

USDA Equity Commission Public Meeting #2 - May 10th - May 11th, 2022 Zoom Chat Comments

*Note: These comments were written in the Zoom chat by a live audience throughout the duration of the meeting. Some comments may be in response to specific statements made during the meeting and some may include spelling errors.

Day	Name	Comment*
Day 1	Sylvia Brown:	For future programming please consider a countdown timer. Thank you
Day 1	Victor Hernandez:	What are doing to institutionalize the USDA BFR initiative and is there a timeline to realize this nation-wide effort?
Day 1	Reginald Alexander:	Will the slide decks be available to us after the webinar?
Day 1	Edena McDaniel:	Regarding Rural Development (RD) who do we contact if we believe that we are not getting full opportunity?
Day 1	Walter Battle:	Are there any plans to utilize Cooperative Extension (particularly 1890 institutions) as a mechanism to address racial issues and rebuild trust for USDA programs?
Day 1	Edena McDaniel:	Accountability is important. What are your Plans and how do you plan to hold your local Agents Accountable?
Day 1	Ominique Garner:	seems like a Workforce labor push for immigrant workers
Day 1	Ominique Garner:	but what about equity and land ownership for US Black America descendants of slavery
Day 1	Traci Bruckner:	I appreciate the comments being made right now. We need systems level change!
Day 1	Edena McDaniel:	Many Farmers in Rural Communities are leaving what they know best because they are not getting the financial support from the USDA as others are. I believe this due to a lack of knowledge and support! These farmers need help! and they are currently not receiving the support that is available. What are your plans to try to reach this group!
Day 1	Ominique Garner:	I thought 0.52% are Black owned 95 % white owned
Day 1	Ominique Garner:	why group us all together
Day 1	Edena McDaniel:	Manny banks are not supporting rural farmers with USDA Guaranteed Loans or others. How do you get the local banks to cooperate?
Day 1	Edena McDaniel:	Thank you for your response! Many do not have the option of personal loans, but must rely on Federal Gov to help support. Thank you.
Day 1	Victor Hernandez:	Non-Profit Lenders, and State Lenders are other options
Day 1	Sylvia Brown:	county committees don't seem to be community facing. it's a mystery of who is on them & when they meet once the recruitment happens.
Day 1	Edena McDaniel:	It is amazing that we say they must look like me to do what is right by me. I believe that if you are following the Rules. Regulation, and guidelines of the Organization it should not matter how one look. what is important is that you are abiding by rules and relations of the
Day 1	Cinnamon Butler:	Does RMA conduct compliance reviews of the AIPs or obtain the specific demographics of approval and denial of claims?
Day 1	CLAUDETTE FERNANDEZ:	National Appeals Division as part of their Equity Action Plan is targeting outreach including hiring a Spanish speaking administrative judge to improve clients' access to their appeals rights and challenge agency adverse decisions.
Day 1	Kirstin Nelson:	Could we please have a link to the report on the County Commission?
Day 1	Kirstin Nelson:	Apologies, Committees*
Day 2	Walter Battle:	I appreciate the UFW speaker recognize farm workers as PROFESSIONALS due to is does require skill, judgement, and decision making ability.
Day 2	Shielder Pressley:	On the FSA USDA Guaranteed Farm Owner Loan program \$1,825,000 and not one SCORE mentor is qualified as an agriculture consultant. I am a single African-American - Native American - trying to locate a lender that knows and understands the program in low country of South Carolina to purchase an existing ranch of 142 acres of which there are 3 single family homes \$1.650,000 and NOT ONE LENDER ON THE LIST seems to be qualified to do this type of loan or even understand the program. Our farm when I was 2 over 6 decades ago was turned into a shopping center. Can you direct me to a national lender that does the FSA USDA Guaranteed \$1,825,000 with 3 single family homes on the property?
Day 2	Traci Bruckner:	Thank you for the question about where are the resources actually going. The commodity program and crop insurance programs are designed to support the largest and wealthiest farmers and it would be good to see some solid reform in those areas.

