

ADVANCER

NEWSLETTER

February 2026

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Talk of the Land

George Washington Carver's Lasting Impact on Agriculture: Black History's Contribution to Conservation Through Innovation *Pioneering Sustainable Production Practices in American Farming*

George Washington Carver, one of America's most influential agricultural scientists, revolutionized farming in the early twentieth century through the development and implementation of innovative conservation production practices. Recognizing the destructive effects of continuous cotton cultivation, Carver advocated for crop rotation, a method that alternated cotton with soil enriching crops such as peanuts, sweet potatoes, and cow peas. This not only restored vital nutrients to depleted soils but also helped farmers diversify their yields and income.

Carver's commitment to sustainability extended beyond crop rotation; he promoted composting and the use of organic fertilizers, encouraging farmers to recycle plant waste and animal manure to naturally replenish soil health. His practical demonstrations and bulletins educated rural communities on how conservation could increase productivity while safeguarding the land for future generations. These practices formed the foundation for modern sustainable agriculture, with Carver's legacy enduring in farms throughout the country.

Through his tireless efforts and visionary approach, George Washington Carver empowered farmers to adopt environmentally responsible methods, transforming the face of American agriculture and setting a precedent for conservation that remains relevant today.

Beyond his groundbreaking work in soil conservation, Carver developed hundreds of innovative uses for crops like peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans, creating new markets and economic opportunities for struggling farmers. He invented a wide array of products ranging from dyes, plastics, and paints to food items and cosmetics, demonstrating the versatility and value of sustainable crops. Carver also placed a strong emphasis on education, traveling extensively to share his findings and promote scientific farming techniques among rural communities in the rural South.

His outreach efforts included the creation of movable school wagons, known as "Jesup Wagons," which brought hands on agricultural education directly to farmers. Carver's dedication to research, education, and community upliftment helped bridge the gap between science and everyday life, ensuring that his innovative spirit and integrated approach to agriculture would influence generations to come.

Drones Use in Small, Micro, and Urban Conservation Needs Assessment and Monitoring

Emerging Technologies Transforming Conservation Practices

Drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), are rapidly revolutionizing how conservationists assess needs and monitor practices across diverse ecosystems. By offering a bird's-eye view, drones enable small and micro farm operators to collect data from inaccessible areas, with both the accuracy and efficiency of environmental assessments. They can be valuable tools in conservation efforts, especially within small, micro, and urban environments. Their ability to capture high-resolution imagery and real-time data enables conservationists to assess habitat conditions, monitor wildlife, and identify threats. The versatility of drones allows for the mapping of vegetation, detection of illegal activities, and collection of environmental data in areas that may be difficult or unsafe for humans to access. Drones provide ongoing surveillance that is less intrusive than traditional methods. They can track the success of habitat restoration projects, observe animal behaviors without human disturbance, and monitor the effectiveness of anti-poaching efforts. The imagery and data gathered through drones are often processed with artificial intelligence, enabling rapid analysis and pattern recognition that would be impossible with manual surveys alone.

In small farms and urban settings, drones facilitate rapid surveys of green spaces, wetlands, and fragmented habitats, helping to prioritize restoration efforts and guide management decisions. For micro and small-scale projects, drones can provide frequent and detailed monitoring, supporting adaptive management and timely interventions. Overall, the use of drones enhances the precision and scope of conservation needs assessments and ongoing monitoring, making them an essential component of modern conservation strategies.



Heirs' Property and Tax Laws: Navigating Complex Ownership Issues

Families Face Legal and Financial Challenges Over Inherited Land

Heirs' property, the term used to describe land inherited without a formal will or clear title, remains a significant issue for families across the United States. This form of property ownership often results from generations passing land down informally, leaving multiple family members with fractional interests but no single owner with a clear deed. The lack of clear ownership can cause a range of problems, from difficulty in selling or developing the land to vulnerability to forced sales by outside interests.

Tax laws add another layer of complexity to heirs' property. Because county tax offices may not have an individual owner on record, tax bills are often sent to the last known address or to one family member, putting the entire property at risk if taxes go unpaid. In some states, delinquent taxes can lead to the property being auctioned off, sometimes without all heirs' knowledge. Arkansas' successful efforts to modernize its laws, with the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, aim to give families more protection and opportunities to resolve disputes, but many still struggle with the costs and legal assistance being involved.

As always, Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) recommend that families work proactively to resolve title issues, create clear succession plans, and consult professionals familiar with both property and tax law. With increasing awareness, some nonprofit legal aid organizations are stepping in to provide legal help to preserve generational wealth and empower families to keep their land.

Over the years, (ALCDC) has found that outreach and education are essential components in addressing heirs' property challenges. ALCDC local workshops, informational sessions, and partnerships with trusted community leaders continue to raise awareness about the risks of unclear land ownership and the importance of timely tax payments. By equipping families with knowledge and resources, ALCDC outreach programs have continued to help prevent the loss of valuable property and ensure that land remains a source of stability and opportunity for future generations.

