

**“50 YEARS OF COURAGE, COOPERATION,
COMMITMENT & COMMUNITY”**



**Federation of Southern Cooperatives/
Land Assistance Fund 2016-2017**

“A Legacy of Hope, Vision and Collective Wealth Building”



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
20250-0100

31 July 2017

Dear friends in agriculture:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), I write to extend my sincere congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of the Celebration of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

The Federation has been a strong partner in enhancing the quality of life and increasing opportunities in rural communities. Your long-standing commitment to agriculture and economic development in rural America has been of tremendous value to many hard-working people.

Thank you for your dedication to American agriculture and best wishes in your continued service for years to come.

Sincerely,

Sonny Perdue



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FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Greetings to Farmers, Members, Cooperatives, Landowners and Friends:

Let me begin by thanking you the membership and loyal supporters for the past 50 years of dedicated service to the rural America- especially farmers, landowners and communities of color.



We began the planning stage for this important milestone at the end of last year's annual meeting and are pleased to have had involvement and encouragement from across the nation.

We have arrived and survived 50 years of the known as well as the unknown injustices that have confronted us as an organization and the people we serve. Yet we remained true to our calling, which is to be effective advocates on behalf of those who deserve fairness and equity as they seek better lives for themselves, their families and communities.

We have planted and witnessed the growth of many seeds of success over the past 50 years - yet there are still more to be sown. It is our hope that we have built an institution that generations to come will be as honored to serve as I am today and will be ready to grab the torch, honor the legacy and lead the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund to even greater heights.

I want to thank the planning committee for working tirelessly to make this historic event a success. We hope you enjoy all aspects of this celebration and leave with a renewed and re-energized commitment to a fair and just agricultural and rural economic system.

Enjoy...and we look forward to another 50 years on this cooperative journey.

Committed to Serve,

Shirley Blakley

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members, Board of Directors, Staff and Partners:

Happy 50th Anniversary! 50 years is a milestone to be recognized and celebrated. It is a rare occasion for any organization to survive for 50 years, but especially an organization that is owned and controlled by its membership...a membership primarily of black farmers, landowners and cooperatives...an organization and membership that owns its infrastructure. So let's take a moment to recognize and truly celebrate this milestone.

After 50 years, the state of the Federation is stable. This stability can be measured by the organization's levels of assets and liabilities. Our assets have increased with the attainment of an affordable housing subdivision in West Alabama, a pecan processing operation in South Georgia as well as a growing portfolio of investments. Furthermore, our debts are being serviced and have been drastically reduced. Our Federation is stable and the net assets are increasing.

After 50 years, we also have much to celebrate beyond our existence and growing assets. Our impact in the communities in which we live and serve, as well as invaluable partnerships, are immeasurable. We have pooled our resources and know how, in order to build, to grow and retain cooperative businesses in our communities. We have worked together to save and expand black owned land all over the Deep South and beyond. We have also built and preserved an organization that serves as a collective voice for its membership, our rural communities and the common good of the country. We have created and continue to build onto a legacy of hope, vision and collective wealth building.

We must also celebrate the fact that we have documented and archived this 50 year history of courage, cooperation, commitment and community. Our archives have been researched by many scholars and serve as a lighthouse for this and future generations of black farmers, landowners and cooperatives. Our archives and Federation should also serve as a model for the world. Our history is a shining example of what is possible when limited resource people and communities pool their resources and work cooperatively to solve their common problems and build organizations that are owned and controlled by those that use and benefit from them.

50 years is a milestone to be recognized and celebrated. Let's celebrate this history of courage, cooperation, commitment and community. Let's celebrate this legacy of hope, vision and collective wealth building. Let's celebrate this Federation of Southern Cooperatives. Let's celebrate the cooperative businesses that provide stability to limited resource families and communities. Let's celebrate the LAND and all those that work it and depend on it as the real basis of wealth and survival.

We celebrate our 50 years of courage, cooperation, commitment and community. We celebrate this as a foundation and lighthouse for the next 50 years. But we must build onto this foundation and recommit ourselves to the vision and mission that was etched into history 50 years ago.

We envision sustainable rural communities that are supported by a network of farmers, cooperatives and credit unions - all based on local control and leadership. Our mission is to be a catalyst for the development of these self-supporting communities via cooperative economic development, land retention and advocacy. So, we must continue to work towards becoming a more sustainable, viable and institutional resource for our members and the communities they serve.

So, let's celebrate our 50 years of courage, cooperation, commitment and community. But let's continue to build onto our legacy of hope, vision and collective wealth building.

LET'S CELEBRATE, BUT LET'S CONTINUE TO BUILD!

Cooperatively,

Cornelius Blanding



Introduction

RURAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER/ALABAMA

The collective membership of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF) owns the Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC), located between the towns of Epes and Gainesville in Sumter County, Alabama. The FSC/LAF and the Panola Land Buying Association together own more than 1,300 acres of farm and forested land, which form the land base of the RTRC.

The RTRC facilities were built between 1971 and 1974 as a place to provide meeting and training space for the FSC/LAF membership. For more than forty years, the RTRC has served the membership and other community-based organizations as a gathering place to inspire organizing and action for a peoples' movement for economic and social justice.

FSC/LAF has title to 850 acres on 3 separate tracts of land including the 375-acre tract where the RTRC is located. The RTRC has an administrative office; a dormitory that can house up to 70 overnight guests; a multi-purpose building; agricultural research and demonstration sites; the southern regional agroforestry center; a silvo-pasture goat herd; nature trail; two fishing ponds; and many other features. The RTRC also oversees the Wendy Hill Subdivision in Gainesville, AL, a 38-unit apartment complex serving very low-income people.

