

NEWS BULLETIN

February 2025



Beginning Farmer



Pirtle Ridge Farm

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A New Generation of Beginning Farmers/Ranchers

On a twenty-five-acre cattle ranch just northeast of Conway, Arkansas, you will find Pirtle Ridge Farm. A family-owned livestock ranch that developed a sustainability farm program that intentionally produces a small herd of grass-fed and grass-finished Angus beef cattle. The herd of about twenty-five animals are pasture raised and without the use of hormones.

German and Sylvia Pirtle greatest legacy may not be sustainable cattle ranching but instead inspiring a new generation of farmers and ranchers to reconnect to the land, and the agriculture industry by using more alternative approaches that are focused on sustainability.

German was a young man with a dream when he left Popular Grove, where he was raised. He attended school in Marvell, Arkansas and was a member of Future Farmers of America in high school, graduating in 2000. He knew exactly how it felt to work a dream job growing up in the Delta, working for row crop farmers and learning about cattle. His parents owned a fish market in Popular Grove for about three years where he also helped his parents process the fish for customers. Later his dad was diagnosed with lung cancer and his mother decided to close the fish market to take care of his dad.

Subsequently over the years he would join the U.S. Army, serving two deployments in Iraq, during which he sustained an injury that led to a medical discharge after twelve years of service. Following his discharge, German said that he faced uncertainty about his future endeavors, prompting him to pursue higher education where he graduated from Central Baptist College in Conway with a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management. However, he continued to struggle with adjusting to civilian life after serving so many years overseas, leading him to rediscover his dream passion for livestock management, specifically caring for cows, goats, pigs, sheep, and chickens.



Cattle ranching has always represented opportunity, says German that he and his wife decided to buy land and set up a twenty-five-acre farm in Enola, Arkansas with the aspirations to expand in the future.

In our interview, German said that in the process he would attend different, workshops, courses, or formal education programs to build the necessary skills to ensure that he would be successful at building his dream into reality. He had talked to other farmers and individuals asking questions and no one would give him the right information needed until a friend from Forrest City told him to go to Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC).

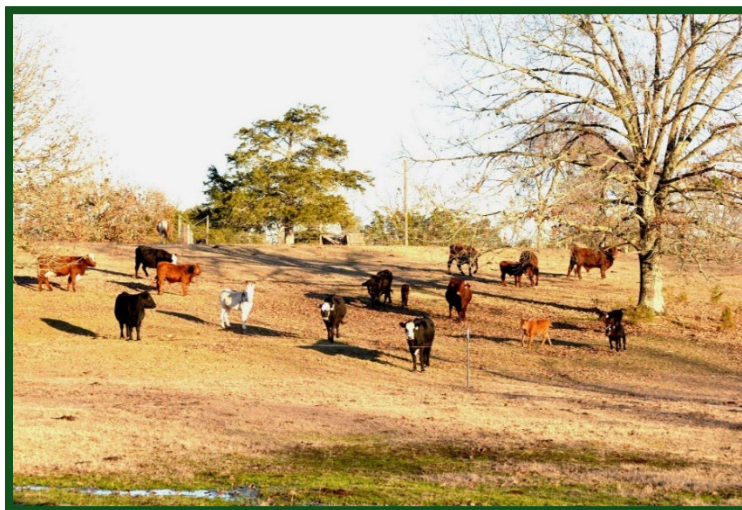
In doing so German went to Fargo, Arkansas where he met with farm advisor Michael Tucker to go over his plans about his farm. ALCDC designed a business plan for him in which he provided to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and says from that point on it was smooth sailing.

In addition, not only did he receive a loan from FSA, but he also received funding from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Cost Share Program, which provides financial aid to producers and landowners to implement conservation practices. These practices can help improve soil, water, and air quality, as well as wildlife habitats.

German also received financial aid in the Rotational Grazing Program which helps ranchers manage their livestock and pastures by rotating animals between paddocks and the Heavy Use Area Program that promotes rotational grazing as a management practice to improve environmental outcomes.