Day 2	Ominique Garner:	is there a list of all those that were given money to provide us TA ?
Day 2	Ominique Garner:	its hard to find the local support we need from local farming and agricultural nonprofits that are getting the money to support us. they say they support "BIPOC farmers and communities" but yet offer no support but offering to help sign up for SNAP if that whats wanted or asking you to attend a conference..
Day 2	Traci Bruckner:	There is a statutory definition for sustainable agriculture. The statutory definition of sustainable agriculture is "an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long-term, satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends; make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources; integrate natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole." 7 U.S.C. § 3103(19)
Day 2	Walter Battle:	There needs to be a major marketing effort by USDA to debunk myths which are Black foster concerning completing the Ag Census.
Day 2	Walter Battle:	I'm sorry it should say "which Black farmers foster concerning completing the Ag Census".
Day 2	rodney stone:	No discussion about broadband access and its relationship to farmer families and rural communities we are locked out of the current rural utilities grant process there needs to be an historical review on service provision. No broadband no connection to the world.
Q&A (Day 2)	Anonymous Attendee:	Wasn't the USDA formed to support planters and the new labor force that would employ new "freed Black" and poor people once land was given back to the planters ? later supporting our county and world by supporting immigrant farm workers and big farms and those with money and generational wealth. that was created with the free labor or African American slave
Q&A (Day 1)	June Johnson:	What was the name of the book mentioned?
Q&A (Day 1)	Victor Hernandez:	What is USDA doing to institutionalize the Beginning Farmer & Rancher initiative, is there a timeline to realize this nation-wide effort?
Q&A (Day 1)	Sylvia Brown:	The "customer experience" theme cannot be addressed soon enough. On the ground staff "just dont get" intersectionality, disrupting the silo approach or the flexibility available to them.
Q&A (Day 1)	Victor Hernandez:	What is USDA doing to be inclusive of the 42 Employee organizations to further DEIA efforts?
Q&A (Day 1)	Anonymous Attendee:	Where can consituents submitt written and oral public coments to the comission? Is via USDA website? If so, pls send link, thank you
Q&A (Day 1)	Victor Hernandez:	Comment: we often hear that the top three barriers for farmers are; 1) Access to Capital, 2) Access to Land, 3) Access to Markets, however, the core barrier is lack of Business Acumen. With that, what can we do to build stronger partnerships with organizations that truly support farmers with building business acumen. w/o having to go back to business school, who is out there supporting farmers with organizational structure, business planning, business negotiation, and the list goes on and on..
Q&A (Day 1)	Victor Hernandez:	That microphone is fading out really bad. I'm really interested in hearing what she's saying.
Q&A (Day 1)	Joe James:	As you might recall, one of the key recommendations I made, on March 15th was to: Create a sense of urgency and procedures, within USDA, so that farmers and entrepreneurs of color, adversely impacted by the USDA don't go out of business, or die, before their matters are reviewed and resolved.
Q&A (Day 1)	Joe James:	Is the Commission aware of how many black farmers and others who have discrmination complaints against the USDA?
Q&A (Day 1)	Victor Hernandez:	Agreed RE: County Committee - not only for external customers, but also for employee selection for CEDs. (COT program)
Q&A (Day 1)	Anonymous Attendee:	In our very thinly stretched offices, in terms of staffing, it's hard for folks to do their work and spend sufficient time to do outreach to new customers. It's easier to deal with folks who are already informed and well-versed in the processes (known regulars, acquaintances, etc.), and ultimately, those are the individuals who get tend to apply and get funding. Do we know the percentage of minority applicants (awarded or otherwise)? I recall a particular instance, where I, as an NRCS outreach coordinator, accompanied an FSA loan specialist to meet with a black farmer, who ultimately got a loan, and who otherwise would not have, due to the employee saying they weren't comfortable reaching out on their own.