Over the years, through partnerships and projects we maintain, for the benefit of our membership, various agricultural and forestry demonstration plots, including a 1-acre irrigated fenced garden with rotating plasti-culture crops, a screened raised bed enclosure, a hoop house, a fruit tree orchard with alley cropping, an aquaculture hydroponic greenhouse and several forestry tracts.

The RTRC is also the base of operations for the Alabama State Association of Cooperatives (ASAC) outreach and technical assistance staff. Together at the RTRC, FSC/LAF and ASAC staff work on projects with USDA-Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS); USDA-Rural Development; Environmental Protection Agency-Gulf of

Mexico; US Endowment for Forestry and Communities; and Democratizing Rural Electric Cooperatives Campaign. Each program and partner contribute significantly to the success of the RTRC.

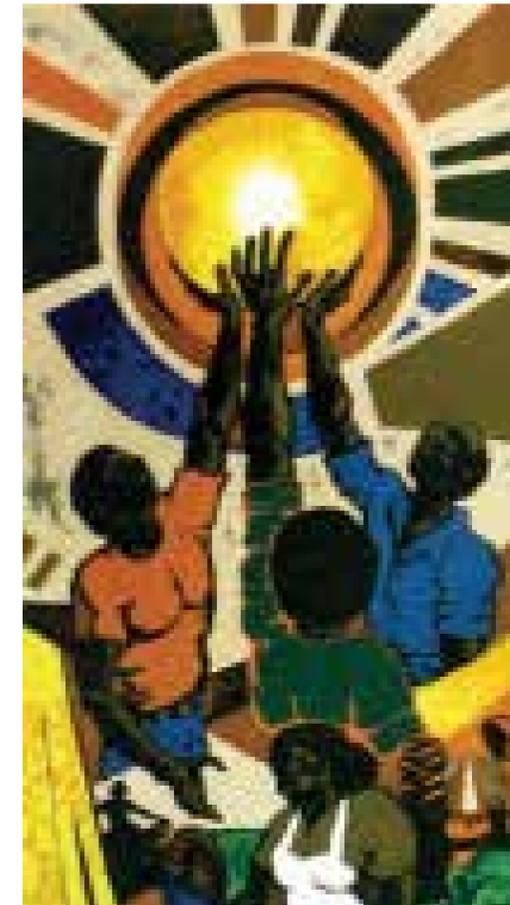
The theme for Coop-Econ 2016 was "Cooperation among Cooperatives" and featured various exciting activities to help the audience think deeply about how cooperatives can be used to solve needs in diverse communities across the South. Approximately 116 people gathered from 16 states, including Alabama, Texas, California, District of Columbia, Mississippi, Minnesota, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, New York and West Virginia. The conference also welcomed guest practitioners from Mexico and Columbia. Coop-Econ is uniquely designed to conduct the entire meeting in two languages (English and Spanish) with simultaneous translation.

Rural Redevelopment & Other programs

The FSC/LAF and Rural Development worked in partnership on a Rural Cooperative Development Grant with the goals of (a) providing technical assistance to low-income minority farmers and ranchers in the development of new cooperatives and credit unions; (b) providing services to rural underserved communities; and (c) partnering with other organizations that share our commitment to cooperative economic development. The work-plan of the grant centered around working with: the Black Belt Green Jobs Worker Co-op Development Program; Southeastern Goat Cooperative of Alabama; Coop-Econ

Networking & Training Conference/Building Democratic Ownership in the South; Southern Cooperative (SOCO) Regional Marketing System/Network; Rural Electric Cooperative Membership Education; and outreach and education within and for FSC/LAF cooperative members.

The FSC/LAF and USDA Animal Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS) 2016-2017 provided outreach, education, and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR) to increase awareness and understanding of the APHIS programs and services in 6 southeastern states. FSC/LAF engages livestock producers



The painting above is from the Federation's Rural Training & Research Center that depicts working together to make a better world for us all! Artist - Donald Alexander

in various activities to ensure that they are knowledgeable of sustainable agricultural practices for raising healthy animals in a sound environment. FSC/LAF also maintained its partnership in the project with Tuskegee University's Veterinary Ambulatory Program and Teaching Hospital to reach out to the SDFR in providing on-farm technical assistance to livestock producers in Western Alabama counties.

The FSC/LAF in conjunction with the ASAC operated two USDA programs of direct technical support and assistance to our cooperative members in the west Alabama service area of counties surrounding the RTRC. These counties include: Sumter, Greene, Choctaw, Pickens, Hale, Marengo, Perry, Dallas, Lowndes, Monroe, Clarke and Washington.

ASAC Workshops and Outreach

During this fiscal year 2015-2016, the ASAC hosted and coordinated 8 outreach workshops to educate farmers and landowners about USDA programs, the eligibility requirements, and technical support for interested participants to apply to the USDA programs that they qualify for. We concentrated on the programs of USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) that serve small farmers and landowners; FSA loans and the NAPS insurance program; Rural Development for housing new construction; and housing rehabilitation programs. These workshops and the FSC/LAF's Annual Meeting in August 2016 provided a way to reach many of the African-American farmers in the 12 county western Alabama Black Belt area where there is still a significant number of African-American farmers. All of the counties in the ASAC service area are also in the Alabama USDA Strikeforce Area. Many of these farmers are also veterans who served in Vietnam, the first Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan.

