

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE SMALL FARMERS OUTREACH TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (2501) PROGRAM FROM 1994-2001: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN FARMERS

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Abstract

The United States Department of Agriculture incorporated the Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance (2501) Program into the 1990 Farm Bill. It was envisioned that the 2501 Program would assist historically black land-grant institutions in addressing the myriad of needs and issues facing African American farmers through the provision of farmer-specific, individualized, technical and outreach assistance. This research article examines the experiences of 6 of the 27 small farm projects participating in the 2501 Program from 1994-2001. In particular, this study provides a qualitative case study analysis of the 2501 Program and the procedures used in the implementation and delivery of agricultural extension education to African American farmers. This research article addresses the following questions: (1) what did the 2501 projects do, (2) how well did they do it, and (3) how did the farmers experience the 2501 program.

Introduction/Theoretical Framework

The rich history of African Americans outlines a legacy that is rooted deep within the agrarian community. Originally brought to the United States as slaves, African Americans have participated in farming for more than 300 years (Royce, 1993; Zabawa, 1989). A review of the Census of Agriculture indicates that thousands of African Americans have abandoned farming. African Americans have abandoned farming at a much greater rate than their White counterparts (see Table 1). This rapid rate of decline began in the 1920s. At that time, there were more than 900,000 African American farm operators in the United States. In 1997, seventy-seven years later, that number had fallen drastically, to less than 19,000.

Why have so many African Americans abandoned agriculture? Researchers studying African American farmers suggested that African Americans were driven out of agriculture due to racism and discrimination, the mechanization of cotton,

the widespread adoption of scientific and technology innovations, the changing structure of agriculture and because of the increasing economic opportunities presented through urbanization, and the Civil Rights movement (Brown, Christy, & Gebremedhin, 1994; Jones, 1994; Schor, 1992; Schweniger, 1989; United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1982). In an effort to slow down the rate of African American farmers leaving agriculture and to provide limited-resource, small farmers with culturally relevant, farmer-specific, technical and outreach assistance, the Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance (2501) Program was implemented.

Description of the 2501 Program

The Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance (2501) Program is a federally funded program sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The goal of this program is to provide agricultural extension education services to minority farmers, including

Table 1
U.S. Farms Operated by Blacks and Whites 1900-1997

| Year | Blacks | % Change | Whites | % Change |
|-------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1997 ^a | 18,451 | - 1.9 | 1,882,652 | - 0.9 |
| 1992 ^a | 18,816 | - 18.0 | 1,900,629 | - 8.0 |
| 1987 ^b | 22,954 | - 31.0 | 2,064,805 | - 6.5 |
| 1982 ^b | 33,250 | - 41.9 | 2,207,726 | - 8.0 |
| 1978 ^c | 57,271 | - 57.3 | 2,398,726 | - 22.4 |
| 1969 ^c | 133,973 | - 50.8 | 3,089,885 | - 9.6 |
| 1959 ^c | 272,541 | - 51.3 | 3,419,672 | - 28.8 |
| 1950 ^c | 559,980 | - 17.9 | 4,802,520 | -10.7 |
| 1940 ^c | 681,790 | - 22.8 | 5,378,913 | 0.1 |
| 1930 ^c | 882,852 | - 4.6 | 5,373,703 | - 2.3 |
| 1920 ^c | 925,710 | 3.6 | 5,499,707 | 1.1 |
| 1910 ^c | 893,377 | 19.6 | 5,440,619 | 9.5 |
| 1900 ^c | 746,717 | -- | 4,970,129 | -- |

^a United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistical Services (1992, 1997). ^b United States Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census (1982, 1987). ^c United States Commission on Civil Rights (1982).

females, African Americans, American Indians, Asian or Pacific Islanders, and operators of Spanish origin (Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, 1990).

The 2501 program is currently administered by the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). CSREES provides competitive grants to institutions that "...have demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agricultural-related services to socially disadvantaged family farmers and ranchers in their region" (Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, 1990). The grant recipients used the funds to establish small farm projects or to support their existing small farm projects. Funds are channeled through the USDA state offices and then distributed to the individual small farm projects. The small farm projects are implemented at the grassroots level. Each of these projects provides services directly to minority farmers (Hargrove, 2002).