Currently, Pirtle's run a cow-calf enterprise, managing twelve pairs, implementing rotational grazing, heavy use area management, and fall planting of clover and rye grass. Raising commercial beef cattle could be thought of as a natural progression for German.

The experience obtained while growing up watching and helping farmers created an interest that grew into a career goal after arriving in Enola, Arkansas, found in Faulkner County.



Today he and Sylvia, along with their ten children ranging from six to twenty-two, run the farm. This has given us the opportunity German says, to do an amazing job with our children. It helped us find the specific ways we wanted to show up for our children and build the expectations we have for our family.

Two of his daughters and son take part in an activity of exhibiting cows and calves at livestock shows at the county fair or agricultural event when permissible.



Community Outreach and Engagement

Historically, Helena-West Helena is located on the Mississippi River, about seven and a half miles below the mouth of the St. Francis River. is the county seat of the largest city within Phillips County.

ALCDC held its outreach meeting on December 5, 2024, hosted by the City of Helena-West Helena. The purpose of the outreach meeting is to encourage the participation targeting several groups that include beginning farmers, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged, which includes members of a group which has been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice.

In attendance was Mayor Christopher Franklin of Helena-West Helena. ALCDC staff members Dr. Calvin R. King Sr, Janie Williams, and Michael Tucker. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Tresel Benjamin (District Conservationist), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Nitosha Berry (Farm Loan Manger), Darrin Davis and Syretha Turner (Program Analysis).

NRCS provided outreach guidance to participants to increase access to NRCS programs and services. The NRCS also provided informational materials to help participants understand the agency's mission, goals, and eligibility issues.

FSA provided outreach services to participants, including veterans, new and beginning farmers, women farmers and ranchers, and minority farmers and ranchers' information on their programs and loans to help farmers improve their farm income.

Dr. King spoke on Rural Development Rural Business-Cooperative Service that offers a broad suite of resources through the various current Community Facilities programs emphasizing the potential for these resources improving the quality of life, development, and sustainability in rural communities.



Dr. Calvin King Sr. and Mayor Christopher Franklin



Tresel Benjamin and Staff



Nitosha Berry, Darrin Davis and Staff

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the City of Helena West Helena and to everyone who joined us at the in-person/hybrid Summit One USDA Outreach engagement.

Hello Everyone!

Exciting YECAE/EXCEL Program News

First, we would like to tell you about our programs. Our Youth Enterprise and Careers in Agriculture and Entrepreneurship (YECAE) and Excellence for our Children through Enrichment Leadership Development and Work Experience (EXCEL) programs are designed to assist youth ages 13 to 19 in establishing professional careers in agriculture and related fields, including economics, bio-systems, agricultural engineering, communications, dietetics family science, human nutrition, rural community development and entrepreneurship. Participants progress through four phases:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: Participants are taught leadership skills, people skills including written and oral communication, presentation skills, social skills, and volunteer placement support for community service with youth summer nutrient programs.

THE BUSINESS OF FARMING: Participants engage in the firsthand aspects of farming. Projects include actual production of fresh produce, working in farmers markets/food hubs and working with row crop farmers. In addition, to classroom sessions, participants learn directly from producers how agriculture works and how USDA services, particularly NRCS foster sustainable farming and conserve our natural resources while also increasing sustainable profitability.

PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE: Participants are afforded the opportunity of serving as interns in NRCS and other USDA Agency Offices. Knowledge and experience of how the government serves agriculture is obtained.

CAREER PLANNING DEVELOPMENT/LEADERSHIP TRAINING: Monthly leadership training workshops and career planning seminars are conducted.

Our 2024 Final Annual Youth's Community Service Projects

For 2024 the youth chose the Spring's Nursing Home & Rehabilitation Center in Brinkley, Arkansas, Fargo Head Start and the Monroe County Human Resource Center to spread not only love but with joy and laughter.