As part of our outreach effort, the ASAC encouraged farmers and landowners to apply for NRCS Cost Share Programs; FSA Loans and Microloans; Rural Development housing loans; and other available services from USDA. ASAC viewed the 2501 Outreach Program as the cornerstone of our efforts to ensure that previously underserved and historically racially discriminated applicants for USDA services received a fair access and an equitable response to their requests and applications for government agriculture services, training and specialized resources.

We also organized and facilitated a number of farmer and rancher management trainings in collaboration with various partners including Tuskegee University, Alabama A&M University, and the Extension Service. Topics covered included: food security; farm biosecurity; sustainable pasture management; livestock production; agroforestry management; integrating beekeeping with pasture and livestock management; general animal health management for small ruminants; etc. An average of 2 workshops per quarter were

held during this fiscal year reaching more than 20 farmers and landowners at each meeting.

ASAC continued to work with member farmers and landowners in our database and those who attended our workshops on applying for programs. Multiple site visits are usually made to farmers and landowners to provide one-on-one technical assistance in the form of: program education; hands-on; need assessment; farm planning; house inspection; facilitated expert visits; etc. These visits also sometimes involve accompanying farmers and landowners to USDA offices to sign up for practices and/or programs. Some 500 visits were made by the ASAC staff this year. In the process, we were able to help 100 farmers and landowners sign up for USDA programs and practices. Some of these were successful, and we continue to work with others to address their eligibility concerns.

Our monthly reports show that we worked with the total of 670 African-American farmers and landowners in the following counties: Sumter County, Greene County, Marengo County, Hale County, Perry County, Pickens County, Dallas County, Wilcox County, Choctaw County, Monroe County. Out of these contacts, we were able to have 26 farmers approved for NRCS cost share programs and practices; 12 approved for FSA Microloans; 52 applicants in the Rural Development 502 and 504 loan programs for housing construction and rehabilitation.

During this year, ASAC completed work on its Socially Disadvantaged Group Grant assisting cooperatives and individual farmers to more effectively produce and grow crops and livestock. This program promoted youth gardens at schools, farmers markets and other direct marketing efforts.

Democratizing Rural Electric Cooperatives Project & Black Warrior Territory

The Democratizing Rural Electric Cooperatives Project between the Rockefeller Family Fund and the FSC/LAF has closed out its second year. The RTRC has been intentional in building community relationships and strategic partnerships throughout Black Warrior (BW) territory. During the Summer 2016 Organizing Fellowship program, six fellows worked from the RTRC for three weeks. For the next three to four months, bill reading parties were held to bring greater attention to the campaign and eliminate community silos. During that time, three community leaders were identified and began working closely with the organizer and within their respective communities.

The overall goal of the project is to broaden our membership and the communities overall understanding of and participation in cooperatives. The focus has been on bylaws, district maps, annual meeting/election participation

and other measures to ensure a democratically run electric cooperative with engaged member-owners. Additionally, community meetings and working sessions have been ongoing where various BW member-owners would lead educational activities and small groups with organizing strategies for their communities. As momentum picked up with the campaign, FSC/LAF added two additional staff members to provide support for the principle organizer. Lastly, the RTRC piloted a Community Ambassador program for individuals that have expressed interest in becoming board members of Black Warrior Electric Membership Co-op and change-agents within their communities.

Agroforestry

FSC/LAF and the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities program work with approximately 50 forest and heir property landowners with a combined total of 5,400 total acres, 3,000 of which are forested. We found that the greatest barriers working with African-American forest landowners were heir property and lack of education/awareness of available resources.

The Southern Regional Agroforestry Center (SRAC) was initiated in 2016 through an MOU between NRCS, USDA Forest Service, USDA-National Agroforestry Center, and FSC/LAF. The SRAC is a multi-dimensional initiative established at the RTRC that is being designed to demonstrate activities in research, extension, training and education using agroforestry practices and natural ecosystems resources that are advantageous to African-American landowners in better utilizing their forest land to increase income, improve wildlife habitat and ensure environmental sustainability.

The SRAC works across the southeastern United States where most of our membership is located. Several demonstration forestry plots involving different species: hardwoods, Long-Leaf pine, Loblolly and Slash pine have been planted on FSC/LAF lands to show differing practices, growth rates and financial viability. These plots have been planned and nurtured using USDA and private funding sources.

During the year, FSC/LAF secured \$300,000 from the Gulf of Mexico-EPA Program to help African-American landowners with forest lands along rivers and tributaries of the Gulf of Mexico to develop easements to protect sustainable forestry plots. The grant includes \$200,000 to secure easements to protect special environmentally sensitive lands leading to the Gulf of Mexico.

Photo above: 2016 FSC/LAF Georgia Farmer's Conference with Carolyn Parker, USDA Director of the Office of Advocacy & Outreach speaking; Listening are Georgia Field Director Cornelius Key and FSC/LAF Executive Director

RTRC Hosts Numerous Groups

The RTRC remains a centric site for local and distant groups for meetings, trainings, family reunions, rural and recreational retreats, weddings, and many other community-oriented activities. The RTRC also hosted: students from the University of Missouri; Food and Drug Administration; students from Alabama A&M University; La Via Campesina; and the National Black Food and Justice Alliance. We are aggressively planning to expand, modernize, and improve the facilities and services of the RTRC over the next few years to better serve our membership and supporters.

GEORGIA REPORT

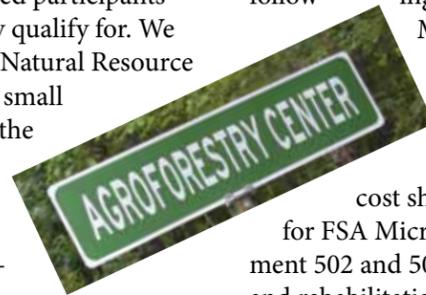
In the past year, FSC/LAF's Georgia Field Office provided outreach and education to approximately 414 members/farmers. These services were provided through 9 informational workshops, meetings, newsletters and phone counseling. Areas covered included cooperative development, marketing, estate planning, land retention and USDA programs.