The 2501 Program was implemented, because minority farmers, specifically African American farmers, were not receiving the maximum benefits from USDA programs (Hargrove, 2002). In some cases, African American farmers were not even participating in USDA programs (Franklin & Moss, 2000; McCray, 1994; Pennick, 1996). Factors that restricted African American's participation in government programs included: (a) racial discrimination in the implementation of agricultural programs; (b) having little or no knowledge of existing programs; (c) not being able to fully comprehend the rules and regulations surrounding government programs; (d) having lower educational levels; and (e) operating and living in a social, political, and cultural environment that traditionally promoted inequitable educational opportunities and inferior educational conditions for African Americans (Bagi & Bagi, 1989; Jones, 1994). Inferior educational opportunities and limited knowledge of how the political

and economic system worked resulted in poor educational training for the African American farmer. African American farmers were able to effectively produce different crops and raise livestock, but did not have the necessary managerial skills to successfully operate a farming enterprise (Brown et al., 1994). When combined, Brown et. al stated the inadequate managerial skills and the inequities

...associated with Extension Service Programs, African American farmers were less able to utilize information on the latest technological developments, and evaluate relevant market opportunities and make modifications for their farming operations. These factors (limited land, capital, and management) weakened African American farmers' competitive position and led many to leave agriculture. (p. 60)

The 2501 Program has proven to be both beneficial to USDA and African American farmers (Hargrove, 2002). USDA benefits from the 2501 Program, because they have an organization (small farm projects) working at the grassroots level, who have the necessary skills and training to provide individualized technical assistance to USDA's hard-to-reach clientele. African American farmers benefit because they have an organization from within their communities that is dedicated and committed to ensuring the sustainability and survival of African American farmers. The small farm projects are able to effectively and thoroughly explain USDA programs to African American farmers. Therefore maximizing the benefits that African American farmers receive from USDA programs; while minimizing opportunities for unfair treatment and discrimination (Hargrove).

Purpose and Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study is to provide an analysis of the procedures used in the implementation and delivery of agricultural extension education to

African American farmers. Using the 2501 Program as a case study, this paper will examine selected 2501 projects within the context of process evaluation. "Process evaluation focuses on the internal dynamics of and actual operations of the program..." (Patton, 1997, p. 206). Process evaluation provides answers to questions such as: (a) what did the program do, (b) how well did the program staff do it and (c) how did the participants experience the program (Patton). The perceptions of people close to the program are a key element in process evaluation.

Research Methods

The data for this study were collected using the qualitative case study methodological approach. This avenue of inquiry allowed for an in-depth exploration of the 2501 Program within its natural settings and within a real-world context; while at the same time capturing the essence of the program through the voices of those who have participated directly in its implementation. Specifically, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and participant observations were used to collect the data. The data collection period extended from June 1, 2001 – July 30, 2001.

Using a list obtained from the National Office of Outreach (former administrator of the 2501 Program), 6 small farm projects were identified. The six small farm projects were selected using the purposeful sampling technique. Purposeful sampling involves the selection of cases or samples that are "likely to be informational rich with respect to the purposes of the study" (Gall, Borg, Gall, 1996, p. 218). The logic behind purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about a topic (McMillian & Schumacher, 1997).

The small farm projects selected as cases in this study included: South Carolina State University (SCSU), Fort Valley State University (FVSU), Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC/LAF), Tuskegee University (TU), Alcorn State University (ASU), and Lincoln University (LU). Each of the projects

selected had an extensive history in providing agricultural extension education and outreach assistance to African American farmers.

Fifteen interviews were completed with representatives from each of the six small farm projects. Four of the 15 interviews were conducted with project directors. An additional seven interviews were completed with assistant/associate project directors or project coordinators. Four interviews were conducted with small farm professionals. In addition, 12 different farm visits were also conducted. Five of the 12 farm visits resulted in the completion of one-on-one interviews with African American farmers participating in the 2501 Program. The interviews were completed at each of the six different projects, which were located in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Missouri.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was analyzed using the within technique and the case focused technique. The within-case technique treated each project as a comprehensive case in and of itself (Merriam, 1998). While, the case-focused or crossed case technique built general explanations that fitted each of the individual projects, even though the projects varied in detail. These two techniques are consistent with the approaches recommended by Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998) when analyzing case study data.

