asides for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), minority depository institutions and smaller lenders to ensure the farmers and borrowers they serve are able to access emergency relief as well.

Who's Eligible?

All businesses with fewer than 500 full-time or part-time employees (including farms and food businesses) are eligible to obtain a PPP loan. Businesses include sole proprietorships,



independent contractors and self-employed persons, 501(c)(3) private non-profit organizations, tribal organizations, or 501(c)(19) veterans organizations affected by COVID-19.

Businesses and farms must have been in operation as of February 15, 2020.

Despite initial confusion, farms (and other small businesses) are not required to also fall under the revenue cap set by SBA for defining ‘small business’ in any given sector. For farms (including livestock and aquaculture) that cap would be \$1 million in annual revenues.

While some farmers are being told by SBA that farms and agricultural businesses must first explore Farm Service Agency (FSA) loan programs, particularly if the applicant has a prior or existing relationship with FSA, Congress was clear in creating PPP that borrowers are not required to demonstrate that they are unable to obtain credit elsewhere. And since no similar loan program exists at FSA, farmers should be able to obtain SBA PPP loans without first going to FSA.

What can PPP loans be used for?

The loan can be used to cover payroll costs, mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs over the 8 week period after the loan is made. Payroll costs include salaries, employee benefits, and payroll taxes. However, it’s important to note that the CARES Act places a restriction on PPP payroll expenses to cover “Only individuals whose principal place of residence is in the United States are considered employees under PPP.” While additional clarity is needed, farmers are advised to exclude payroll for any foreign workers, including H-2A

workers, in their PPP loan applications.

What are the Terms and Conditions?

PPP loans are capped at \$10 million and can cover up to two months of a business’s average monthly payroll costs (plus an additional 25 percent for non-payroll expenses). Although the payment is made as a loan, any loan proceeds that a business uses to cover payroll costs, mortgage interest, rent, and utilities during the eight-week period after the loan is made can be forgivable. However, this forgivable amount will be reduced if businesses don’t maintain full-time employees (as of February 2020); decrease salaries or wages by more than 25 percent or spend more than 25 percent of the loan on non-payroll costs.

The interest rate on PPP loans is 0.5 percent, and loan payments for any non-forgivable costs will be deferred for 6 months. The loan term is up to two years. If all or a portion of the loan is forgiven, the forgiven amount will not be subject to federal income tax.

Considerations

Farmers will want to evaluate all options available to them to see if PPP loans make the most sense for their operations. For example, small farms who have very few employees and associated payroll may not receive significant benefit from PPP loans. Whereas farms that have year-round workers and larger payroll expenses may benefit more from PPP loans.

How to Apply?

Starting April 3rd, farmers and other small businesses can apply for PPP loans through existing SBA lenders, or through any federally insured depository institution or credit union, and Farm Credit System Institutions who are enrolled in SBA’s loan programs. Other lenders will be available to make these loans as soon as they are approved and

enrolled in PPP.

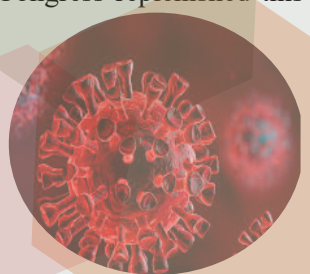
Farmers and other small businesses will need to complete the PPP loan application and submit to an approved lender by June 30, 2020. Loan funding will be provided on a first come, first served basis, and the additional funding is expected to go quickly. Farmers and other small businesses who may be eligible are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. It’s important to note that borrowers don’t necessarily need to close on their loans immediately and can work with their lenders to choose a closing date that more closely aligns with the greatest 8 week payroll period for their operation.

For additional details on loan eligibility, refer to the PPP Borrower Fact Sheet or SBA’s PPP website. USDA has also released a COVID resource page that includes FAQs on how programs apply to farmers. For a free, customizable PPP loan calculator template, check out these free COVID resources from the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Farming!

Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)

The CARES Act also provided \$10 billion to expand SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program by authorizing emergency grants of up to \$10,000 that do not need to be repaid. While smaller in scope than PPP loans, EIDLs can cover a broader range of business-related expenses that are essential to help farmers and food businesses overcome the temporary loss of revenue related to the COVID-19 crisis.

