

Understanding and Addressing Inequalities in the Food System

Addressing Inequalities in Rural Areas

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Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA)

Pittsboro, North Carolina

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University of Missouri

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Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security

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Event Sponsors

Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security at the University of Missouri

- Research, teaching, and outreach at the intersection of food security and food systems

Community and Economic Development Food Systems Team, part of University of Missouri Extension

- Community engagement and education to build healthy, resilient, and equitable food systems
-

Upcoming Webinars

Webinar III: Addressing food system inequalities in urban areas

- Thursday, November 19, 3:30-4:30 p.m. CST
- Erica Williams, A Red Circle, St. Louis, Missouri

More information at foodsecurity.missouri.edu

Webinar Format

Hear from our speaker ~ 30 minutes

- Guest mics will be muted

Question & Answer ~ 20 minutes

- Guest mics will be unmuted
- Questions can also be submitted through the chat feature

Additional, optional Q & A ~ 5:00-5:30 p.m.

- If needed

Presentation intended to spur thoughtful dialogue and civic discussion

Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA)

Mission: RAFI-USA challenges the root causes of inequities in the food system, supporting and advocating for economically, racially, and ecologically-just farm communities.

Vision: We envision a thriving, sustainable, and equitable food system: where farmers and farmworkers have dignity and agency; where they are supported by just agricultural policies; where corporations and institutions are accountable to their community.

rafiusa.org



Our food system is working really well at what it was built for:
creating wealth for those who own the biggest pieces of it.

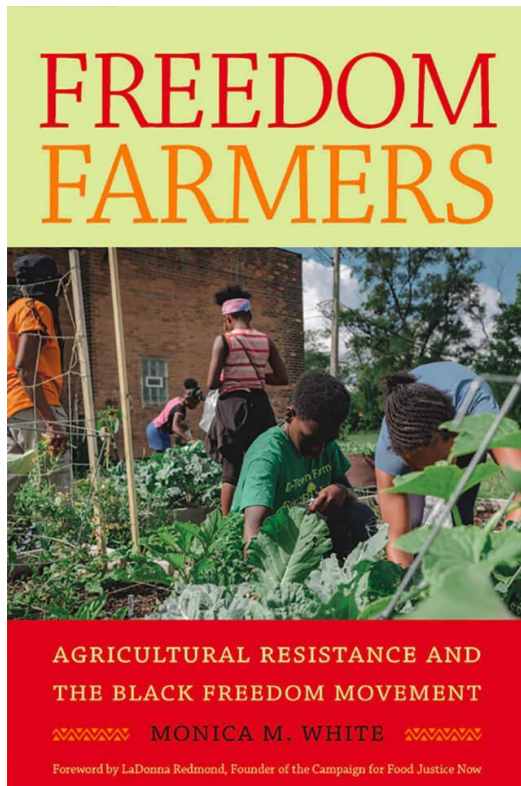
In every era of agriculture of this nation, the most powerful players in agriculture and our food system have depended on the relative vulnerability, or lack of power, of other groups of people, in order to exploit them economically for their own financial gain.

In many cases this power differential, and the connection between economic and political power, have been made clearly explicit through acts of physical or economic violence.

[Recording: “How Did We Get Here, and What Can I Do? Democracy, Land, & Liberation”](#)



**Resistance and
resilience are
also a part of
the story.**



[Dr. White's keynote at the
2019 Come to the Table Conference](#)



[Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African
American History and Culture / The Louis Draper Archive](#)

“I don’t think it’s fair for us to do an analysis of the way that people respond to a catastrophe without interrogating the conditions and the structures that make certain communities vulnerable to those catastrophes to begin with.”

- [Dr. Monica](#)

[White, on resilience](#)

Racial Injustice

Corporate Consolidation

Labor Rights

Erosion of Democracy

Racial Injustice

The United States is built on stolen indigenous land. Slavery, sharecropping & tenant farming, and over a century of discriminatory policy and practice post-emancipation have resulted in, among other things, a significant racial wealth gap (the median net worth of white households is 13x that of Black households), and Black land loss.

“In 1910, 218,000 Black farmers were registered as full or part owners of 15 million acres of land.

By 2007, 28,000 Black farmers were full or part owners of 2.9 million acres of land.