USDA personnel participated in FSC/LAF sponsored workshops and meetings with farmers. The objective was to make sure that as service providers, the FSC/LAF and USDA were, as much as possible, on the same page when delivering information and assistance. The goal is to instill trust among all parties so that the farmer can have confidence in the process.

Direct one-on-one technical assistance was provided to 210 members/farmers. This assistance was provided through office visits by the FSC/LAF members/farmers and farm visits by our outreach specialist. The outreach specialist and farmers developed individualized service plans, and assistance was provided in accordance with the needs identified. The farm visits are supplemented by telephone visits and counseling - 621 telephone counseling sessions were conducted.

Projects Update Summary

- 11 cooperative organizing meetings, 174 people attended;
- 6 cooperative development workshops, 119 members participated;
- 1,465 incoming calls to the Georgia Field Office for assistance;
- 1,680 newsletters mailed and emailed;
- 438 fliers and letters mailed to members and farmers;
- 9 document notarized at the Georgia Field Office;
- 12 veteran farmers assisted with USDA programs;
- 18 farmers assisted with Georgia Agricultural Tax Exempt cards;



- 12 meetings with farmers, FSA farm loan managers and officers;
- 39 applications for loans totaling \$3,556,042 were completed;
- 10 direct operating loans approved totaling \$1,565,071;
- 9 microloans approved for \$336,152;
- 1 farm ownership loan approved for \$300,000;
- 3 bank loans approved totaling \$353,000.
- 5 debt servicing loans approved for \$209,113;
- 4 denied direct loans totaling \$649,190;
- 7 denied microloans totaling \$193,516.

The 34th Georgia Farmers Conference was held at the Hilton Garden Inn in downtown Albany, Georgia on Thursday and Friday, February 2 & 3, 2017. More than 200 supporters and participants attended the conference and took part in various activities held throughout the conference. The keynote speaker was, Carolyn Parker, USDA Director of the Office of Advocacy & Outreach. The theme was "Cooperatives: Leading, Serving and Growing Rural Communities."

MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF COOPERATIVES

Currently, the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC) consists of 22 cooperatives and 3 associate cooperatives. MAC held three board meetings that were presided over by MAC president Jessica Foxx of the Beat 4 Cooperative.



Photos above: Members of the Mississippi Beat 4 Co-op; Denver Winston - the granddaughter of Mississippi farmer and FSC/LAF staff member Ben Burkett



Funding

MAC submitted a proposal for \$200,000 from the Rural Cooperative Development grant program. We received a \$20,000 cooperative agreement from the Farm Service Agency and \$175,000 from the USDA's Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant. Our operational budget also includes \$150,000 from the Kellogg's Foundation for the PHMS and \$200,000 per year from Agroecology.

Projects Update Summary

Cooperative Development/MAC Development

Ten groups were assisted with cooperative 101 basic education and were provided technical assistance such as strategic planning, board training and business plan development. Board education was conducted by center staff for the following cooperatives: Kemper County, UCAC, North Delta, and Corporation Jackson.

Fulfilled Work Objectives

- Strategic Planning session for organizational capacity building.
- Continued work with cooperative members.
- Continued outreach efforts to non-member groups that request our services.
- Continued to provide business planning assistance to cooperatives and women in business.
- Small farmers conference held with over 200 attendees.
- Began planning meeting for 2nd Agricultural Symposium in October 2017.
- Continue to identify new and work with emerging cooperatives.

2017 Rural Cooperative Business Grant Semi-Annual Statistics: Assistance to Various Sectors

MAC offered assistance to the following: Small Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Ranchers (277); Small Businesses (5); Groups (3); Co-ops (13): **Total - 298**

Five new cooperatives/groups were identified and the Center has begun working with these groups: "Jubilee Ranch Cooperative", Pocahontas, MS; "Mississippi Delta Community Farms", Oakland, MS; "Coalition of Forest

Landowners", Morton, MS; "NG Co-op LLC", Carrollton, MS; "Up in Farms", Jackson, MS. These groups called and were referred by partners from ASUEP and USDA agency personnel.

2017 MAC Annual Membership Meeting

The Southern Rural Black Women Cooperative hosted Mac's annual meeting. Seventy cooperative representatives attended.

Project for a Healthy Mississippi

In this program farmers provide locally grown vegetables to schools as well as, importantly, educating Mississippi students about growing food locally.

Impact List 2016-2017

- Jefferson County Public Schools: 2 schools - 300 students
- Hinds County Public Schools: 3 schools - 680 students
- Attala County Public Schools: 2 schools - 250 students
- Forrest County Public Schools: 7 schools - 800 students
- Madison County Public Schools: 2 schools - 280 students
- Private or Charter Schools/ Institutions: 3 private schools - 285 students
- 8 Charter schools: (Louisiana) - 2500 students
- 2 Colleges (USM, Alcorn)- 400 students

Mississippi Agriculture Mediation Program

Two mediations were closed in May. The mediation program was expanded to Georgia as part of our newly established Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center.

2501 Project

The agricultural specialists assisted their clientele with information on improving and implementing farm management plans, loan applications, estate planning and information on networking opportunities such as the Small Farmers Conference co-sponsored by MAC and Alcorn State University, Field Days and many regional trainings and workshops.

