

ABCA NEWSPPOINTS

Celebrate Thanksgiving || November 2024 || Volume 68



"Thanksgiving: The Black Family"



*The Austin Area Black Contractors Association
extends our best wishes for a cheerful
and beautiful Thanksgiving.*

*May your family, community and our nation be of
good health and prosperity as we celebrate
Thanksgiving day!*

*This Thanksgiving contribute to your
local community food bank, church pantry
or a family in need. And don't forget . . .
the elderly; children; college students;
homeless shelters; African American,
Latino and rural communities.*

People are hungry! So, lend a helping hand.



HOLIDAY HERITAGE: FOOD, THANKSGIVING, BLACK FAMILY TRADITIONS



How Black communities have celebrated over the years

Thanksgiving is more than just a holiday for the average African-American family. It is where we give thanks and gather with each other over scrumptious sweet potato pie, collard greens, turkey, fried chicken, candied yams, and more.

One of the main traditions of the African-American Thanksgiving holiday is to pray. The families give thanks and pray to the Creator for the multiple blessings that they have received physically and spiritually, such as seeing another day and being able to gather once more. Thanksgiving in the ordinary African-American home is a spiritual day where every little detail of life, love, and lecture is deeply appreciated. The tenderness of Thanksgiving is really something to be thankful for in an African-American family.

Another important aspect of the traditional Thanksgiving in an African-American household is the food, of course. Food has always played important roles in the black family. Food has been a time of bonding and special nourishment before it became a tradition. Think about it... Where do we learn the technique of frying and preserving chicken? How do we know how to make even the hooves of a pig taste like a delicacy?

Well, since slavery days in America, food has been a way that African-Americans worship, and we take our time and put our souls into it because we know that enrichment calls for special instruction. I say that to explain that "soul food" is such a specialty of African-American Thanksgiving scene. For example, families of direct African descent engage in meals of okra soup and jollof.

Those new Louisiana enjoy delicious meals such as gumbo. African-American families here in the Deep South devour dishes of sweet potato and cornbread hash. Not only is the food delicious, but it often has a story behind it, love into it, and it brings the family closer. Then they all take a seat at the table, and go watch the pigskin (football) be tossed!

The Black Thanksgiving

It is a common belief that Black people don't celebrate Thanksgiving. However, this couldn't be further from the truth. Most people just don't know the true history behind why we have this holiday and what it means to Black communities. Experts say that the first documented

celebration of a harvest festival dates back to the early 1500s, when European explorers and settlers first arrived on American soil.

The first Thanksgiving took place in 1789 as a result of this new dynamic between Europeans and Native Americans. Many historians believe that this was an attempt by President George Washington to mend relationships with Native Americans after their violent clashes in the past few years.

Most people just don't know the true history behind why we have this holiday and what it means to Black communities. Experts say that the first documented celebration of a harvest festival dates back to the early 1500s, when European explorers and settlers first arrived on American soil. Black people have always been an integral part of American culture. From the very beginning, Black people have found a way to incorporate their culture into mainstream society. This is also true of Black people as they celebrate Thanksgiving.

Black people have long celebrated Thanksgiving as an opportunity to share their culture with their friends and family. This can mean a few different things. First, you'll see a lot of Black families and friends gather around a big Thanksgiving-style meal. This is usually a mix of traditional Thanksgiving food and Black culture. You'll see the classic Thanksgiving dishes like turkey, mashed potatoes, and stuffing paired with collard greens, yams, mac and cheese, and other traditional Black dishes. Another way Black people incorporate their culture into the Thanksgiving holiday is by using Thanksgiving as an opportunity to gather and educate the people in your life about the Black experience. This could be as simple as telling your friends and family a little bit about the history of Black people in America.

Final Words

Thanksgiving has traditionally been a time to come together and celebrate the harvest. It has also been a time to come together and celebrate with family and friends. For many years, Black people have had to celebrate their harvest and traditions in secret. They have had to keep their celebrations hidden from the eyes of people who have historically oppressed and abused Black people. This year, we encourage you to celebrate with your friends and family. We encourage you to share your history, your culture, and your traditions. Let this be an opportunity to come together and celebrate who you are as a person and as a community.