Moreover, Black operated farms are significantly smaller than non-black operated farms in size (104 vs. 418 acres).”

from [Regaining Ground: Cultivating Community Assets and Preserving Black Land](#), 2011, by the Center for Social Inclusion



Racial Injustice - some suggested resources

[Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation - Policy Packet](#), Bread for the World Institute

[From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century](#), by William A. Darity Jr. & A. Kirsten Mullen

[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#), by Michelle Alexander

[This Land](#) podcast from Crooked Media, hosted by Rebecca Nagle

[“African American Farmers and Civil Rights”](#) by Pete Daniel

[“The Trauma of Betrayal in Farm Loss”](#) - Farmers of Color Network webinar

Corporate Consolidation & Farm Consolidation

“Get big or get out.”

- Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture, 1971 - 1976

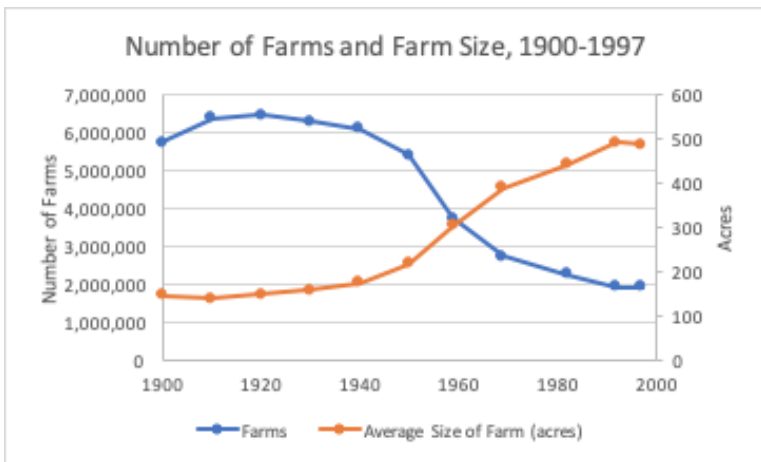
“In America, the big get bigger and the small go out.”

- Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture, October 1, 2019 to Wisconsin dairy farmers

Corporate Consolidation & Farm Consolidation

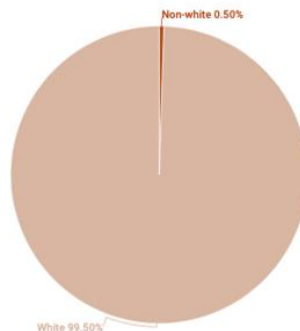
Between 1900 and 1997, there was a 66% loss of white farm operations and 98% loss of Black farm operations.

[Returning African American Farmers to the Land: Recent Trends and a Policy Rationale](#), by Spencer D. Wood & Jess Gilbert



Source: [USDA NASS, 2018](#)

Market Facilitation Program subsidies by recipients' race

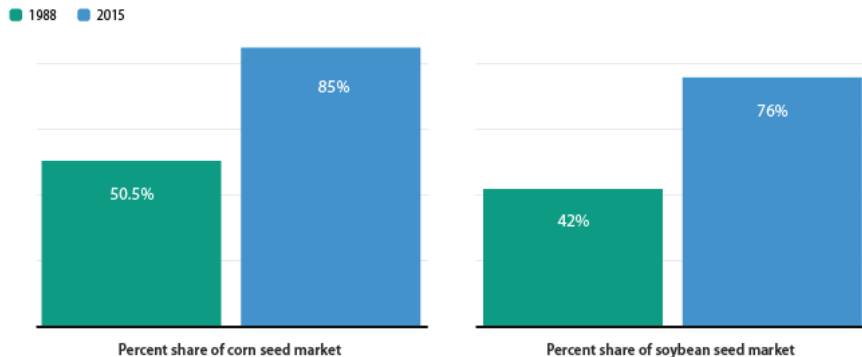


Source: [“USDA gave almost 100% of Trump’s trade war bailout to white farmers,”](#) by Nathan Rosenberg & Bryce Wilson Stucki

FIGURE 2

Four firms increasingly dominate the corn and soybean seed markets

Concentration of the corn and soybean seed markets among the four largest firms by percentage of market share, 1988 and 2015



