

ADVANCER

NEWSLETTER

April 2025



*Beginning Farmer
Clardy Bennett*



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Letter from the President/CEO

Dear Valued Members, Partners and Stakeholders,

As we reflect on forty-four years of dedicated service, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable journey we have undertaken together. Since our start, we have tirelessly worked to address the pressing needs of the underserved segment of our population, focusing on three pivotal areas: land and family farm retention, community economic development, youth workforce readiness and housing.

Our commitment to preserving the legacy of family farms and ensuring the retention of land has been steadfast. We have implemented programs that provide vital resources, support, and education to landowners and farmers, empowering them to sustain their operations and protect their heritage. By advocating for the support of family farm policies and financial aid, we have safeguarded the livelihoods of countless families, ensuring that their farms are still a cornerstone of our communities.

Economic development lies at the heart of a thriving community. Over the past forty-four years, we have spearheaded initiatives that stimulate local economies, foster entrepreneurship, and create job opportunities. Our collaborative efforts with local businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations have yielded transformative results, revitalized neighborhoods and fostering a sense of pride and ownership among residents. Through grants, mentorship programs, and training workshops, we have equipped individuals with the tools they need to succeed, contributing to a vibrant and diverse economy.

Access to safe and affordable housing is a fundamental opportunity that we have championed throughout our history. Our housing programs have provided shelter and stability to those in need, offering a pathway to self-sufficiency and improved quality of life. We have developed and supported affordable housing units, provided homeownership opportunities, and supported initiatives that combat homelessness. Our integrated approach ensures that individuals and families receive comprehensive support, from financial counseling to housing repairs, enabling them to build a secure future.

As we celebrate this milestone, I extend my deepest appreciation to our resolute staff, partners, and supporters. Your unwavering commitment and collaboration have been instrumental in our success. Together, we have made a lasting impact on the lives of many, reinforcing our belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Looking ahead, we stay resolute in our mission to serve the underserved and build stronger communities. With your continued support, we will forge ahead with renewed vigor, embracing the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Thank you for being an integral part of this journey. Together, we will continue to create a brighter and more fair future for all.

Sincerely,

Calvin R. King, Sr.

Talk of The Land

Beginning Farmer Clardy Bennett

Story by: *ALCDC Staff*

Menifee, Arkansas—For many ranchers, registered cattle are in their blood. While that might not be true for first-generation cattle ranchers Clardy Bennett, for his daughter it will be. About 6 years ago, Clardy Bennette decided to dive into the registered cattle world and started his ranching operation. The operation has grown over the years, and he now has 10- 100% red Beefmasters and 10 Angus straight black along with 3 donkeys on his ranch. He prides himself on producing cattle that excel in reproductive efficiency, docility, as well as performance.

“To have females that will produce a good calf but yet stay bred and get bred every year and on time, but yet also focusing on the production part of it,” Clardy Bennett said. “What we're looking for is pounds on the ground is what you get paid at the auction barn. So, trying to encompass that whole entire herd, functionality, good feed, good legs, good fertility.”



Clardy was born and raised in Dumas, Arkansas (Desha County) located in the Arkansas Delta, west of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers. Dumas has long been a business and agricultural asset to the state of Arkansas and is a welcome oasis to travelers through the delta region. Farming continues to sustain the community and has allowed for the continued growth of business and industry, including dry goods, groceries, sawmills, cattle ranching, banking, lumber, wood products and hardware, and in more recent years, furniture factories and garment manufacturers. Farm crops diversified in due time and—in addition to cotton—rice, soybeans, and winter wheat became integral.

While Clardy Bennett did not grow up in agriculture, he remembers his aunt Ruby Clay a row cropper and Cornelious Buchannan, a farmer who raised cattle. When he was around the age of 14 or 15, he would go out and work with Mr. Buchannan and his cattle until he graduated from Dumas High School. Clardy knew that one day he would have his own herd because there's nothing like caring for your land and livestock and watching them grow.