On December 14, YECAE made their entrance into the hallways of the Spring Nursing Home & Rehabilitation Center donating warm socks and candy to seniors and others. EXCEL participants included Vice President

Trenton Maggit Jr. and Assistant Secretary Nadilyn Branch, Melvin Roddy, Nuri Owens, along with Youth Director Janie Williams and Mykaitlyn Smith Youth Coordinator were in attendance to help distribute the gifts.



On December 18, Santa came down the chimney early before the reindeer's got too far away and delivered gift bags with toys and candy to Fargo Head Start early before heading back to ALCDC. The children were excited, of course, to see Santa and the gifts. It was fun to see the little ones so happy!



December 20, ALCDC youth coordinator Mykaitlyn Smith presented a donation check to Monroe County Human Resource Center to help support people with developmental disabilities. Our YECAE/EXCEL youth provided endless inspiration by spreading love, joy and laughter throughout 2024.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Meeting Schedule for 2025

Date	Event	Time	Location
Feb 4	Growers Meeting	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	484 Floyd Brown Drive Fargo, AR 72021
Feb 13	Outreach Meeting	11:00 AM- 1:00 PM	Sweet Home Community Center 7000 Hwy 365 S Little Rock, AR 72206
Feb 25	Estate Planning	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	ALCDC Forrester City Office 831 N. Washington St. Forrester City, AR 72335 Contact: (870) 594-7000
March 6	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Shaw City Hall 101 Faison Street Shaw, Mississippi 38773
March 11	Outreach	11:00 AM- 1:00 PM	Fordyce Civic Center 300 Highway 79-167 Bypass Fordyce, AR 71742
March 25	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Crossett Community Center 105 W. 2 nd Ave Crossett, AR 71635
April 3	Heir's Property	10:00 AM – 12:30 PM	ALCDC Forrester City Office 831 N. Washington St. Forrester City, AR 72335 Contact: (870) 594-7000
April 10	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Marvell, Arkansas 401 N. Elm Marvell, AR 72366
April 24	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Bolivar, Tennessee 211 N. Washington Street Bolivar, TN 38008
May 6	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Parkin, Arkansas 122 Wilson Street Parkin, AR 72373
May 15	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Kingsland City Hall 140 2 nd Street Kingsland, AR 71652
May 29	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Indianola, MS 101 Front Street Indianola, MS 38751
June 12	Outreach	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Arkadelphia Parks & Recreation Center 2555 Twin River Drive Arkadelphia, AR 71923

Schedule of Outreach Meetings

Economic Assistance Payments to Farmers

Permalink

In December, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that 1) continued the current farm bill into 2025, 2) appropriated \$20.78 billion for disaster aid to farmers, and 3) appropriated \$10 billion in economic assistance payments to farmers. This article discusses these impacts, with a focus on the \$10 billion in economic assistance which is estimated to provide \$42.51 per acre for corn and \$29.50 per acre for soybeans to offset projected economic losses for the 2024 production year.

Continuing Legislation

On December 21, 2024, the U.S. Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law, the American Relief Act of 2025. The legislation provides funds for the federal government's continuing operation through mid-March 2025. It also extends the 2018 Farm Bill into 2025, meaning the current commodity programs will continue for the 2025 production year. By March 15th, farmers will again be allowed to choose between Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) for the base acres on their farms.

The Act also contained nearly \$31 billion in ad hoc disaster aid to farmers divided into two portions: \$20.78 billion will aid farmers who have suffered natural disasters in 2023 and 2024, including droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derecho, excessive heat, tornados, winter storms, freeze events, and excessive moisture. The U.S.

Department of Agriculture has not announced the mechanisms by which this aid will be distributed. These funds could be similar to recent disaster assistance programs that have been delivered using crop insurance as the design foundation such as the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity (WHIP+) and Economic Relief (ERP) Programs (see farmdoc daily from June 6, 2022).

\$10 billion in economic assistance payments. The Farm Service Agency will distribute this aid, likely in the first part of 2025.