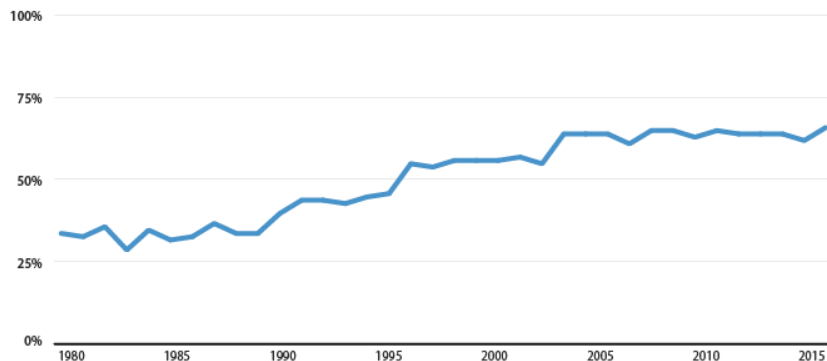
Sources: Jorge Fernandez-Cornejo, "The Seed Industry in U.S. Agriculture" (Washington: Economic Research Service, 2004), available at <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/33671/files/ai040786.pdf>; James M. MacDonald, "Mergers and Competition in Seed and Agricultural Chemical Markets," Economic Research Service, April 3, 2017, available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2017/april/mergers-and-competition-in-seed-and-agricultural-chemical-markets/>.

CAP

FIGURE 4

The hog industry has become increasingly concentrated

Percentage of hogs slaughtered by the four largest firms, 1980–2015



Sources: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, "2001 Annual Report of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration" (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2001), available at <https://www.gipsa.usda.gov/gipsa/ar/01ar.pdf>; Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, "Assessment of the Cattle, Hog, and Poultry Industries: FY 2005 Report" (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2006), available at <https://www.gipsa.usda.gov/psp/publication/asses/06assessment.pdf>; Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, "2012 Annual Report: Packers and Stockyards Program" (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2013), available at https://www.gipsa.usda.gov/psp/publication/ar/2012_psp_annual_report.pdf; Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, "2016 Annual Report: Packers and Stockyards Program" (Washington: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016), available at https://www.gipsa.usda.gov/psp/publication/ar/2016_psp_annual_report.pdf.

CAP

From "[A Fair Deal for Farmers](#)" Report by Zoe Willingham and Andy Green, Center for American Progress

Labor Rights

- [Mapping COVID-19 Outbreaks in the Food System](#), Leah Douglas,
- “The [NC Department of Labor] has received 75 complaints and referrals related to COVID-19 and the meat packing industry through July 15. None have prompted a site visit.” - [July 28, NC Watchdog Reporting Network](#)
- “Of the nearly 10,000 virus-related requests OSHA received to investigate workplaces in all industries since early March, Smithfield and JBS are the only ones that have so far resulted in a citation and fine.” Fines totaled about \$29,000. Smithfields revenue last year was \$14 billion; JBS’ was \$51.7 billion. - [September 13, Kimberly Kindy for the Washington Post](#)
- Jeff Bezos has made \$73.2 billion (a 65% increase in his net worth) since the pandemic began. - [September 17, Rupert Neate for the Guardian](#)

Erosion of Democracy

- Citizens United
- Shelby v Holder
- Racist gerrymanders that dilute Black voting strength
- Erosion of trust in democratic institutions like an independent press

What's Needed?

Goals & Strategies

Goals

- Repair & strengthen democracy
- Wholesale shift in money and power
- Wholesale shift in cultural values; recognition of mutual self-interest and interdependence
- New systems built on justice, sustainability, and mutual care

Strategies

- Build relationships
- Build power

Others who have led the way

- [Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union](#)
 - 1.2 million members across the South in 1891
 - Set up exchanges at ports where members could purchase discounted supplies
 - Organized a strike for better wages for cotton pickers
- Fannie Lou Hamer & the Freedom Farm Cooperative
 - “Where a couple of years ago white people were shooting at Negroes trying to register [to vote], now they say, “go ahead and register—then you’ll starve.”
 - “Down where we are, food is used as a political weapon. But if you have a pig in your backyard, if you have some vegetables in your garden, you can feed yourself and your family, and nobody can push you around. “
- [Courtney Patterson on forming a farmers cooperative in South Boston, VA](#)