By mid-April, SBA exhausted all EIDL funding and ceased accepting new loan applications. Congress replenished this funding last week and provided an additional \$10 billion to resume the



EIDL program. In addition, Congress clarified that farmers are eligible for EIDL, including the emergency grants.

Note: As of April 28, SBA has not yet reopened the EIDL program, as the additional funding provided may already be exhausted by previous applicants. We will update this post as more information on the status of EIDL becomes available.

Who's Eligible?

Small businesses (including farmers) and non-profit organizations with fewer than 500 employees are now eligible to obtain an EIDL, including the new emergency EIDL grant.

Historically, SBA has deemed “agricultural enterprises” as ineligible for most SBA loans, and there has been much confusion since rolling out EIDL emergency grants whether farmers were eligible for loan funding. SBA defines agricultural enterprises to include “those small business concerns engaged in the production of food and fiber, ranching, and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other farming and agricultural-related industries.” However, Congress clarifies in Section 101(c) of the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act that farmers ARE eligible for EIDL loan funding.

In addition to agricultural enterprises, cooperatives, nurseries and aquaculture businesses, several other agriculture-related businesses are eligible for EIDL. These include agritourism enterprises, on-farm retail stores, and value-added enterprises, as well as non-profits that operate farmers markets or food hubs. More on efforts to address these eligibility issues below.

What can EIDLs be used for?

The loan and emergency grant can be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that a business or farm cannot pay because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

What are the Terms and Conditions?

EIDLs are capped at \$2 million, though a business or non-profit can apply for an advance of up to \$10,000, which will be made available within three days of a successful application. The advance does not need to be repaid. The interest rate on an EIDL is 3.75 percent for small businesses and 2.75 percent for non-profit organizations. Payments on Coronavirus EIDL loans are deferred for one year.

How to Apply?

In order to apply for and receive an EIDL, applicants must self-certify that they are eligible to receive a disaster assistance loan by completing the COVID-19 **Economic Injury Disaster Loan Application by December 31, 2020.**

Continued Challenges

By far, one of the top concerns that farmers have raised since the CARES Act was passed is whether farmers are eligible to receive assistance through any emergency relief. And while it is now the case that farmers are eligible to receive both a PPP and EIDL loan, we expect that farmers will still face confusion as lenders clarify the expanded eligibility for EIDL.

Historically, SBA has restricted eligibility for some programs to ensure

that farmers cannot “double dip” and use SBA disaster programs if they can receive the same assistance from USDA. However, USDA disaster programs (like the Livestock Indemnity Program, Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance) currently are restricted to providing relief from natural disasters (such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, etc.) and are not likely to provide any immediate relief to farmers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

Many stakeholders within the farm community and within the halls of Congress have raised serious concern with the Administration’s interpretation of the CARES Act and restrictions on EIDL. Earlier this month, Representatives Delgado (D-NY), Anthony Brindisi (D-NY) and Josh Harder (D-CA) along with 83 other members of Congress wrote to SBA urging the agency to:

“

ensure that agricultural businesses and farmers are eligible to access the EIDL program, and the other small business provisions in the CARES act. Farmers need our help to make it through this pandemic while continuing to feed American families, fuel our economy, and sustain other resources which are essential to our survival. Now more than ever we must provide our farmers and rural communities with federal assistance needed to combat this pandemic and not turn our backs on these communities.

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DRONES IN AGRICULTURE

by: J.D. Davis



The United Nations estimates that farmers will have more than 9 billion people to feed by 2050. To meet the increased demand, food production will need to rise by nearly 70 percent. Increasing crop yields and reducing crop damage will be key to feeding the world in the future, and **drone** technology is a tool farmer can use to help make it happen. The use of drones in agriculture is on the very near horizon, and for once, we want our clients to be at the front of this innovation. There is no question that many in the agricultural industry are excited about the use of drones. The ability to use drones in precision farming, crop health analysis, monitoring livestock and other agricultural uses has been deemed a “game-changer”.