Looking ahead, ongoing legislative efforts and advocacy at both the state and federal levels could drive further reforms. These changes may expand legal protection, reduce barriers to clearing titles, and offer more prosperity solutions for families who have inherited property under complex circumstances. As these conversations continue, the hope is that more families will be able to preserve their heritage and build lasting economic security through responsible land stewardship.

USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program Opens Sign-Up Period

Farmers and Local Communities to Benefit from Financial and Technical Support

The Arkansas Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has officially opened its sign-up period, offering a vital opportunity for local farmers and agricultural producers to access both financial assistance and expert technical guidance. Administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), EQIP is designed to address critical resource concerns on private lands while promoting sustainable agricultural practices across the state.

Through the program, eligible farmers can apply for cost-share funding to implement a variety of conservation practices, including soil health improvement, water quality enhancement, erosion control, and wildlife habitat development. This financial support can help offset the initial investment required to adopt new technologies or best management practices, making it easier for producers to improve their environmental stewardship while maintaining productive operations.

In addition to direct financial incentives, EQIP participants receive one-on-one technical assistance from NRCS specialists. These experts work closely with farmers to assess their operations, develop tailored conservation plans, and provide ongoing support throughout the implementation process. This hands-on guidance ensures that every project is both effective and practical, maximizing environmental benefits and operational efficiency.

The impact of EQIP extends beyond individual farms, benefiting local communities by improving water quality, reducing runoff, and enhancing regional wildlife populations. As more landowners participate, the program contributes to stronger, more resilient rural economies and a healthier environment for all Arkansans.

Producers interested in applying for EQIP are encouraged to contact their local NRCS office as soon as possible, as application deadlines may vary by county. For more information on eligibility requirements and program details, visit the NRCS Arkansas website or speak directly with a conservation professional at your nearest field office.



USDA Farm Service Agency Announces Update to 2-Phase Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) Policy

New Guidelines Aim to Streamline Conservation Efforts for American Farmers

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently announced significant changes to its 2-Phase Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) policy, a move designed to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of conservation programs for producers nationwide. The 2-Phase PIP policy provides financial incentives to farmers who implement approved conservation practices, helping to improve soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat on agricultural lands.

Under the revised guidelines, the FSA has simplified the payment process to allow producers to receive incentive payments at two distinct intervals: upon the initiation of eligible conservation practices and upon completion of those practices. This change is expected to reduce administrative burdens and provide more timely support to farmers, enabling them to better plan and execute conservation efforts on their properties.

Agency officials have emphasized that the updated policy reflects ongoing feedback from producers and stakeholders, who have called for greater flexibility and predictability in conservation program funding. By streamlining the PIP process, the FSA aims to encourage broader participation in environmental stewardship programs and support the sustainability of American agriculture.

Producers interested in learning more about the new 2-Phase PIP policy or enrolling in conservation programs are encouraged to contact their local FSA office or visit the USDA's official website for detailed information and application resources.

FSA Offers Lifeline for Struggling Farmers

USDA Aims to Educate FSA Staff on How to Help Producers with Farm Business Restructuring Through Bankruptcy Options

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is launching a new educational initiative, “Bankruptcy 101 - FSA-2574,” to support agricultural producers navigating financial hardship. As unpredictable markets and challenging weather continue to affect the agricultural sector, many farmers face tough decisions regarding their financial future. Recognizing this need, the USDA FSA leadership has developed staff workshop training plans to provide clear, practical guidance for those considering bankruptcy or family farm financial restructuring as a last resort.

“Bankruptcy 101- FSA-2574” offer FSA staff an overview of bankruptcy processes relevant to family farmers and ranchers. FSA participating staff will learn about the different types of bankruptcy filings, their implications for farm operations, and the steps required to maintain compliance with FSA program requirements. The training workshop also clarifies how bankruptcy may impact existing loans, eligibility for future credit, and steps for working with FSA through periods of financial distress and family farm debt restructuring.

FSA officials emphasize that the program is designed not only to inform but help FSA staff to empower producers with resources and contacts for legal and financial counseling. By demystifying bankruptcy and providing a roadmap for recovery, “Bankruptcy 101 FSA-2574” aim/goal is to help struggling farmers make informed decisions and, where possible, find pathways to financial renewal.

For more information to access the FSA-2574 form and related materials, producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office or visit the official FSA website.

Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation

Office Phone Contact: Michael Tucker (870) 734-3005 or Janie Williams (501) 454-6206

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP)

To apply for SDRP, producers must submit the FSA-526, Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP) Stage One Application, in addition to having other forms on file with FSA.

All producers who receive SDRP payments are required to purchase federal crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. Producers who fail to purchase crop insurance for the next two available crop years will be required to refund the SDRP payment, plus interest, to USDA.

Eligible losses must be the result of natural disasters occurring in calendar years 2023 and/or 2024. These disasters include wildfires, hurricanes, floods, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought, and related conditions.

To qualify for drought related losses, the loss must have occurred in a county rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks, D3 (extreme drought), or greater intensity level during the applicable calendar year.