In order to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the research design, several techniques were employed including, mechanically recording the data, member-checking, triangulation, purposive sampling, and maintaining a reflective journal.

Results

What did the 2501 Projects do and how well did they do it?

A review of the findings indicated that the six small farm projects were uniquely different; however, they did share one commonality. This commonality was in the provision of basic services to African

American farmers. The six small farm projects were actively engaged in: (a) recruiting and retaining African American farmers, (b) providing one-on-one technical assistance, (c) disseminating information, (d) assisting farmers in completing loan applications, (e) establishing cooperatives and (f) exposing African American farmers to alternative enterprises.

Recruiting Participants/Reaching African American farmers

The findings indicated that the six small farm projects were faced with the task of identifying and recruiting African American farmers as participants in their small farm projects. To achieve this objective, the six small farm projects implemented a strategy that was based on the projects going directly to the farmers rather than relying on the farmers coming to them. Essentially, each of the six small farm projects had to go where the African American farmer was located. This included traveling door-to-door, visiting local churches, attending community meetings, and using other nontraditional sources as avenues for recruitment. Nontraditional sources included the local Chamber of Commerce, NAACP, and African American leaders within the communities.

The process of identifying and recruiting African American farmers revealed numerous insights regarding the farmers' participation habits and cultural behavior. It was discovered that there were a large number of Black farmers who desperately needed assistance, but they were hesitant to come forward. For example, when conducting recruitment activities at local churches, the project staff found that when they made an announcement about their small farm project and the services that they offered, not one farmer would come forward or identify himself or herself as a farmer, even though there were several farmers in the congregation at those times. In most cases, a member of the congregation would identify all of the African American farmers and the ones that potentially needed assistance. This scenario was described by one of the participants:

The churches are very resourceful from the standpoint of making contact with Black Farmers. They don't always respond just because we have made an announcement. But when you start asking other folks, they will tell you that 'there is Brother Joe over there, you need to go and visit with him'. What happens is that when we are working with a client and if they are pleased with the service then they will say, 'you ought to go down and visit so and so, he needs your help. (Participant 2)

The six small farm projects interviewed for this study indicated that African American farmers do not trust government programs. This problem can be cited as a reason for African American farmers' lack of participation in government programs. Two of the participants recounted their experiences with this very issue:

You know throughout the years, I have often thought of what my grandfather said. He refused during his years of farming to borrow money from Farmers Home Administration. He felt that it was just a way to take Black folks land, and we lost a lot of land due to the practices of county agents working in the local office. And extension was not even concerned. (Participant 14)

The reasons why the Black farmer has such indifference is because they have been victimized by the system. They have been victimized so much that they don't trust anybody. That is the reason why it is difficult to make changes. They think that everybody that comes out there is just coming to take advantage of them. (Participant 16)

Another participant described an incident of how African American farmers' past experiences with government programs influenced their perceptions and belief. He indicated:

I remember some years ago, we (the project staff) went back to a little farm in the state to meet with some folks down there. I begin to make my presentation and when I said something to let them know that it was a government program one gentleman said. 'You know I remember when the government took my daddy's mule.' When he raised the issue about the government taking his daddy's mule, I said to myself, we might as well quit this conversation. This was an older gentleman who looked like he was retired from another job. If his memory was that good, he wasn't going to buy into anything that we said that night. (Participant 2)

This information regarding African American farmers' participation in government programs is not a new topic and the examples provided in the above paragraphs were typical of the experiences encountered by each of the six small farm projects. In an effort to gain the trust of African American farmers and to increase their participation in government programs, each of the six projects were implementing a strategy that was based upon the establishment of rapport, educating, treating the African American farmer's information confidentially, and gaining the confidence of the African American farmer. Achieving this objective was not an overnight process, but developed out of patience and a sincere desire to make a difference. In addition, each of the six small farm projects emphasized the significance of building positive relationships and assisting the African American farmer in identifying his or her problems, and developing solutions. A participant articulated his strategy in working with African American farmers:

A lot of times, we tend to think that we know what these people need. We have to understand that we need to bring these people to the table. It is important that farm families identify those barriers that affect them. If you help them to identify those barriers, then it is their

problem and not yours. If it gets to the point, where it becomes your problem, you may not have any support. You have to work with people. We put emphasis on building relationships. (Participant 2)

Providing Technical Assistance

African American farmers are in desperate need of technical assistance in the areas of farm planning, record keeping, financial planning, and production. The provision of technical assistance in these areas was the foundation of each of the six small farm projects. Each of these projects had achieved remarkable success in the provision of these services. For example, 92% of farmers participating in the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance's small farm project had developed some form of record keeping system and 8% were using computers. Through the provision of technical assistance this organization had also helped save 4,054 acres of land valued at \$3,356,720 through education and direct legal and technical assistance. In addition, the average farm income of participants in the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund's small farm project had increased from \$40,665 in 1995 to \$55,413 in 2000 (Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project Summary, n.d.).

Technical assistance was provided to the farmers primarily through one-on-one consultation with a specialist. The specialist was responsible for completing farm and home visits. Each of the six projects was actively engaged in the completion of these visits. In 1999, Fort Valley State University's small farm project completed over 500 farm and home visits (Fort Valley State University Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project Summary, 1999).

Once initial contact was made with the farmer, the specialist worked directly with him or her. Depending on the farmers' need, the specialists typically visited the farmer on an average of one or two times

per month. A participant described this process:

Specialists make farm visits to participants at least two times a month. Sometimes, it will be more depending on what that particular person may have going on. If that person is in the process of obtaining a loan, you may see that person four or five times in that month working with him on his application. You are making sure that all his ducks are lined up in a row and everything that you can possibly do to make that a good loan application has been done, all i's dotted and t's crossed, that may involve seeing the farmer more than just once or twice a month. (Participant 4)

A major task confronting each of the six small farm projects was assisting the farmers in establishing and maintaining good farm records and developing sound farm plans. A description of this process is provided below,

Basically, we try to incorporate an intensive management plan for the farmer. We try to make sure that all of our farmers have a farm plan and the farm plan maps out what their intentions are for that year. For example, how much money they are spending, how much money they plan on making, where they are going to spend the money, and how much they expect to get in return. (Participant 4)

Disseminating Information

One of the primary objectives of the 2501 Program was the dissemination of information to African American farmers. According to one of the participating project directors,

Black farmers have not mastered, per se, the ability to go to the farm service agency and say, tell me what programs are coming up and how can I sign up for them. (Participant 2)

Therefore, each of the six small farm projects was engaged in an extensive process to get valuable information to African American farmers. Each of the six small farm projects interviewed employed a variety of methods to reach African American farmers. The primary goal of each of these projects was to increase the African American farmer's awareness about USDA programs.

The methods that were being used by each of the six small farm projects were not traditional. The six small farm project staff utilized local newspapers, radio public announcements, local farmer groups, brochures, and booths at county fairs, farmer markets, farm visits, farm demonstrations, and workshops. For example in 1999, Fort Valley State University conducted 18 group meetings for more than 400 farmers. They were able to distribute more than 700 publications on subjects ranging from farm planning to alternative enterprises to their clientele (Fort Valley State University Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project Summary, 1999). In their five-year summary, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives indicated that they conducted 200 workshops/meetings and over 4,874 farmers attended those meetings.

Even though each of the six projects were actively engaged in conducting workshops, they each indicated that workshops were not necessarily the most effective method to reach or educate African American farmers. Two of the participants discussed their experiences with conducting workshops for African American farmers:

A lot of times, group meetings may not necessarily be the best way for those people to learn about a particular subject or get them involved. I think that group meetings are good when you are informing people about different programs. In terms of trying to do a group meeting and training farmers to be independent and to do it on their own, it is going to take more than a group meeting to accomplish that (Participant 4).