After graduating from high school, he went to College in Florida and later relocated to Conway, Arkansas. Afterwards Clardy went to barber school and became a Master Barber for twenty-one years. Soon after he obtained his contractor's license doing homeowner repairs and building homes that lead him to build his own home in Menifee, Arkansas. But that was not his calling he says. He wanted to become a rancher and raise his own herds. Eventually he would purchase 82- acres of land in Menifee, Arkansas. Ranching is my life, and it can simply not be explained by a few paragraphs. It is something you must experience for yourself.

BE: You stated earlier that you would help Mr. Buchannan on his farm. Can you elaborate on that?

Clardy: There is no better way to learn lessons about life and responsibility than to work on a farm with livestock on it, even if those livestock were only backgrounding steers that were bought and sold every year. I was always hanging out with the cattle, checking for sick steers, for possible bulls (the likelihood of finding a bull or two [or three] in the first few weeks of getting them is a higher probability than you think), and pushing up feed for them. I also got them used to my presence, because at first, they were nervous around me but eventually warmed up to me when they realized I wasn't a threat or anything to worry about.

I would be helping with feeding, handling, and like I said, pen checking. When we put the cows out to pasture in the summer, I would continue to check on them as often as I could for grass conditions, checking the fence-line, and just to enjoy their company. Since I didn't have a dog as a pet growing up, the cattle were my "pets," even if they only lasted a year before a new group came in after they were sold and shipped to the local feedlot. Cattle are food-

oriented, and since I was the giver of treats, when I was out in the pasture with them, they would surround me thinking I had something for them. But they would never push me around, more because I made sure they knew I wasn't going to let them. At the same time though, their presence gave me peace. I was happy, soulful, and forgot all my petty problems when I was with them in the pasture. And they were happy to be around me too, even if they got bored of me and went back to their grazing.



BE: What inspired you to become a farmer, and what were your biggest challenges?

Clardy: It takes a lot of care to keep these animals fed and happy. Almost every day I go out early and don't get home till sundown, because at times I would have to doctor baby calves and cows. There may be times that I fence all day, sort, move cows, and so many more everyday chores that are required of the ranching life. I also have three donkeys that protect the babies from coyotes and cougars and such, lately there have been some wolves too. Being a rancher means having a lot of debt as well. You don't become a rancher to make money. You do it because you have a passion for it. Ranching is a lifestyle. It has made me a better disciplined person along with a bunch of work.

BE: What resources have been most helpful to you?

Clardy: It can be difficult to get started in agriculture where, in general, a lot of capital is required to get started to be successful. I received a microloan through the Farm Service agency where I was able to purchase my tractor, trailer and ten heads of cows thanks to Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation who helped me with my business plan. Prior to that I had been turned down so many times from banks and lending institutions that I started my operation out of my own pocket.

BE: What advice would you provide for an individual thinking about starting to raise cows?

Clardy: Before deciding whether to go into the cattle business, gather as much information as possible. A trustworthy, knowledgeable source of information is an asset.

BE: What do you think is the most important reason to farm sustainably?

Clardy: The quality of life for the animals, making sure they are happy and easy to work with and the taste of meat would be the most important reasons to farm sustainably.



ALCDC Shared Roots Run Deep

New Market Opportunity Growers Technical Meeting

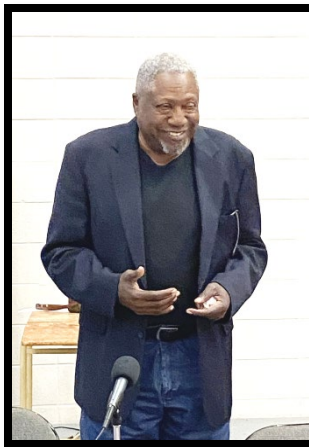
The Growers meeting on February 4, 2025, in Fargo, Arkansas, gathered growers and livestock producers to explore capacity, products, and capabilities across all seasons. Discussions included accessing farm financing, infrastructure support, and USDA market opportunities to enhance and diversify production for greater profitability.