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Strategies

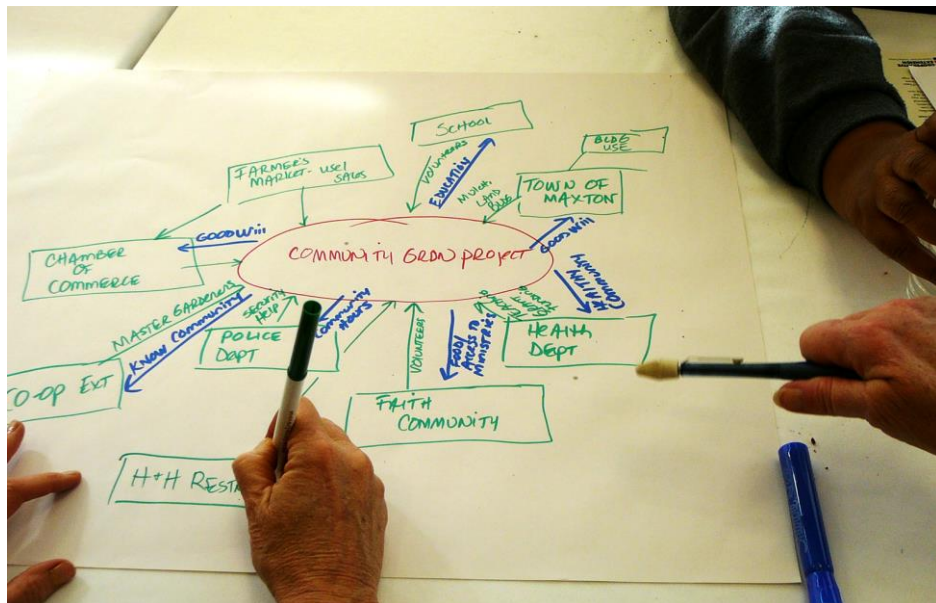
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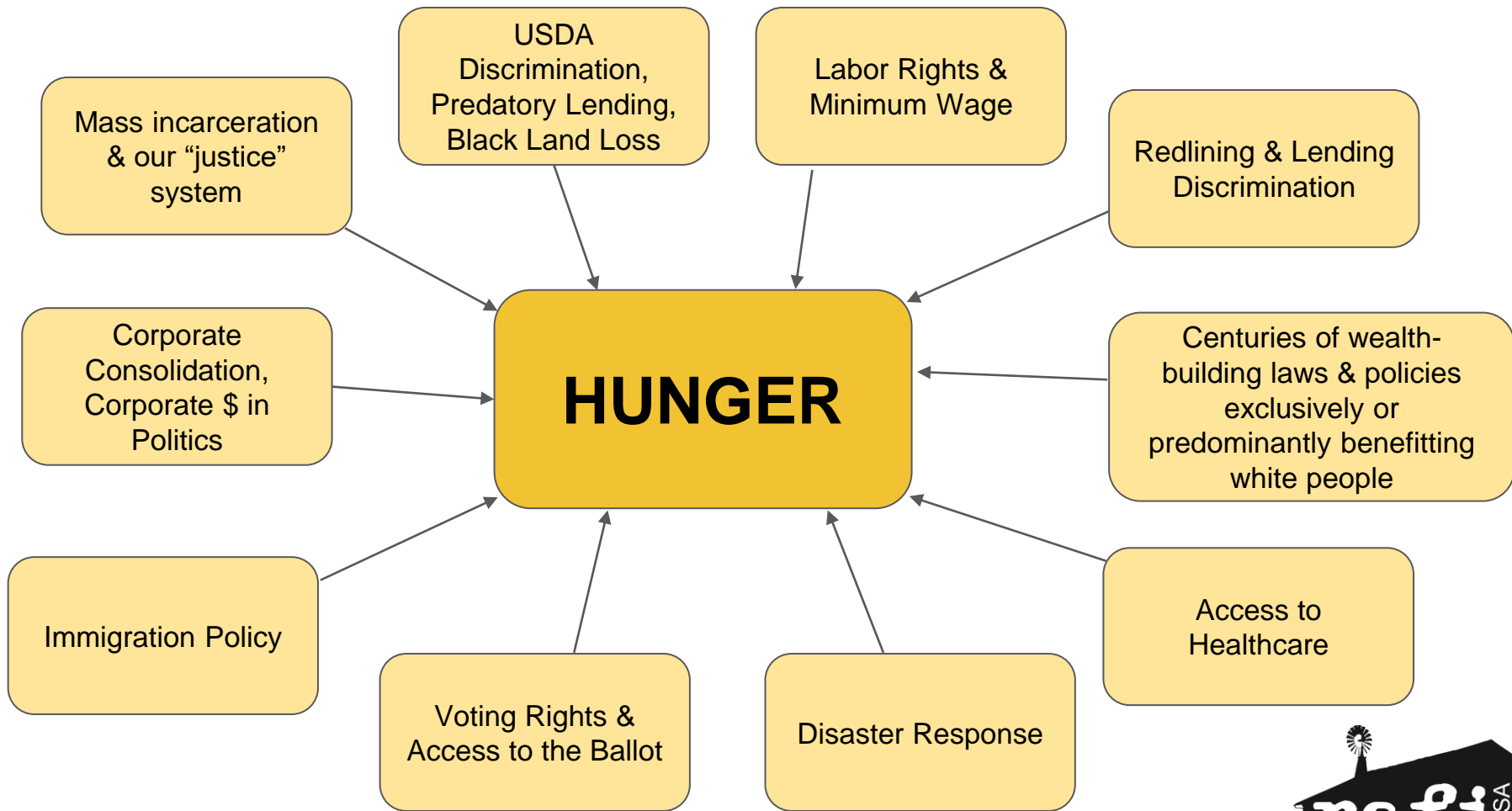
COME TO THE TABLE