2501 Outcomes

- Workshops/Group Meetings conducted (3)
- Farm/home visits (32)
- One on one contacts (40)
- Meetings with USDA staff (6)
- Socially Disadvantaged Applicants (41)
- Farmers submitting loan applications (4)
- Potential new cooperative members (17)
- Crops in production: Turnip greens, cabbages, mustard greens, parsley, kale, chard, collards, Chinese cabbage, watermelon and sugar cane
- Referrals for additional assistance (30)
- New veterans (12)

Challenges and future goals and objectives

- To improve the overall farm income and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through farm business, financial and risk management;
- Ensure the profitability and sustainability of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in targeted counties through alternative enterprise production, value-added production and commercial production of fruits and vegetables;
- Inform socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers of USDA programs to enhance farm operations and management;
- Urban Farming: We are working with the staff of the Urban Farming project in both Jackson and New Orleans- to date we have assisted them with locating plants, garden supplies, seeds, chemicals and tools. This included a meeting with former FSC/LAF staff member Wendell Paris to discuss the project and offer technical assistance and advice.

Land Retention

This work is ongoing as when clients are referred to us they are directed to the proper source for technical assistance.

Agroecology

Two field days and one workshop were held to educate people on agroecology. A specialist assisted farmers and landowners with raised bed and clearing spots for gardening.

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE ASSOCIATION

Eighty rural and urban farmers in the State of South Carolina have received one-on-one technical assistance. Two loans totaling \$400,000.00 were submitted and are pending approval. Four farm numbers have been applied for through the Farm Service Agency. Four cooperative development trainings and one NRCS program eligibility workshop were held. One disaster assistance grant through partnership with Farm Aid was provided in Beaufort, SC.

A new co-op development specialist was hired to serve the state of South Carolina. The renewed efforts in South Carolina are part of the FSC/LAF's envisioned Regional Cooperative Development Center.



Photo above: Joseph and Helen Fields of the Fields Farm in South Carolina - organic farmers

From Ray Marshall
Economist & Cooperative Advocate
Secretary of Labor for the Carter Administration

I applaud the hard work the Federation has done these 50 years and I congratulate them where they are today. I hope they can continue build on that foundation; to continue to grow; and continue to do the important work that they're undertaking. And the Federation's work and existence is not just good for them - it's good for the South and it's good for the country overall for organizations like the Federation to prosper.



1967 22 coop and credit union groups meet in Atlanta and agree to charter the "Federation"

1968 Charles O. Prejean, first Executive Director, moves to Atlanta to open a small office

1969 James Forman released the Black Manifesto demanding \$200,000,000 for the establishment of a land bank that would acquire land, organize cooperatives and counter the racist pressure being visited upon rural blacks

1969 The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) makes significant grant to enable the Federation to employ staff to organize and develop cooperatives

1970 Ford Foundation and others join OEO in supporting the Federation

1971 Federation acquires land in Sumter County; moves staff to Epes, Alabama to build Rural Training Center

1973 OEO withdraws funding in dispute over value of co-ops in development

1973 "Only Six Million Acres" published by Black Economic Research Center - Robert E. Browne Director

1973 Emergency Land Fund (ELF) formally organized - Joseph Brooks named Executive Director

1974 Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) contracts with Federation for 8 state, 10 office "rural business development programs"

1975 National Association of Landowners organized by the ELF

1978 ELF completes study on impact of heir property on rural land tenure in the southern region of the U.S. The study was authorized by the US Senate

1979 Joseph Brooks named president of ELF; Jerry Pennick becomes ELF Executive Director

1979 US Attorney's Office and Federal Bureau of Investigation in Birmingham begin investigation of the Federation for alleged misuse of Federal funds based on complaints from local white politicians

1981 Federal Grand Jury investigation ends; Federation is exonerated; President Reagan begins cutting all federal social programs

1985 Federation and Emergency Land Fund merge to strengthen efforts to retain and protect Black landowners

1985 Ralph Paige named Federation/LAF Executive Director

1987 20th Anniversary held; work begins on "minority farmers rights" as part of 1987 Agricultural Credit Act

1988 Small Farmer Outreach Program, supported with USDA funding, started in Albany, Georgia

1988 FSC/LAF receives Martin Luther King Jr. "Humanitarian Award"

1988 Federation/LAF establishes first Georgia state office for Small Farm Outreach in Albany, Ga

1989 Federation/LAF receives United Nations award for the Griffin Mandela

apartments "In recognition of a significant contribution to the provision of adequate shelter to the poorer segments of the community"

1989 Federation/LAF receives Fannie Mae Award for housing

1990 The first lawsuit filed against the federal government on behalf of black farmers by the Farmers Legal Action Group, with the assistance from the Federation/LAF

1990 Section 2501 and other provisions for "socially disadvantaged farmers" included in 1990 Farm Bill

1992 25th Anniversary held; Federation/LAF "Black Farmers Caravan" to Washington takes place with demonstrations in state capitols, at the U.S. Capitol and the U.S. Department of Agriculture

1993 Mike Espy becomes first African American USDA Secretary

1994 USDA agencies contract major outreach efforts to Black and farmers of color through Federation/LAF; Greene Sumter Rural Enterprise Community designated

1997 Federation/LAF launches Emerging Markets Program to facilitate collaboration with family farmers in the developing world

1997 Federation staff participate in USDA's Civil Rights Action Team that develops 92 recommendations to end discrimination within USDA

1997 Second lawsuit on behalf of black farmers' filed against the federal government

1999 Delegation from Cuba visits the Federation/LAF

HIGHLIGHTS OF FIFTY YEARS "WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE"