Historical overview was given by Dr. Calvin King Sr., recalling how in 1978 the establishment of the East Arkansas Produce Marketing Association (EAPMA) was created serving as an umbrella organization for marketing and member services to independent grower cooperatives. In 1983 the EAPMA was working with six vegetable producer co-ops and more than five hundred growers, providing technical assistance and helping introduce new crops with strong market demand. We were the biggest buyers in Eastern Arkansas shipping out by the trailer loads that included squash, okra, peas, and sweet potatoes. The EAPMA has led the way in connecting people to local growers and producers with health and sustainability in mind.



James Davis (JD) spoke about business cooperative and why you need one as well as commitment to the community, cooperative values, and safe food. Whether you are talking about alternative crops, vegetables, livestock or micro-urban farming, USDA has long been the leading advocate for cooperatives in rural America. The goal of the Cooperative Programs of USDA Rural Development is to promote understanding and use of the cooperative form of business. Business cooperatives are producers and user-owned businesses that are controlled by and work for the benefit of their members, rather than outsiders. The cooperative help producer-members market and process their crops and livestock and secure needed production supplies and services. Together, as a business cooperative we will strengthen our community through a commitment to a strong local food system, clean ingredients and responsible sourcing.



Ester Dolittle who has been part of the Farm Service Agency and affiliated with Natural Resources Conservation, and the County Extension Service reiterated on the business cooperative marketing/farming and becoming certified as a farmer to grow safe food.

In attendance was Urban Ag County Executive Director LaShunda Tucker, on Micro-Urban farming, Farm Service Agency (FSA) Barbara Pettigrew on Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP), Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) Derinda Applewhite district Conservationist for Monroe County and staff members Shanon Griffin (Irrigation Water Management) and Lucas Birrell a Field

Specialist in Urban Agriculture.



Community Outreach and Engagement

February 13, 2025

ALCDC held its outreach meeting on February 13, 2025, at The Sweet Home Community Center, 7000 AR-365, Little Rock, Arkansas. Sweet Home, a small rural community in Pulaski County, has had a post office since May 29, 1877, which remains operational today.

The WE CARE program's center serves Southeast Pulaski County. The Sweet Home Community Workers Organization (CWO) purchased the site of a former elementary school in 1972, funding the building, volunteer fire department, and water district. For much of its history, Sweet Home consisted mostly of family farms.



March 6, 2025

ALCDC conducted an outreach meeting on March 6, 2025, in Shaw, Mississippi. Shaw is a city in Bolivar and Sunflower counties in the Mississippi Delta region. Most of Shaw is in Bolivar County, with a small section in Sunflower County. In the 2000 census, all 2,313 residents lived in Bolivar County, while by 2006, one resident lived in Sunflower County. The name likely refers to the Shawnee people, a Native American group from the Northeastern Woodlands. While the exact connection isn't definitively stated, the Shawnee tribe is a strong possibility given their historical presence in the northeast region of Mississippi.



In the Shaw, Mississippi area, common vegetable crops include Irish potatoes, okra, squashes, pumpkins, and root vegetables like turnips and rutabagas. Other crops are sweet potatoes, rice, wheat, peanuts, cotton, soybeans, and corn.

March 11, 2025

Fordyce is a city in southeast Dallas County, Arkansas. It is notable for the Redbug Field, a high school football field where future University of Alabama coach Paul “Bear” Bryant learned to play the game in the late 1920s.

During the Great Depression, most farmers used wells for water, collected wood for heating and cooking, and grew their own food. Some townspeople had gardens and a few chickens, but the Depression was difficult for many. The government provided commodities through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and built canning kitchens. In the area around Fordyce, you will find significant production of rice, soybeans, cotton and corn. The main economic industry has always been timber. Fordyce Lumber Company was established in 1889, and by 1932, it employed twenty-five percent of the working



population of Fordyce. The lumber company was purchased in 1963 by Georgia-Pacific Corporation. Koch Industries purchased Georgia-Pacific in 2005 but retained the Georgia-Pacific name.