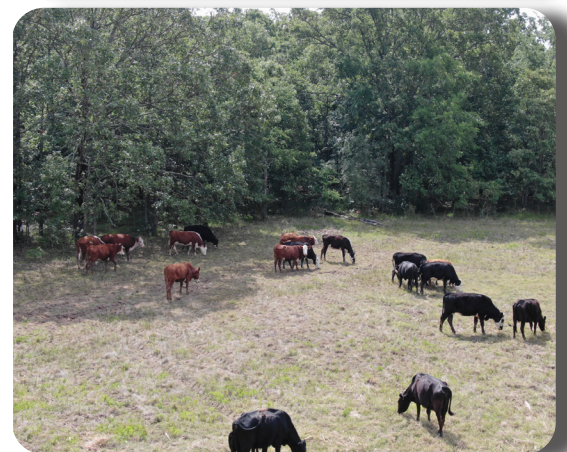
As reported in Small Farm Magazine, drones can be used for:

- **Keeping Watch** – Drones can act as a tool to monitor and uncover environmental changes on farm, or the health and status of livestock. Equipped with surveillance technology, drones can create time-series animations that report back any crop, land or herd issues in real time.
- **More efficient and effective, target spraying** – Drones equipped with sprayers and spray technology (including ultrasonic echoing devices and lasers) are helping reduce the environmental impact of chemical use on farms, reduce the overall spray requirement and target that spray to where it is really needed. Fast.
- **Irrigation Efficiencies** – Drones fitted with remote sensing equipment can identify the driest sections of field so water can be applied much more economically and efficiently. They can also report back on irrigation performance, and help identify issues with infrastructure before big problems arise.
- **Livestock Surveillance** – Drones fly over, in and around herds collecting all kinds of information from illnesses to pregnancies, young stock and injuries. In recent times, farmers have begun using livestock surveillance drones to monitor entire herd health and fertility cycles.

To better understand and introduce drone technology to small family farmers, ALCDC implemented the Demonstration Center for Drones in Grazing Lands Management Project. Grazing management is the total process of organizing livestock to make the best use of the pastures grown or managing the frequency and intensity with which livestock graze pasture. It is of common knowledge that pastures respond differently to grazing, and by understanding the growth characteristics of a pasture, grazing can be used to encourage plant growth and maintain productivity. Grazing management is also a crucial factor in the management of soil, water and nutrients. If not managed well, grazing can lead to severe natural resource degradation.

ALCDC uses drones to monitor pasture conditions to support rotational grazing decisions, water supply, fencing conditions, counting cattle, finding newly born calves. In the adjoining picture, Michael Tucker, utilizes his FAA Certified Remote Pilot knowledge and skills to fly a drone in the performance of his duties as an ALCDC farm advisor. Mike can quickly check in on herd to see if there are any injured or missing livestock, as well as see livestock who are giving birth.

While our farm demonstration was canceled due to COVID-19, we are now revising demonstration plans that will allow for a demonstration in accordance to COVID-19 State and Federal requirements.





FSA REMINDS PRODUCERS OF ONGOING DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SIGNUP

PAYMENTS HAVE STARTED FOR PRODUCERS IMPACTED BY DROUGHT,
EXCESS MOISTURE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has started making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Signup for these causes of loss opened March 23, and producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can still apply for assistance through WHIP+.

“To date, FSA has received more than 33,000 WHIP+ applications,” said Richard Fordyce, Administrator of USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). “We want to remind producers that we are still accepting applications for WHIP+, and we encourage producers to call our offices for next steps on how to apply.”

To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event.

For losses due to drought, a producer is eligible if any area of the county in which the loss occurred was

rated D3, or extreme drought, or higher on the U.S. Drought Monitor during calendar years 2018 or 2019. Producers who suffered losses should contact their FSA county office.

In addition to the recently added eligible losses of drought and excess moisture, FSA will implement a WHIP+ provision for crop quality loss that resulted in price deductions or penalties when marketing crops damaged by eligible disaster events. To ensure an effective program for all impacted farmers, the Agency is currently gathering information on the extent of quality loss from producers and stakeholder organizations.