2002 Delegation of farmers from Cuba visit the Federation/LAF

2002 Congress authorizes \$25,000,000 in Farm Bill for Section 2501 Outreach and Technical Assistance Program - full Congressional appropriation refused

2002 Assistant USDA Secretary for Civil Rights created in Farm Bill

2004 Robert S. Browne, founder of the Emergency Land Fund, passes

2004 The Federation/LAF institutes first Annual Robert S. Browne award recognizing an individual or organization that has made significant contributions to African-American land retention

2005 Hurricane Katrina devastates Gulf Coast and the Federation/LAF launches its Hurricane Relief And Recovery Program

2006 The Federation/LAF issues a report on African-American Cotton Farmers and the impact of subsidies as part of the 2007 Farm Bill debate

2007 First national conference on Black Environmental Thought held at Tuskegee University

2008 Barack Obama - first African American elected president and plays a significant role in the creation of the second phase of the Black Farmer Lawsuit

2009 Shirley Sherrod appointed first African American Rural Development director for the State of Georgia

2010 Shirley Sherrod becomes the first person in the history of USDA to be fired for racial discrimination, later to be found innocent of the charges which ironically were based on a doctored video from a racist website

2015 Ralph Paige retires after 30 years as the Federation/LAF's Executive Director

2015 Cornelius Blanding becomes Executive Director of Federation/LAF

2015 - Federation/LAF receives the Food Sovereignty Prize awarded by the Food Sovereignty Alliance

2016 - Federation/LAF signs MOU with the US Forest Service, National Agroforestry Center and NRCS to establish the first Regional Agroforestry Center focused on minority landowners in the South

2016 The Federation/LAF and Tuskegee University develop a cooperative development curriculum at the University

2017 The Federation establishes a Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center supported by an MOU with the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights

Photo: Man on tractor on a field at the Federation/LAF's Training & Research Center

LAND RETENTION AND ADVOCACY **Agricultural Mediation Program in Georgia**

New Director of Land Retention and Advocacy

Monica A. Rainge, an agricultural lawyer, was tapped to serve as the Director of Land Retention and Advocacy (LRA). As the Director, Rainge leads the development and management of high quality outreach and technical assistance programs that support regional land retention and advocacy initiatives. She also directs the FSC/LAF's Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center.

Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center

FSC/LAF signed an MOU with USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary For Civil Rights (OASCR) in support of the FSC/LAF Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center. This partnership will support FSC/LAF's efforts to assist minority and other socially disadvantaged landowners who own heirs property across the southern region.

The lack of clear title or heirs property is one of the greatest barriers to accessing USDA programs for historically underserved communities. The MOU provides a working framework for cooperation between OASCR and FSC/LAF to increase access to USDA programs by minority farmers and ranchers.

For the last 50 years, FSC/LAF has worked to reverse the trend of African-American land loss and to encourage land based economic development. The Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center will work cooperatively with OASCR to identify traditionally underserved landowners within the southern states and assist them in resolving heirs property, land retention, and estate planning issues through mediation and legal assistance. Currently, the FSC/LAF serves as the USDA's Certified Agricultural Mediation Program in Georgia and Mississippi.

Measurable indicators will be an increase in the number of minority and socially disadvantaged landowners who are knowledgeable about the USDA and FSC/LAF services and are accessing USDA programs which support and secure their land tenure.

Outreach, Education and Technical Assistance

LRA has provided direct assistance to more than 100 families this year. Our work has impacted nearly 5,000 acres of heirs property with a conservative value of \$5,000,000. LRA has assisted these families by helping them access legal and non-legal resources that provided solutions to heir property problems, while presenting landowners with a series of sustainable land use options (conservation, recreation, timber, farming, etc.) This was done primarily by facilitating legal clinics, workshops, family meetings, family reunions, and phone conferences to educate landowners on heir property problems and solutions.

The Georgia Agriculture Mediation Program (GAMP) was certified by the USDA as the mediation service provider in Georgia to assist in the resolution of disputes between participating USDA agencies and their program participants. The FSC/LAF will oversee all aspects of the program, which is to be funded through a grant from USDA.

The mediation program also seeks to resolve disputes between farmers and private agricultural lenders.

Scope of Services

GAMP will offer voluntary mediation services as part of the administrative appeals process for farmers challenging decisions made by USDA agencies. Various USDA agencies - including FSA, NRCS, Rural Development, and the Risk Management Agency - offer mediation as one step in the review of administrative decisions.

Specifically, the following cases are eligible for mediation under this program:

- Agricultural loans, whether made by USDA or commercial lenders, and;
- Disputes involving USDA actions on farm and conservation programs, wetlands determinations, rural water loan programs, grazing on national forest system lands, pesticides, rural housing and business loans, and crop insurance.

Research Partnership with Alcorn State

FSC/LAF has launched a research partnership with Alcorn State University's "Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers Policy Research Center", entitled "*Land Loss Trends Among Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers in the Black Belt Region from 1969 to 2017: Re-Examining the Implementation and Effectiveness and Relevance of Land Tenure Recommendations in the 'Only Six Million Acres' and 'The Impact of Heir Property on Black Land Tenure in the Southeastern Region of the United States' Studies*". This study will take a close look at Black land loss trends across four southern states.

Train the Trainer Workshop for Attorneys

On April 20-23, 2017, FSC/LAF in collaboration with OASCR conducted an attorney training workshop entitled, "Land Rich and Cash Poor: Understanding How to Effectively and Ethically Represent Low Income Clients with Heirs Property in Louisville, Kentucky". This national workshop was co-sponsored by the National Bar Association as a means to increase the number of black attorneys who are knowledgeable of heirs property issues and are willing to assist with pro-bono or low-bono opportunities.