March 25, 2025

Crossett, the largest city in Ashley County, Arkansas, nickname “Forestry Capital of the South”. Crossett saw significant industrial growth starting in 1937 when the Crossett Lumber Company built a paper mill. By 1960, they had added a kraft paper mill, a food carton factory, and a flakeboard factory. In 1962, the Crossett Lumber Company merged with Georgia-Pacific.



The 65,000-acre Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, located eight miles west of Crossett, provides fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. Twenty-two miles southeast of Crossett, the 12,247-acre Overflow National Wildlife Refuge provides habitat for migratory waterfowl, bald eagles and other birds. Excellent fishing can be found north of Crossett at Lake Georgia-Pacific, a 1,700-acre corporate impoundment served by an adjacent 47-acre park that accommodates RVs, tent campers and picnickers. Among Crossett's major annual events are the Crossett P.R.C.A. Rodeo in August and the Wiggins Cabin Arts and Crafts Festival each October.

Each summit workshop was an innovative and comprehensive event designed to provide participants with a wealth of information, training, and technical support centered around USDA resources. The community engagement was organized by Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) that brought together USDA agencies Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development staff, state specialists, and private sector experts to share the knowledge and expertise.

The objective of the workshop included:

- Offering a detailed overview of USDA resources available to local communities.
- Providing hands-on training sessions to ensure effective utilization of these resources.
- Facilitating technical support and personalized guidance from experienced professionals.
- Encouraging networking and collaboration among participants and experts.
- ALCDC staff conduct client case intake at the meeting for follow-up services and an evaluation of the training to be filled out.

Participants gained an in-depth understanding of the various USDA programs and services available to support agricultural development, community projects, and local initiatives. This includes information on grants, loans, and other financial assistance options.

A key benefit of each of these workshops is the opportunity for participants to network with peers, experts, and potential collaborators, fostering an environment of shared learning and mutual support, and encouraging the development of strong partnerships and community alliances.

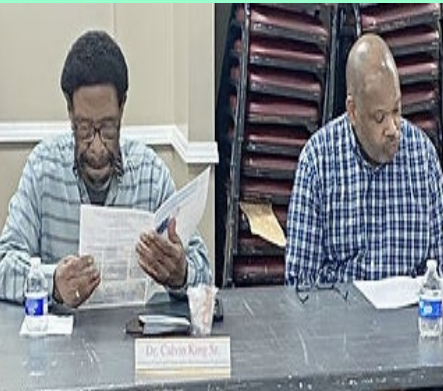
Sweet Home, Arkansas



Shaw, Mississippi



Fordyce, Arkansas



Crossett, Arkansas



Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation Outreach and Community Engagement on the Benefits of USDA Conservation Program Services to Farmers and the Public

Farmers Enhancing Agricultural Sustainability and Environmental Health

Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) public community engagement outreach in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) continues to provide the public with training, technical assistance, and educational information on the benefits of conservation programs resources. USDA NRCS have long been instrumental in promoting sustainable farming practices and protecting natural resources. These programs offer a wealth of benefits to both farmers and the public, fostering a healthier environment and ensuring the longevity of agricultural productivity and prosperity.

Conservation Program Benefits to Farmers

Improved Soil Health

USDA conservation programs focus on enhancing soil health through practices such as crop rotation, cover cropping, and reduced tillage. These methods help support soil structure, increase organic matter, and prevent erosion, leading to more fertile and productive farmland.

Water Conservation

Efficient water management is crucial for sustainable farming. USDA initiatives support the implementation of irrigation systems that improve water use and reduce waste. By adopting these practices, farmers can ensure a consistent water supply for their crops while conserving this precious resource.

Financial Incentives for Production Agriculture

Farmers taking part in USDA conservation programs often receive financial assistance and incentives. These funds help offset the costs of implementing sustainable practices, making it more possible for farmers to adopt environmentally friendly methods without compromising their economic viability.