What we have found is that many of the clients that we provide assistance to, they don't come to workshops initially. But once they have developed the confidence in our people, then they begin to come out when we ask them to attend. (Participant 2)

Assisting Farmers in Applying For and Obtaining Loans

In addition, to identifying and recruiting African American farmers, providing technical assistance, and disseminating information, the six small farm projects were also actively assisting African American farmers in applying for loans. During a three-year period beginning in 1994 and ending in 1997, Tuskegee University small farm project assisted 284 socially disadvantaged and limited resource farmers in completing loan applications. This included assisting 106 farmers in obtaining farm operating loans totaling \$1,054,000; 21 farmers in obtaining farm ownership loans that totaled \$1,252,500; and 98 youth totaling \$474,000 (Tuskegee University Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project Progress Report, 1997). In 1999, Fort Valley State University small farm project assisted farmers in securing over \$1.3 million in loans (Dealing with Farm Debt, 1999). In their 1999-2000-project summary, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund assisted farmers in receiving \$13,708,070 in loans for operating, livestock, equipment, and farm ownership.

The process of assisting a farmer in applying for and receiving a loan involves many different steps. The six small farm projects were intensively engaged in each of these steps which included: (a) ensuring that the farmer meets the necessary requirements, (b) completing the necessary forms, (c) submitting the loan package and (d) receiving the loan. The project staff also served as a linkage between the farmer and the local Farm Service Agency or lender and provided clarification to the farmers regarding financial standards and requirements of the lenders. One participant

described the process of assisting farmers in the completion of loan applications:

We go to the farmers' home. If it is 5:00 in the evening or 7:00 in the evening. I sit there and go through the whole process. The farmer may not have everything, but once we start the application, I am with them until the end. (Participant 6)

Establishing Cooperatives

The small farm projects assisted farmers in their targeted area in the establishment of cooperatives. In particular, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund assisted a farmer's organization in Georgia with the establishment of the Southern Alternatives Cooperative. The process of establishing this cooperative is described below:

Ben and Jerry Ice Cream Company approached us about doing something for Black farmers. They indicated that they would be interested in purchasing a product from the farmers to be included in their ice cream. Ben & Jerry had what they called special project people and that person worked closely with me during the time that we were developing this project. We were able to get loans during the first year. Ben & Jerry said that they would purchase a certain amount of pecans from our farmers. Ben & Jerry can't put a pecan in its shell in their ice cream, the pecans have to be processed.

We ran into a lot of racism trying to find a place that would process the pecans. Every place we went to try to get the pecans processed, the folks would say, 'tell you what we will do, we will buy the pecan from the farmer, process the pecan, and then we will sell them to Ben & Jerry. This process was not different from what was already happening to them. Ben & Jerry finally had to get the major company that they were

buying pecans from, to process the pecans from the Black farmers.

Throughout this whole process it occurred to me that what the farmers needed to do was to have their own processing facility. Ben & Jerry paid market price plus a premium price to the farmers. I encouraged the farmers to save half of the premium price towards building their own processing facility. And they did that and acquired their own facility in 1997. There are between 25 and 30 farmers who are a part of the cooperative. Ben & Jerry continued to buy from them for a while.

Exposure to Alternative Enterprises And Niche Markets

The project staff for each of the six small farm projects indicated that their targeted clients were heavily engaged in the production of traditional crops such as cotton and soybeans. Each of the six small farm projects revealed that they were actively engaged in introducing their clients to alternative enterprises as a means of increasing their incomes and ensuring their long-term sustainability. In fact, in 2000, 87% of the farmers participating in the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance grew alternative crops compared to 54% in 1995 (Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund Small Farmers Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project Summary, n.d.). Two of the project directors described their experiences in introducing alternative enterprises in their targeted area.

A lot of the farmers in our area want to continue to grow traditional crops like cotton and soybeans. The prices are not as good as they were in the past and they are still trying to stick with those traditional crops and losing money. We are trying to introduce them to nontraditional crops or alternative crops such as sweet potatoes, greens, purple hull peas, or okra. We are trying to get them to start with one or two acres for one year and assist them in marketing and

selling those particular crops. Then they can see how easy it is compared to some of the traditional crops and the amount of money that they can make off of those two acres compared to an acre of cotton or soybeans. (Participant 17)

How did the farmers experience the 2501 Program?