Advocacy: Building Bridges to Opportunity

Our key legislative priorities are specifically focused on the Farm Bill, Cooperative Laws in the south and the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act.

2018 Farm Bill: Expanding Our Voice

Much at risk for Black farmers and landowners in the next Farm Bill. The opportunity for creating transformative change is now. As we face a new administration, we also embrace the opportunity to develop an even more effective voice for farmers and communities of color. Since 1967, the FSC/LAF has been an advocate for black farmers across the South. In the last 50 years, our advocacy efforts] contributed to many sweeping changes in agriculture legislation and two historic lawsuits that confirmed a history of racial discrimination by USDA in providing equitable access to Its programs and services. Despite these successes, the allocation of Farm Bill Resources to farmers and communities of color remains grossly disproportionate.

As an organization, we have been a part of several key advocacy coalitions that have given a broader platform to our issues. While we value those partnerships, we also recognize that our advocacy strength is in defining our own voice in a more intentional way. Building the collective power and self-determination of the FSC/LAF's membership is the seed for a fruitful harvest of equitable change in the South. We recognize the importance of a broader advocacy strategy that is focused on examining and accessing opportunities across the entire Farm Bill landscape. We are deeply and directly engaged in the improvement and development of agricultural policy because it directly impacts our lands, our soil, our air, our water. The Farm Bill is especially important because it can determine the economic future of farmers and communities of color especially in the rural south.

Our Farm Bill efforts are mapped around two themes: cooperative development and land retention. We, the membership of the FSC/LAF, support agricultural legislation for farmers, cooperatives and communities of color which connect to emerging opportunities for:

- (1) Food Security: Access to healthy foods produced and marketed through rural, urban and regional food systems;
- (2) Cooperative Development: Building a cooperative economy;
- (3) A system that that enables small farmers to market their products locally and regionally;
- (4) Support for greater diversity in food production and cropping practices;
- (5) Land Retention: Stabilize Black Land Ownership; Diversity and Inclusion: Equitable Access to Agricultural Programs including specific set asides;
- (6) Revitalization of Rural America: Investments in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America;
- (7) Land Utilization: Enhance Land Based Economic Development opportunities through Agriculture, Forestry, and Energy;
- (8) Continued funding for Agricultural Mediation Programs as a means of disaster relief for all farmers;

- (9) Incentives for sustainable farming practices that enhance soil health and productivity;
- (10) Strengthening risk management education and tools for socially disadvantaged farmers;
- (11) An adequate income safety net that is based on the cost of production and not solely an insurance program;
- (13) Increased allocation of resources for the Office of Advocacy and Outreach and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights to ensure equitable access to USDA programs;
- (14) Investments in rural development and agricultural research;
- (15) Energy programs to provide energy independence and support rural electric cooperatives that are truly democratically owned and controlled and reflective of the community they serve;
- (16) Conservation programs to protect the environment and create more incentives for small landowners to participate;
- (17) Establishing innovative public-private conservation partnership opportunities which do not have matching requirements that create barriers for minority organizations.

Cooperative Laws In The South

The legal requirements for forming a cooperative vary by state. In the South, these cooperative laws are often fragmented and fraught with legal barriers. The FSC/LAF, supports federal and state laws which strengthen member-owned and controlled cooperatives and the cooperative movement. We will continue to vigorously defend cooperative principles and rights of people to build collective economies.

Uniform Partition Of Heirs Property Act

As a founding member of the Heirs Property Retention Coalition, FSC/LAF continues to advocate for the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act (UPHP) to help preserve intergenerational wealth in the form of real property. Currently, the act is enacted in 9 states (Nevada, Georgia, Montana, Alabama, Arkansas Connecticut, South Carolina, Hawaii, and New Mexico.)

Nearly 60% of African-Americans die without a will or intestate. If the landowner dies intestate, the real estate passes to the landowner's heirs as tenants-in-common under state law. Too often, real estate speculators acquire a small interest in heirs' property in order to file a partition action and force a sale. Using this tactic, an investor can acquire the entire parcel for a price well below its fair market value. UHPA provides a series of simple due process protections: notice, appraisal, right of first refusal, and if the other co-tenants choose not to exercise their right and a sale is required, a commercially reasonable sale supervised by the court to ensure all parties receive their fair share of the proceeds.

Funders 2016-2017

Alabama Forestry Commission
 Andrew J. Young Foundation, Inc.
 Capital Impact
 Christopher Reynolds Foundation
 CHS Inc.
 CoBank
 Cooperative Development Foundation
 Cooperative Foundation
 Farm Aid
 Flora Foundation
 Fund for Democratic Communities
 Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation
 Kurz Family Foundation
 Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, Inc.
 National Cooperative Bank (NCB)
 National Cooperative Business Association
 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
 Nationwide
 Robert K. Morris Foundation
 Rockefeller Foundation
 Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education
 Sharing Inc.
 Suntrust Bank
 The Daniel Foundation
 Tides Foundation
 Tuskegee University
 University of Georgia Foundation
 US Endowment for Forestry & Communities
 USDA/Rural Development
 USDA/Agricultural Marketing Services
 USDA/APHIS
 USDA/Farm Service Agency (FSA)
 USDA/NASS
 USDA/NRCS
 USDA/OASCR
 USDA/Office of Advocacy and Outreach
 USDA/Risk Management
 U.S. Forest Service

Financials

Federation Of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund's Combined Statement Of Financial Position (Unaudited) August 31, 2016