Enhanced Ecosystem

Conservation programs encourage practices that promote prosperity through conservation, such as planting native species and creating habitats for wildlife. An enhanced ecosystem can improve crop resilience against pests and diseases, reducing the need for chemical interventions and promoting a balanced agricultural landscape.

Benefits to the Public

Cleaner Waterways

Agricultural runoff is a significant source of water pollution. USDA conservation efforts aim to reduce runoff by implementing buffer zones, wetlands, and other natural filtration systems. Cleaner waterways help the public by providing safer drinking water and healthier aquatic ecosystems.

Reduced Carbon Footprint

Sustainable farming practices supported by USDA programs often lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Techniques such as no-till farming and carbon sequestration contribute to reducing agriculture's overall carbon footprint, helping the public by mitigating climate change.

Preservation of Open Spaces

Conservation programs help support open spaces and natural landscapes by promoting responsible land use. These preserved areas give recreational opportunities to the public, enhance aesthetic value, and serve as critical habitats for wildlife.

Educational Opportunities

USDA conservation programs often include educational components that inform the public about sustainable farming practices and environmental stewardship. These programs increase awareness and engagement, fostering a community that values and supports sustainable agriculture.

Through public engagement education, training, and technical assistance, ALCDC continues to deliver to the public, what USDA conservation program services offers and the myriads of benefits that extend beyond the agricultural community. Through improved soil health, water conservation, financial incentives, and enhanced biodiversity, farmers can achieve sustainable and productive farming practices. Meanwhile, the public benefits from cleaner waterways, reduced carbon footprints, preserved open spaces, and educational opportunities. These programs play a crucial role in promoting agricultural prosperity sustainability and protecting our natural resources for future generations.





Armor Bank Invest to Address Heir Property and Community Economic Development

Investing in Community Development and Addressing Heir Property Issues in Eastern Arkansas

Armor Bank, in collaboration with the Federal Home Loan Bank, and Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation has

embarked on a significant initiative aimed at tackling the adverse impact of heir property issues in Eastern Arkansas. This partnership is designed to foster community economic development through a comprehensive approach that includes estate planning, training, and technical assistance.

Heir property, often referred to as heirs' property, is land or real estate that is passed down through generations without a clear legal title. This situation can lead to numerous complications, including an inability to obtain financing, sell the property, or use it as collateral. These issues often result in the property being underutilized or lost altogether, negatively affecting the economic stability of communities.

The economic social implications challenges associated with heirs' property disproportionately affect minority and low-income families, exacerbating economic disparities. Without clear ownership, families are unable to leverage their property to build wealth, invest in improvements, or pass on secure inheritances to future generations. This initiative looks to address these deep-rooted issues and provide paths to economic community wealth. The partnership goals and initiatives between Armor Bank, Federal Home Loan Bank and Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation is to implement several key initiatives to support communities in Eastern Arkansas.

One of the primary goals is to provide estate planning services to ensure that property ownership is clearly defined and legally documented. This includes assisting families in creating wills, trusts, and other legal instruments to protect their assets and ensure smooth transitions of ownership.

Education is a critical part of this initiative. The partnership will offer training workshops and seminars to educate community members about the importance of estate planning, the legal complexities of heirs' property, and the steps necessary to secure their property rights. This educational outreach is designed to empower individuals with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their property.

Technical assistance will be provided to help families navigate the often complex legal and bureaucratic processes involved in resolving heir property issues. This may include referrals for legal representation, mediation services, and support in accessing relevant government programs and resources.

The initiative is expected to have a profound community impact on the economic development of Eastern Arkansas communities. By resolving heir property issues, families will gain clear titles to their land, enabling them to unlock its full economic potential. This, in turn, can lead to increased investment in property improvements, greater access to financing, and enhanced opportunities for wealth building.

In addition to the economic benefits, this initiative aims to strengthen community bonds by preserving family legacies and ensuring that land stays within families for future generations. By addressing these issues collectively, the initiative fosters a sense of community solidarity and shared progress.