USA
rafi

Come to the Table works at the intersection of faith communities, hunger relief advocates, and farmers to find solutions that work for everyone.

Our core strategy is connection: making connections between people, organizations, and issues.





“I’ve worked with other non-profits before, but this is the first time we’ve partnered with a faith-based organization. To be honest with you, it’s been a match made in heaven. Our missions both align, we’re big on giving our community access to healthy fruits and vegetables...

The infrastructure of how a church is set up works well with us. The fact that faith is involved is a big deal. Even with our project, we’re walking on faith. Farmers are just like people in the church, they walk on faith. You don’t know what will happen from day to day.

It was amazing. It almost brings tears to my eyes because of the level of support we got. At first I knew we would get some support, but the amount of support every week was amazing -- people were calling to see how they could get involved, and it helped that David knew stakeholders and was so involved in the community.”

- Davon Goodwin, Sandhills Ag Innovation Center



Farm to Church

“We have bought into a cheap food policy in America, and it’s literally killing us. So the first thing I would say to a church is, you should be wanting to support the members of your community no matter how much it costs because that farmer is an active member of the community, so supporting them is keeping that same dollar in your community, and that dollar is staying right here a couple different times before it leaves the community.”

- Davon Goodwin

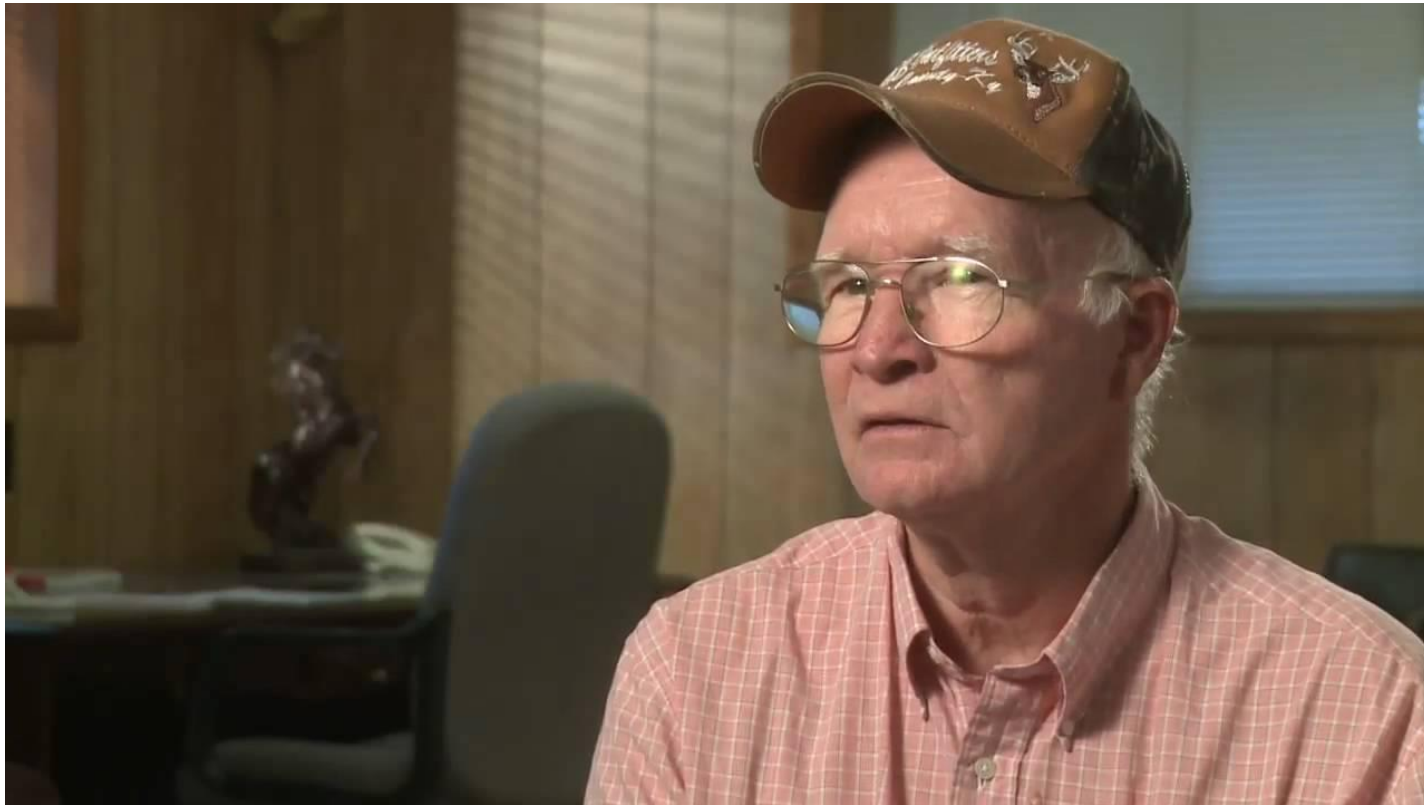


Pastor Jason Leighton assists with food distribution

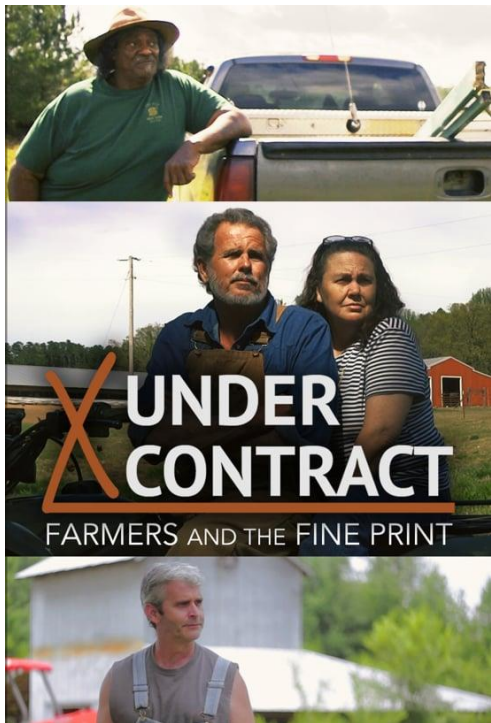
Farmers of Color Network



Farm Advocacy



Corporate Accountability



**ADOPT AN
EMERGENCY
STANDARD
TO PROTECT WORKERS**

NC WORKER WEEK OF ACTION

[Worker Week of Action](#)

#ProtectNCWorkers
on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)



Farmer Seed Coop & Seed Stewards Project



More examples

[Farm Labor Alliance Calls for Food System that Works for Main Street, Not Wall Street](#)

Down Home NC

- Knocked on doors and had 1,384 front porch conversations with residents of 2 rural NC counties
- “Residents of rural counties are more unified than might be expected... Solution categories focusing directly on meeting basic needs receive support from strong majorities across race and gender”

[Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative](#)

- Agricultural cooperatives, worker-owned companies, and Human Rights Commissions who implement local action agendas

Rural Assembly

- [Happening virtually Oct 26-30!](#)

Thank you!

Check out our new report!: [“When Diversity Isn’t Enough: Experiences of Board Members of Color at Environmental & Agricultural Nonprofits”](#)

[rafiusa.org](#)

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