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$86,942
Investments	650,951
Receivables:	
Grants and contracts	808,283
Promises to give	41,950
State receivables	64,907
Accounts Receivable, net	<u>915,130</u>
Travel advances	4,583
Prepaid other	3,000
Prepaid Insurance	<u>23,886</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>1,684,492</u>

Property and equipment, at cost

Land	180,988
Land Improvements	62,036
Parking Lot	12,300
Buildings	1,021,103
Building Improvements	319,133
Equipment	<u>536,965</u>

Less: accumulated depreciation (1,788,507)

New Property and Equipment 352,677

Other Assets	
Deferred Charges	<u>16,888</u>

Total Other Assets 16,668

TOTAL ASSETS \$2,053,838

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	\$393,594
Accrued Leave	52,153
Accrued Expenses	49,406
Deferred Income	314,625
Other Liabilities	85,037

Notes Payable:	
Current	
Non-current	<u>293,230</u>

Total Liabilities 1,188,044

NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	(566,327)
Temporarily Restricted	<u>1,432,120</u>

Total Net Assets 865,793

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS \$2,053,838



Cooperative members at Annual Meeting

COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

ALABAMA Alabama State Association of Cooperatives • Brown-town Co-op - Marbury • Demopolis Citizens FCU - Demopolis • Federation of Greene County Employees FCU - Eutaw • Greene/Sumter Farmers Market Cooperative • Marengo County Farmers Co-op - Safford • PLBA Housing Development Corp - Gainesville • Selma-Dallas Farmers Cooperative - Selma • SOGOCO Goat Producers Cooperatives - Epes • SANKOFA Youth Agricultural Co-op - Livingston **ARKANSAS** Arkansas Farm & Land Development Corp - Brinkley **GEORGIA** Georgia State Association of Cooperatives • Georgia Child Care and Nutritional Assoc. • Child Development Center • Southern Alternatives • West Georgia Farmers Cooperative **KENTUCKY** Kentucky Minority Farmers Association **LOUISIANA** Louisiana Oysterman Association - Plaquemine Parish • Point Coupee Farmers Cooperative - New Roads • **MISSOURI** Missouri Rural Crisis Center **MISSISSIPPI** Mississippi State Association of Cooperatives • Attala County Self Help Cooperative • Beat 4 Farms Cooperative A.A.L • Bogue Chitto/Lincoln County Community Center • Family Farmers Cooperative • Indian Springs Farmers Association, Inc. • Kemper Regional Outreach Cooperative • Milestone Cooperative Association • Mississippi Delta Southern Rural Black Women in Agriculture • Mid-South Progressive Agricultural Group • Mississippi Meat Goat Producers • Mt. Zion Saving Lives Outreach Center • New Community Cooperative • North Bolivar Development Cooperative • North Delta Produce Growers Cooperative • Quitman County Development Organization • South Rankin County Farmers Association • Unlimited Community Agriculture Cooperative • Winston County Self Help Cooperative • East Central Federal Credit Union (HOPE) • First Delta Federal Credit Union • Shelby Bolivar County Federal Credit Union • Shreveport Federal Credit Union • **SOUTH CAROLINA** Axiom Farms • Farmers Co-op/CIA • Florence City Farmers Cooperative • Global Producers • Mid-Eastern Farmers Cooperative • Orangeburg Young Farmers Co-op • People's Cooperative • RAFFCO Farmers Co-op • Saluda Farmers Association • South Carolina Coastal • South Carolina Sea Island Farmers Co-op • Williamsburg and Clarendon Farmers Coop • **TEXAS** Texas Landowners Association



Alabama staff member Pam Madzima (lft) awarding youth scholarship

STAFF

PUBLIC RELATIONS & FINANCE OFFICE • ATLANTA, GA
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 Corniel Crawford *Finance Director, Land Assistance Fund*
 Tywan Arrington *Director of Special Projects and Program Compliance, Gordon Drennan Internal Auditor,*
 Eris Adams *Accounting Clerk, Nicole Stewart Administrative Assistant*
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 John Zippert *Director, Program Operations*
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 Aaron Hodge *Outreach Specialist*
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 Nicole Bell *Consultant, Paul Darby Consultant*

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 Keith Alexander *Cooperative Development Specialist*

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 Writers/Researchers: Jerry Pennick, John Zippert, Tywan Arrington, Eboni Thomas
 Photographers: Heather Gray & John Zippert

Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund
 2769 Church Street, East Point, GA 30344 • 404 765 0991 • www.federation.coop

Fifty Years On Our Path

We are still on our path
The one we dared for ourselves
when many said this is no way
we can travel - there is no road there

We are still on our path
The one we chose to press
our prints upon
when many said don't waste time
to venture there - no one will follow

We are still on our path
The one we forged for fifty years
through our hard labor and sacrifice
when many said you will stumble
on rock and tangle in brush
and lose your way

We are still on our path
The one we shaped for fifty years
with our own dreams and plans
when many said this will not work
you will be stopped

We are still on our path
Stretched across a region
building co-op upon co-op
twenty thousand families strong
holding on for fifty years

We are still on our path
Yes, we've struggled in fifty years
but never losing our way
Yes, we've strained in fifty years
but never missing our vision

We are still on our path
The path of nurturing people
in co-ops
The path of saving family land
in co-ops
The path of girding community
in co-ops
The path of forming society
through co-ops

We are still on our path
That fifty year journey
we bequeath as we build
for fifty years more
growing co-op upon co-op
raising community upon community
creating new society through co-ops

Pledging fifty more years on our path.

Carol Prejean Zippert
August 2017