USDA Service Centers, including FSA county offices, are open for business by phone only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus, and more information on WHIP+ can be found at farmers.gov/whip-plus.

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HOW CAN I RECEIVE ADDITIONAL INCOME WITH MY HEIRS PROPERTY?

by: Albert Jones



Image credit: Johnny Sajem

Amongst African American Heirs property owners this is one of the most frequently asked question. While this is a legitimate concern, rarely is it mentioned the historical significance of the southern homestead that produced the majority of Blacks throughout the United States. Former Undersecretary of USDA Rural Development, Bob Nash in a presentation to Arkansas Land & Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) Employees, stated, "Land is one of the Natural Resources that is not being replicated, i.e. no more land is being made". ALCDC understands the value of land being founded nearly forty years ago on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) to fight black land loss. Below are excerpts from Arkansas Land & Community Development Corporation's (ALCDC) "Heirs' Property Training Packet," 'Ways of Increasing Your Heir Property Asset Value' and USDA's website listed at end of article. Although the USDA practices mentioned below are all

equitable, USDA requires a selection process that sometimes is lengthy; therefore, the Heirs Property Owner should begin the process early in order to qualify. This publication is available upon request from ALCDC at 870-734-3005 or by mail at 533 Floyd Brown Drive, Brinkley, Arkansas 72021.

- a. Enhance the Natural Beauty and Asset Value of Heir Property Land: If you are interested in increasing the value of your land's natural resources, the Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) offers a Forestry Stewardship Plan at no charge to the Landowner. The AFC document is fifteen or more pages which informs the landowner of type of soil, trees, condition of forest, recommended NRCS Conservation Practices & whether timber is ready for harvesting. These programs range from planting trees on forest land to converting farmland into permanent vegetative cover. The Forestry Commission will provide expertise and, in some cases, funding to help further such land development and value. Other programs available consist of:
- b. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands. This program is designed to encourage farmers to convert highly erodible cropland and other environmentally sensitive land to vegetative cover. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will reimburse up to 50% of the cost of establishing permanent vegetative cover, which can include growing trees, creating a permanent wildlife habitat, or growing permanent native grasses and legumes. Interested landowners may contact their local FSA office.
- c. Agricultural Land Easements NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture.

The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland and shrubland. Eligible partners include American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland, rangeland, or grassland protection programs. Under the Agricultural Land Easement component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

- d. **Wetland Reserve Easements** NRCS also provides technical and financial assistance directly to private landowners and Indian tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a wetland reserve easement. For acreage owned by an Indian tribe, there is an additional enrollment option of a 30-year contract. Through the wetland reserve enrollment options, NRCS may enroll eligible land through: **Permanent Easements** – Permanent easements are conservation easements in perpetuity. NRCS pays 100 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement. Additionally, NRCS pays between 75 to 100 percent of the restoration costs. **30-year Easements** – 30-year easements expire after 30 years. Under 30-year easements, NRCS pays 50 to 75 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement. Additionally, NRCS pays between 50 to 75 percent of the restoration costs. **Term Easements** - Term easements are easements that are for the maximum duration allowed under applicable State laws. NRCS pays 50 to 75 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the term easement. Additionally, NRCS pays between 50 to 75 percent of the restoration costs. **30-year Contracts** – 30-year contracts are only available to enroll acreage owned by Indian tribes, and program payment rates are commensurate with 30-year easements. For wetland reserve easements, NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office, including recording fees, charges for abstracts, survey and appraisal fees, and title insurance.
- e. **Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP)** –WREP continues to be a voluntary program through which NRCS signs agreements with eligible partners to leverage resources to carry out high priority wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement and to improve wildlife habitat. Partner benefits through WREP agreements include: Wetland restoration and protection in critical areas Ability to cost-share restoration or enhancement beyond NRCS requirements through leveraging, Able to participate in the management or monitoring of selected project locations, Ability to use innovative restoration methods and practices
- f. **Who Is Eligible?** Land eligible for agricultural easements includes cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, and nonindustrial private forest land. NRCS will prioritize applications that protect agricultural uses and related conservation values of the land and those that maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use. To enroll land through agricultural land easements, NRCS enters into agreements with eligible partners. Land eligible for wetland reserve easements includes farmed or converted wetland that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.