The findings of this study revealed that the six participating small farm (2501) projects had a significant impact on African American farmers in their targeted area. The 2501 projects had the following impacts: (a) increased the awareness of African American farmers regarding government programs, (b) improved the managerial skills of African American farmers in their targeted area, (c) increased the number of African American farmers applying for and receiving loans, (d) achieved success in improving the attitudes and perceptions of African American farmers in their targeted area regarding government programs and (e) increased the number of African American farmers participating in agricultural programs. Examples of African American farmers who achieved remarkable success as a result of participating in the six small farm projects are presented below.

Farmer B

Farmer B was a small tobacco and swine farmer participating in Fort Valley State University small farm project. He inherited the operation from his father. Farmer B also shared this operation with his brother. They began farming in 1981. Farmer B needed assistance in reducing his debt load and obtaining an operating loan for his farming operation. The 2501 Program was able to assist Farmer B in reducing his debt load and developing a farm plan with a positive cash flow. As a result of his participation in the Fort Valley State University small farm project, Farmer B has been able to computerize his farming operation, improved his record-keeping system, and became knowledgeable of his total earnings and expenses (Fort Valley State University Small Farmers Outreach Training and

Technical Assistance Project Summary, 1999). Farmer B provided a vivid description of his experiences.

My grandfather was a sharecropper and it just past on down through generations. My dad, he took it over. When I finished high school my father asked us, Do you want to go to college or farm? It was 11 of us. My first year in farming was in 1981. I was working with USDA before I start working with Fort Valley. I had a lot of problems with USDA. We had to fill out the application package ourselves. I applied for a loan in December of 1980 and I didn't get the loan until July of 1981. USDA kept giving me the run around. From that day on, I had problems. I had problems with supervised loans. You are not supposed to have a supervised loan but for one year, I had six or seven. FVSU has been a big help in filling out applications for USDA. They have helped me budget my loans, helped me get disaster payments. I never got disaster payments before working with FVSU. It has been very different since working with FVSU. The loans have not taken as long. I get them on time. When I called the county agent, he is right here to help me to do whatever needs to be done. (Farmer B)

Farmer D

Farmer D was the sole-operator and owner of a successful feeder-pig operation in South Carolina. Farmer D indicated that prior to participating in the 2501 Program, he had no idea who to go to for assistance with his farming operation. He stated that he was struggling and that he was trying to accomplish for years what he has accomplished by participating in South Carolina State project. He indicated that in the past, USDA agencies would not assist him, and he was frequently given the run around. He cited a lack of knowledge among the Black farmer as their greatest weakness. Farmer D's operation consisted of three bay areas that housed several thousand feeder

pigs. Farmer D contracts with one of the regional feed mills. The regional feed mill provides Farmer D with the pigs. He is responsible for raising the pigs from three weeks to nine weeks of age. Farmer D has a well-organized system in place. He maintains detailed records and knows how many hogs he has at any given time and how many he has lost. This operation was worth about \$600,000.

Implications for Agricultural Extension Education Targeting African American Farmers

This particular study was focused on an analysis of the 2501 Program. This particular study revealed numerous insights regarding African American farmers participation habits, learning needs and preferences, and strategies or techniques that can be used to ensure their sustainability. This study also revealed that learning activities targeting African American farmers are more effective when these activities are individualized, farmer specific, and based on the needs of African American farmers.

Prior to the implementation of the 2501 Program, African American farmers did not have access to valuable agricultural extension education services in the areas of farm management and production. In addition, African American farmers were denied assistance in the completion of difficult loan applications, exposure to alternative enterprises, and their participation in government agricultural programs was restricted due to racism and a lack of awareness. The 2501 Program has assisted African American farmers in overcoming these barriers and has provided valuable agricultural extension education services to this targeted group. If this program fails to continue or if the type and quality of services provided through the 2501 Program is no longer available, the impact on African American farmers will be severe. Thousands of African American farmers will be forced to abandon agriculture and thousands of acres of Black owned farmland will be lost. The African American farmer may

become extinct and the progress made over the last decade will have been in vain.

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