Economic Assistance Payments

The legislation contained considerable detail on how the \$10 billion in economic assistance will be

distributed, thus allowing estimates of payments to be calculated. The economic assistance payments are intended to partially offset estimated economic losses for eligible crops associated with the 2024 production year.

Economic losses are defined as the difference between expected production costs and expected gross returns for 2024. Expected production costs are taken from projections provided by the Economic Research Service of the USDA.

Expected gross returns are defined as the product of the most recent price forecast for the 2024 marketing year available at the time of enactment of the bill (for most major field crops this would come from the December 2024 WASDE report) and a national average yield over the most recent 10-years (presumably the 2015 through 2024 crop years). For eligible commodities for which the cost, price, or yield information outlined above is not available, the Secretary of Agriculture and USDA have discretion in computing comparable estimates.

Per acre payment rates are defined as the greater of a) 26% of a commodity's estimated economic loss or b) a minimum payment rate. Minimum payment rates are defined as 8% of the product of a commodity's statutory reference price as outlined in the 2014 Farm Bill and its national average PLC payment yield.

Estimates of the per acre payment rates for major field crops are provided below in Table 1. Estimated per acre payment rates range from \$21.76 for barley to \$87.26 for cotton. The minimum payment rate applies to barley, peanuts (\$76.48), and rice (\$69.61). The estimated payments for corn, soybeans and wheat are \$42.51, \$29.50, and \$30.69 per acre, respectively.

Weekly Farm Economics

Gardner Policy Series

Impacts of Economic Assistance Payments

Nick Paulson, Gary Schnitkey and Jonathan Coppess

Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics

University of Illinois

Carl Zulauf

Department of Agricultural, Environmental and

Development Economics

Ohio State University

January 7, 2025

Farm doc daily (15):4

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Makes Grants Available for Farmers and Ag Producers to Expand Market Opportunities and Generate More Revenue

WASHINGTON, Jan. 17, 2025 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to help agricultural producers and farmers expand market opportunities and generate more revenue.

USDA is making the grants available under the [Value-Added Producer Grants](#) program. The grants help farmers and ranchers generate new products, create marketing opportunities, and increase their incomes through value-added activities.

Eligible applicants include independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmer or rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.

USDA anticipates making approximately \$30 million available through the VAPG program in fiscal year 2025. USDA may award up to \$75,000 for planning activities or up to \$250,000 for working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product.

Planning activities may include conducting feasibility studies and developing business plans. Working capital expenses may include costs associated with processing, marketing, advertising, inventory and salaries.

USDA is particularly interested in applications that will advance key agency priorities to:

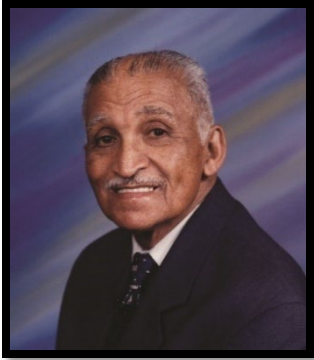
- Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.
- Ensure all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from RD-funded projects; and
- Help rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

Electronic applications will be accepted via the [VAPG application portal](#) until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on April 17, 2025.

Additional information is available on [Grants.gov](#) or by contacting your [local USDA Rural Development office](#).

If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our [GovDelivery subscriber page](#).

ALCDC Highlights Arkansas African Americans History Makers



Samuel P. Massie - Chemist

Graduated second in his class from Dunbar High School at age 13 and went on to graduate from AMN College known today as University of Arkansas Pine Bluff in 1937 where he was a groundbreaking researcher in the field of chemistry. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Massie the first African American professor at the US Naval Academy. During his tenure, he also led the establishment of the Naval Academy's black studies program. Massie is known for his integral role in the research and development of medicines used in the treatment of mental illness, malaria, meningitis, gonorrhea, herpes and cancer



Christopher C. Mercers - Attorney

C.C. Mercer legacy is one full of firsts. After graduating from Arkansas AM&N College (now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff) in 1946, he entered the University of Arkansas School of Law as a part of the 'Six Pioneers' who integrated into the university. After passing the bar, his legal career included work with the Arkansas Council on Human Relations, field secretary for the NAACP, and an "aide-de-camp" to Daisy Bates during the Central High Desegregation Crisis in Little Rock. In 1967, Mercer was appointed deputy prosecuting attorney in Little Rock, making him the first African American to hold this position in any Southern state.