NRCS will prioritize applications based the easement's potential for protecting and enhancing habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. To enroll land through wetland reserve easements, NRCS enters into purchase agreements with eligible private landowners or Indian tribes that include the right for NRCS to develop and implement a wetland reserve restoration easement plan. This plan restores, protects, and enhances the wetland's functions and values.

How to Apply. To enroll land through agricultural land easements, eligible partners may submit proposals to the NRCS state office **to acquire conservation easements on eligible land**. To enroll land through wetland reserve easements, landowners may apply at any time at the **local USDA Service Center**. Visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/> for more information.



SMALL MICRO URBAN FARM BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROJECT

by: J.D. Davis

ALCDC is working with nearly 30 small model farmers engaged in urban agriculture taking advantage of Natural Resource Conservation Services Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) to procure High Tunnels for growing vegetables and Farm Services Agency Micro Farm Loan program for operational finances. These farmers are positioning themselves to not only to stimulate their local economies through gardening business enterprises but also to play a major role in the food supply chain – a critical point when considering the impact that COVID-19 is having on our food supply. These small farmers are producing food in a city or populated town or municipality or on micro small farm scale in rural areas.



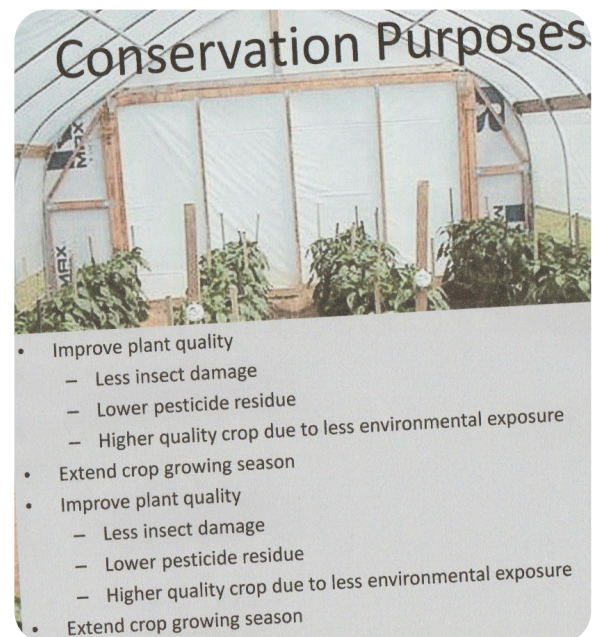
Image credit: Douglas Gayeton

According to Wikipedia, Urban farms also provide unique opportunities for individuals, especially those living in cities, to get actively involved with ecological citizenship. By reconnecting with food production and nature, urban community micro farming teaches individuals the skills necessary to participate in a democratic society. Decisions must be made on a group-level basis in order to run the farm. Most effective results are achieved when residents of a community are asked to take on more active roles in the farm. Access to nutritious food, both economically and geographically, is another perspective in the effort to locate food and livestock production in cities or local small-scale operations. The tremendous influx of world population to urban areas has increased and the need for fresh and safe food. The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) defines food security as:

All persons in a community having access to culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate food through local, non-emergency sources at all times.

To paraphrase from Wikipedia, we expect our urban farmers to evolve to expand the economic base of their communities through production, processing, packaging, and marketing of consumable products. This will result in an increase in entrepreneurial activities and the creation of jobs, as well as reducing food costs and improving quality, and access to food for urban populations, which helps to relieve chronic and emergency food insecurity.

Our Urban Farm participants function at the level of a business enterprise. They are small farmers. They are not a neither a **truck patch** which is a small area devoted to the production of vegetables usually for domestic nor a garden which is a plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers, or vegetables are cultivated as defined by Webster. They are smart farmers and good stewards of the environment using best practices and sound whole farm management. The USDA NRCS High Tunnel is at the heart of their operations. The High Tunnel is not a poor man's greenhouse. It is a technology that allows more intensive production of existing crops, or crops which were not possible to grow previously because of climatic limitations. High tunnels in some cases may expand the growing season by up to three plant suitability zones early or late in season. It equips our urban farmers with a powerful tools that significantly improves their probability of success.