The partnership between Armor Bank, Federal Home Loan Bank and Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation represents a proactive and impactful approach to addressing the adverse impact of heir property issues in Eastern Arkansas. Through estate planning, education, and technical assistance, this initiative looks to empower communities, promote economic development, and preserve the heritage and stability of families for generations to come.



Opportunities for Beginning Farmers in Urban Farming

Nurturing a New Generation of Urban Farmers

In recent years, urban farming has emerged as a powerful movement aimed at addressing food security, promoting sustainable agriculture, and revitalizing urban spaces. For beginning farmers, urban farming presents a unique set of opportunities that align with the growing demand for locally sourced, fresh produce. This article explores the numerous opportunities that urban farming offers to aspiring farmers and the ways in which they can leverage these opportunities to establish successful and sustainable agricultural ventures in urban environments.

The Rise of Urban Farming

Urban farming, also known as urban agriculture, involves cultivating, processing, and distributing food within or around urban areas. The rise of urban farming can be attributed to several factors, including the increasing awareness of the environmental impact of traditional agricultural practices, the desire for fresh and locally grown produce, and the need to repurpose vacant urban spaces. This movement has gained momentum in cities around the world, with community gardens, rooftop farms, and vertical farming systems becoming common sights in urban landscapes.

Access to Resources

One of the most significant opportunities for beginning farmers in urban farming is the access to a variety of resources. Urban areas often have abundant resources that can be leveraged for farming, such as vacant lots, rooftops, and community gardens. Additionally, urban farmers can benefit from the proximity to local markets, restaurants, and consumers who are eager to purchase fresh, locally grown produce. This access to resources can significantly reduce the initial investment required for land and infrastructure, making it easier for beginning farmers to start their ventures.

Community Support and Collaboration

Urban farming initiatives often thrive on community support and collaboration. Many urban farming projects are community-driven, involving residents, organizations, and businesses. This sense of community can provide beginning farmers with valuable support, including volunteer labor, funding, and access to shared resources. Collaborating with local organizations and participating in community events can also help farmers build a loyal customer base and establish their presence in the urban farming community.

Educational and Training Programs

Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) provides educational training and technical assistance program support to assist beginning farmers in their urban farming. These programs offer valuable knowledge related to resource opportunities for building a successful economically sustainable farm business. By participating in ALCDC program services, beginning and seasonal farmers are provided with technical assistance support needed to navigate the challenges of urban farming and build successful agricultural business enterprises.

Innovative Farming Techniques

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) offers innovative conservation support to urban farming. Their conservation program services provide an opportunity for urban farmers to adopt innovative farming techniques that can enhance productivity and sustainability. Techniques such as hydroponics and vertical farming allow urban farmers to grow crops in limited spaces and minimize resource use. These techniques can also help produce high yields with minimal environmental impact. Embracing conservation and innovation can provide beginning farmers with a competitive edge and open new possibilities for their ventures.

Market Opportunities

The growing demand for locally sourced, organic, and fresh produce presents significant market opportunities for urban farmers. Urban consumers are increasingly prioritizing the quality and origin of their food, leading to a rising interest in farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and farm-to-table initiatives. Beginning farmers can tap into these market opportunities by offering unique and high-quality products that cater to the preferences of urban consumers. Establishing direct relationships with consumers through farmers' markets and CSA programs can also help farmers build trust and loyalty.

Challenges and Solutions

While urban farming offers numerous opportunities, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Beginning farmers may face issues such as limited space, soil contamination, and regulatory hurdles. However, these challenges can be addressed through strategic planning and innovative solutions. For instance, utilizing raised beds and container gardening can help overcome soil contamination issues. ALCDC Farm Program Service Division can help individuals navigate the challenges.

Urban farming presents a promising pathway for beginning farmers to enter the agricultural sector and make a positive impact on their communities. By leveraging the opportunities available in urban environments, aspiring farmers can establish successful and sustainable farming ventures that contribute to food security, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. ALCDC is here to provide technical assistance, education, and innovative approaches, to support the next generation of micro and urban farmers, while they thrive and transform the urban agricultural landscape.