Deadline to sign up is April 1st, 2026.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uxlTUu3sOQ>



USDA Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP)
Stage 2
December 4, 2025

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Understanding AEW: The Adverse Effect Wage Rate Explained

Impacts and Implications for U.S. Agriculture

The Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) is a crucial component of the U.S. agricultural labor landscape, impacting both employers and migrant workers across the nation. Set annually by the Department of Labor, the AEWR establishes the minimum wage that must be paid to H-2A temporary agricultural workers, aiming to prevent domestic wage depression caused by the employment of foreign laborers.

Each year, the AEWR is calculated based on data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Labor Survey. This process is intended to ensure that wages for agricultural positions remain competitive enough to attract both domestic and foreign workers, while also protecting U.S. farm employees from potential wage undercutting. Employers hiring H-2A workers are required to pay at least the AEWR, or the prevailing wage rate if it is higher, for the specific state and job category.

Recent changes in the AEWR have sparked debate among growers and labor advocates. Many farmers argue that rising wage rates increase production costs, making it challenging to remain competitive in the global market. On the other hand, labor rights organizations emphasize the importance of fair compensation for the physically demanding and essential work performed by agricultural employees.

As the 2026 AEWR figures are released, stakeholders across the agricultural sector are closely monitoring the implications for labor supply, farm profitability, and the broader rural economy. Policymakers continue to weigh potential reforms, seeking a balance between supporting American agriculture and ensuring just wages for those who sustain it.



H-2A workers harvesting squash



Image courtesy of Economic Research Service

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 with 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 all the following that apply:

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

Row Crop Farmer: Yes: ___ No: ___ Gardener: 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: _____

If so, which ones apply? ___ Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

___ Farm Service Agency (FSA) ___ Rural Development (RD) ___ Forestry ___ Other

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

If you are an heir or a joint interest holder of land (farm, ranch, or woodland), has this property received any USDA program service? Yes: ___ No: ___

Does your property of interest have a Farm # assigned by USDA Farm Service Agency? Yes: ___
No: ___

Would you like ALCDC assistance with obtaining a farm # from USDA in order to qualify you for additional USDA services? Yes: ___ No: ___

Please mail the information provided in the survey to:

Mary Harris

PO Box 743

Brinkley, Arkansas 72021



ALFDC/ALCDC Partnership Membership

Renewal From

October 1, 2025 - September 30, 2026

_____ Individual Membership \$25.00 _____ Partnership Membership \$40.00

_____ Organization Membership \$200.00

Check one of the following:

_____ Renewal Membership _____ New Membership _____ Contribution to Organization \$ _____

Total Amount Paid: \$ _____

Member 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 and urban residents.

Member Opportunities -ALCDC/ALFDC offers leadership opportunities within the organization for our youth, farmers, and rural and urban residents. As a member you will have the opportunity to serve on advisory committees and serve as volunteer and form local volunteer working groups in support of the organization's service delivery program.

Marketing Opportunities -ALCDC/ALFDC offers cooperative marketing opportunities for rural and urban farmers, and businesses. As a member, we also offer the opportunity to present and set up an exhibition during our Regional Meetings and Annual Conferences, along with facility rental discounts.

Access to Housing, Farming, and Youth Services -ALCDC/ALFDC offers rural and urban residents technical support and training for access to affordable housing, homeownership education, business development, technical assistance and support in accessing farm financial resources for conservation practices, operating expense, youth leadership development, education enrichment, and workforce readiness.

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

Name: _____

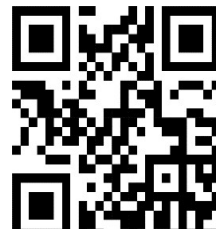
Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

**Please return your application and tax-deductible contribution to:
ALCDC/ALFDC Membership P.O. Box 743 Brinkley, AR 72021**

ALCDC/ALFDC programs and services are available without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status. On your compatible Android phone, Smart phone, or tablet-open the built-in camera app. Point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears on your Android phone, Smart phone, or tablet to join or renew membership.





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ABOUT THE ADVANCER

The Advancer is a publication of the Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) printed quarterly and circulated as a public service and communication Resources for our membership and constituents. The Advancer publication reaches a broad range of organizations and residents throughout the Delta and the United States

The Advancer reflects the nature of our work-supplying self-help opportunities and support services to our farmers and others of limited Resources in our forty-two (42) county service area. ALCDC is committed to helping people become more productive and self-sufficient. We appreciate your comments and suggestions. Direct all comments and inquiries about this publication by phone to (870) 734-3005 or e-mail us at alcdc1934@yahoo.com.

If your mailing address is not correct, contact Mary Harris at (870) 734-3005.

ALCDC STAFF

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Keisha Caffey (Resident Manager)-Meadowbrook, Marianna, West Helena/Helena
Jenifer Jones (Resident Manager) Forrest City and Wynne

ALCDC MISSION



The mission of ALCDC is to supply advocacy outreach, technical aid, and training to limited Resources small farmers and all rural residents to alleviate poverty, enhance 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.

For Additional Information
Phone (870) 734-3005

Visit Our Website

www.arlcdc.org