ALFDC/ALCDC Information Survey for Service

We are requesting that you complete the following survey and provide the requested information. This will give us added options for providing you valuable service during these challenging times.

Name: _____ Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
County: _____

Mobile Phone Number: _____ Home Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Is your phone a landline or a mobile? Landline _____ Mobile _____

Do you have access to the internet? Yes _____ No _____

Please check yes or no to the following that apply:

Landowner: Yes _____ No: _____ Heir Prosperity Interest Holder: Yes: _____ No: _____

Row Crop Farmer: Yes: _____ No: _____ Gardner: Yes: _____ No: _____ Small Farmer: Yes: _____ No: _____

Vegetable Farmer: Yes: _____ No: _____ Rancher (Livestock Operation): Yes: _____ No: _____

Small Business Owner: Yes: _____ No: _____ Veteran: Yes: _____ No: _____ New/Beginning Farmer: Yes: _____ No: _____

Are you presently receiving any service from USDA? Yes: _____ No: _____ FSA: _____ NRCS: _____

USDA Rural Development: _____ Forestry _____ Other: _____

Do you have any conservation program service contracts? Yes: _____ No: _____

Are you aware of the new government program opportunities resulting from the COVID-19

Stimulus package? Yes: _____ No: _____

Are you aware of the COVID-19 Stimulus Grant and other governments program benefits that will be made available? Yes: _____ No: _____

Please mail the information provided in the survey to:

Mary Harris

P O Box 743

Brinkley, Arkansas 72021

ALFDC/ALCDC Partnership Membership Renewal Form

October 2019 - September 2020

_____ Individual Membership \$25 _____ Partner Membership \$40

_____ Organization Membership \$200

Membership Benefits

Advocacy and Public Relations - ALCDC/ALFDC participates in federal and state hearing sessions that focus on policy development for its members, farmers, youth and rural residents.

Member Opportunities - ALCDC/ALFDC offers leadership opportunities within the organization for our youth, farmers and rural residents. Members are also recommended for advisory boards at the federal, state local levels.

Marketing Opportunities - ALCDC/ALFDC offers cooperative marketing opportunities for farmers and rural businesses interested in collective marketing. We also offer the opportunity to present or set up an exhibit during our Annual Conference. We offer facility rentals at a discounted fee to all ALCDC members.

Access to Housing, Farming and Youth Services - ALCDC/ALFDC offers rural residents the opportunity for affordable housing, home ownership education, business development, assistance with accessing farm financing, training on conservation program practices, youth leadership development, education enrichment and workforce readiness.

Information and Communication - ALCDC/ALFDC members are able to communicate with ALCDC representative via phone or website concerning their farming, housing, or youth service's needs. Members receive ALCDC updates and news through our quarterly newsletters and weekly e-letters.

Name _____

Address _____

City, Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Please return your application and tax-deductible contribution to:

ALCDC/ALFDC Membership Program

P.O. Box 743, Brinkley, AR 72021

ALCDC/ALFDC services and programs are available without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status.



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72021

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ABOUT THE ADVANCER

The Advancer is a publication of the Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation. It is printed and circulated as a public service and communication resource for our membership and constituents. This publication is also circulated to a broad range of organizations and residents throughout the Delta and the United States.

The Advancer reflects the nature of our work - providing self-help opportunities and support services to our farmers and others of limited resources in our 42-county service area. Our work is dedicated to helping people become more productive and self-sufficient. Your comments and suggestions are appreciated. Direct all comments and inquiries regarding this publication by phone to (870) 734-3005 or e-mail to mary_harris15@yahoo.com.

You may correct your mailing address on the label above and fax back to (870) 734-4197 or call Mary Harris at (870) 734-3005.

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ALCDC Mission Statement

The mission of ALCDC is to provide advocacy outreach, technical assistance and training to limited resource small farmers and all rural residents to alleviate sustainable farming and strengthen communities' economic sustainability and workforce readiness.

ALCDC services and programs are available without regard to age, race, religion, gender or physical handicap.