Community gardens



Rooftop gardens



Hydroponics



Vertical farming



Aquaponics

Types of Urban Farming



USDA Expediting \$10 Billion in Direct Economic Assistance to Agricultural Producers

Marking National Agriculture Day, Secretary Rollins Prioritizes Timely Support for Farmers

WASHINGTON— U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, on National Agriculture Day, announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is issuing up to \$10 billion directly to agricultural producers through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) for the 2024 crop year. Administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), ECAP will help agricultural producers mitigate the impacts of increased input costs and falling commodity prices.

“Producers are facing higher costs and market uncertainty, and the Trump Administration is ensuring they get the support they need without delay,” **said Secretary Rollins**. “With clear direction from Congress, USDA has prioritized streamlining the process and accelerating these payments ahead of schedule, ensuring farmers have the resources necessary to manage rising expenses and secure financing for next season.”

Authorized by the American Relief Act, 2025, these economic relief payments are based on planted and prevented planted crop acres for eligible commodities for the 2024 crop year. To streamline and simplify the delivery of ECAP, FSA will begin sending pre-filled applications to producers who submitted acreage reports to FSA for 2024 eligible ECAP commodities soon after the signup period opens on March 19, 2025. Producers do not have to wait for their pre-filled ECAP application to apply. They can visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap to apply using a login.gov account or contact their local FSA office to request an application once the signup period opens.

Eligible Commodities and Payment Rates

The commodities below are eligible for these per-acre payment rates:

Wheat - \$30.69	Eligible oilseeds
Corn - \$42.91	Canola - \$31.83
Sorghum - \$42.52	Crambe - \$19.08
Barley - \$21.67	Flax - \$20.97
Oats - \$77.66	Mustard - \$11.36
Upland Cotton & Extra-Long Staple Corn - \$84.74	Rapeseed - \$23.63
Long & Medium Grain Rice - \$76.94	Safflower - \$26.32
Peanuts - \$75.51	Sesame - \$16.83
Soybeans - \$29.76	Sunflower - \$27.23
Dry Peas - \$16.02	
Lentils - \$19.30	
Small Chickpeas - \$31.45	
Large Chickpeas - \$24.02	

Producer Eligibility

Eligible producers must report 2024 crop year planted and prevented planted acres to FSA on an FSA-578, *Report of Acreage* form. Producers who have not previously reported 2024 crop year acreage or filed a notice of loss for prevented planted crops must submit an acreage report by the Aug. 15, 2025, deadline. Eligible producers can visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap for eligibility and payment details.

Applying for ECAP

Producers must submit ECAP applications to their local FSA county office by Aug. 15, 2025. Only one application is required for all ECAP eligible commodities nationwide. ECAP applications can be submitted to FSA in-person, electronically using [Box and One-Span](#), by fax or by applying online at fsa.usda.gov/ecap utilizing a secure login.gov account.

If not already on file for the 2024 crop year, producers must have the following forms on file with FSA:

- [Form AD-2047](#), *Customer Data Worksheet*.
- [Form CCC-901](#), *Member Information for Legal Entities* (if applicable).
- [Form CCC-902](#), *Farm Operating Plan* for an individual or legal entity.
- [Form CCC 943](#), *75 percent of Average Gross Income from Farming, Ranching, or Forestry Certification* (if applicable).
- [AD-1026](#), *Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification*.
- [SF-3881](#), *Direct Deposit*.

Except for the new CCC-943, most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, likely have these forms on file. However, those who are uncertain and want to confirm the status of their forms or need to submit the new Form-943, can contact their [local FSA county office](#).

If a producer does not receive a pre-filled ECAP application, and they planted or were prevented from planting ECAP eligible commodities in 2024, they should contact their [local FSA office](#).