Ernest G. Green – Civil Rights Activist

Ernest Green is a legendary figure of the Civil Rights Movement who made history as the first African American to graduate from Little Rock Central High. He was a part of the Little Rock Nine, the nine African American students whose desegregation of the high school made national headlines in 1957. Green went on to graduate from Michigan State University and had a successful career that included an appointment as Assistant Secretary of Labor during the Jimmy Carter administration. In 1999, Green was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, which Congress awards as the highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions.



Richard Leon Mays – Civil Rights Activist, Attorney

Richard Mays graduated from Horace Mann High School in 1961 and earned his B.A. degree in political science and business administration from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1965. Mays then received his LL.B. degree from the University of Arkansas School of Law at Fayetteville in 1968, where he was the only African American in his graduating class. Mays served on the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, The Arkansas Ethics Commission, and the Arkansas Banking Board. He also served on the U.S. South African Business Development Committee, and on the board of directors of the American Judicature Society. Mays was honored by the Arkansas Civil Rights Heritage Trail in 2015 and inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 2016.



ALFDC/ALCDC Partnership Membership Renewal

From October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025

_____ Individual Membership \$25 _____ Partnership Membership \$40

_____ Organizational Membership \$200

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 residents.

Member Opportunities -ALCDC/ALFDC offers leadership opportunities within the organization for our youth, farmers, and rural residents. As a member you will have the opportunity to serve on advisory committees in support of the organizations program service delivery work.

Marketing Opportunities -ALCDC/ALFDC offers cooperative marketing opportunities for rural and urban farmers, and businesses. We also offer the opportunity to present and set up an exhibit during our Regional Meetings and Annual Conference, along with faculty rental discounts.

Access to housing, farming, and youth services -ALCDC/ALFDC offers rural and urban residents technical aid and training for access to affordable housing, homeownership education business development, help in accessing farm financing resources for conservation practices, 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 Code: _____

Phone: _____

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.



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: _____ 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: _____

If so, which ones apply? _____ National Resources 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 desire ALCDC to assist you with attaining a farm # from USDA to qualify you for additional USDA assistance? Yes: _____ No: _____

Please mail the information provided in the survey to:

Mary Harris

P O Box 743

Brinkley, Arkansas 72021



P.O. Box 907
Brinkley, AR 72021

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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

Dr. Calvin R. King Sr. – President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
LaShica Miller – Vice-President and Chief Financial Operation Officer (CFOO)
J.D. Davis – Vice-President of Programs and Policy
Larry Lofton – Vice President of ALFDC, Ag. Farm Division Director
Barbara Erby – Director of Public Relations Marketing Administrative Service
Janie Williams – Farm Advisor Specialist, Youth Director
Michael Tucker – Farm Advisor
Ashley Crockett – Housing Director, Farm Advisor
Mary Harris – Office Manager, Farm Admin Asst.
Diamond Smith – Accts Payable, Farm Financial Analyst
Mykailyn Smith – Administrative Assistant, Youth Coordinator
Endia Rapier – Accts Receivable, Site Manager

Multi-Family Housing (Off-Site)

Ashley Crockett-McNeil Apartments Phase I & II, Crawfordsville, AR., Earle Duplex's, Pinewood Apartment Development, Brinkley, AR
Keisha Caffey (Resident Manager)-Meadowbrook, Marianna, Helena-West Helena
Jennifer 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.arlcddc.org

Website for
ALFDC
[https://alfdc webs com](https://alfdcwebs.com)