ECAP Payments and Calculator

ECAP payments will be issued as applications are approved. Initial ECAP payments will be factored by 85% to ensure that total program payments do not exceed available funding. If additional funds remain, FSA may issue a second payment.

ECAP assistance will be calculated using a flat payment rate for the eligible commodity multiplied by the eligible reported acres. Payments are based on acreage and not production. For acres reported as prevented plant, ECAP assistance will be calculated at 50%.

For ECAP payment estimates, producers are encouraged to visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap to use the ECAP online calculator.

More Information

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.

Drones In Agriculture



Drones are now used for pre-assessment at vegetable farms.



Transforming Agricultural Vegetables Practices with Drones

In a significant leap forward for agricultural technology, drones are now being employed to pre-assess vegetable farms for insect infestations. This innovative approach, which merges modern technology with traditional farming practices, is poised to revolutionize the way farmers watch and manage their crops, ensuring healthier yields and more sustainable operations.

The Rise of Drones in Agriculture

The use of drones in agriculture has been steadily increasing over the past decade. These unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have proven their worth in various sectors, from surveying and mapping to irrigation management and crop health monitoring. The latest advancement in this field involves using drones to detect and assess plant health and insect infestations on vegetable farms before they become problematic.

How Drones Work in Pre-Assessment

Equipped with high-resolution cameras can capture detailed images of crops from above. These images are then analyzed to show signs of insect infestations, such as damaged leaves, irregular growth patterns, and the presence of pests. Drones fly over fields regularly, giving farmers current data on crop health to proactively address issues.

Precision and Accuracy

One of the key advantages of using drones for pre-assessment is their ability to cover large areas quickly and accurately. Traditional methods of scouting for pests, which involve physically inspecting crops, can be time-consuming and labor-intensive. Drones, on the other hand, can survey entire fields in a fraction of the time, providing farmers with Informed precise images of problem field locations and can be used to make informed decisions.

Early Detection

The real-time data images provided by drones are invaluable for early detection of plant stress caused by insect infestations. By finding problems at an early stage, farmers can implement targeted interventions to prevent the spread of pests and minimize damage to their crops. This initiative-taking approach not only helps protect the health of the plants but also reduces the need for chemical pesticides, promoting more sustainable farming practices.



Featured Business Owner Ester Doolittle

Ester Doolittle, his wife Maxine, and sons Cedric, Christopher and Corey are local producers and owners of D & S Produce in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Doolittle has been farming for an extraordinarily long time.

Mr. Doolittle, who was originally from Hughes, Arkansas graduated with a full agricultural scholarship to attend the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff from 1967 to 1971. Afterwards he would go on to teach at Lee High School in Marianna for three years and Wabbaseka High School in Wabbaseka for two years.



Doolittle has been a longtime client of the Economic Research and Development Center (ERDC) at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) where he was the Marketing Coordinator for Alternative Crops.

In 2012 D & S Produce earned Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and the Good Handling Practices (GHP) certification making it one of the first produce companies in Jefferson County to successfully pass the voluntary independent audit of produce suppliers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Doolittle had to develop a written food safety plan which includes the Standard Operating Policies for the processing shed. But Doolittle did not do it alone. James Davis of Arkansas Land & Farm Development Corporation (ALFDC) helped Doolittle develop the written food safety plan and prepare for the USDA audit.

The family farms on 100-acres of land in Jefferson County and 5-acres near the university where they grow peas, squash, and other vegetables.



They also make regular runs to Indianapolis, Indiana, Champaign and Chicago, Illinois where they supply fresh produce directly to urban markets, something they have been doing since 1997.

Low-income neighborhoods have trouble getting healthy fresh produce food at reasonable prices, Doolittle said. “It’s always better if you can cut out the middleman.”

ALCDC acknowledges D & S Produce's efforts to build a multi-generational business providing fresh local produce. D & S Produce can be reached at (870) 413-0406 or (870) 413-0060.



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, AR72021

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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.

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Keisha Caffey (Resident Manager)-Meadowbrook, Marianna, Helena-West 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.arlcddc.org