Source: John D. Saunders, Founder and Creator of Black Illustrations. He also manages an award-winning Website Design Studio.

State of Black farmers in the United States faces many challenges

Financial struggles

Black farmers earn one-seventh of the farm income of white farmers. They are also more likely to operate on less land, generate a net loss, and be given a long-term production contract.

Limited access to credit

Black farmers have less access to credit, which is essential for operating a farm. The USDA has historically denied Black farmers credit and access to benefit programs.

Vulnerability to closure

Many Black farms are barely surviving and are vulnerable to closure. Only 2,500 Black farmers reach the threshold of \$100,000 in sales, which is probably close to the minimum of sales needed to make a living from the farm.

Unclear land titles

40% of land owned by Black farmers is heirs' property, which is land passed down between generations without a formal will or title. Here are some other facts about Black farmers: Texas has the most Black farmers of any state, but they make up only 3 percent of the state's total farmers. The majority of Black farmers are in the southern portion of the country, including **Texas and the mid-Atlantic states of South Carolina and North Carolina**. Black farmers grow a variety of crops, including oil seeds, grains, specialty crops, cattle, and hogs and pigs. The Biden administration's \$3.1 billion **Partnership for Climate-Smart**

Commodities grant program hopes to convince farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon in the ground. It also seeks to make amends for a century of discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which administers the grants. In its program description, USDA said Black, Native, and other "historically underserved" farmers needed to be a key part of all projects in the climate-smart program. It is a laudable goal, but one that faces many obstacles. The climate-smart partnerships are just underway, but it's clear that some of the biggest projects—the ones that got the most taxpayer money and are led by giant for-profit companies and major agricultural lobbying groups—have not thought through in any detail how they will serve BIPOC farmers. And while strict measurements are in place for quantifying climate progress, grantees will evaluate their own success or failure on matters of equity. Also, **USDA's definition of "historically underserved"**

farmers includes not just ethnic and racial minorities but veterans, young and beginning farmers, women, and those operating at poverty level—so it's possible for a project to meet the USDA's equity goal without serving any Black farmers at all. Perhaps the biggest obstacle for meeting the equity goal isn't structural, but a matter of trust. The USDA's long **history of discriminating** against Black farmers and other ethnic and racial minorities—by denying them access to low-interest loans, grants, and other forms of assistance—resulted in significant financial losses for those farmers over the course of the 20th century, and in many cases led to the loss of their land. Not surprisingly, there remains a significant lack of trust in the USDA, and government programs generally, among Black and other minority farmers. Some reject anything with the federal government's stamp on it, while others may not even be aware of perhaps the biggest obstacle for meeting the equity goal isn't structural, but a matter of trust. The USDA's long **history of discriminating** against Black farmers and other ethnic and racial minorities—by denying them access to low-interest loans, grants, and other forms of assistance—resulted in significant financial losses for those farmers over the course of the 20th century, and in many cases led to the loss of their land. But the equity goal is consistent with what some see as a nascent effort by USDA to im-

prove its relationships and foster trust in these communities. In the 2021 American Rescue Plan, the massive Covid relief package, there was \$4 billion allotted to debt relief for Black farmers. Some white farmers filed a lawsuit claiming discrimination, and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act **revoked the promised funds** and created a **race-neutral program** instead. Many Black farmers eligible for the original debt relief felt once again USDA had broken a promise.

"This is an area that's clearly been a challenge for USDA for a long time," said Robert Bonnie, USDA undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation. "And as we think about everything we do, including climate stuff, we want to make sure we build in equity." The climate-smart projects run for five years, so the verdict on whether they will meet the equity goal—and even how to measure success given the lack of clear metrics—will evolve. But some projects seem designed for success, while others have work to do if they hope to benefit minority producers in meaningful ways.

The **climate-smart program** has two funding tiers. The first is for projects ranging from \$5 million to \$100 million and the second is for projects up to \$5 million. Of the 141 projects announced a year ago, so far 123 have been finalized, **according to USDA**.

Projects in the first tier are dominated by multinational corporations like Pepsi and Tyson Foods; land-grant universities such as the University of Illinois and Virginia Tech; large commodity groups like the Iowa Soybean Association and USA Rice; and nonprofits such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Association of Conservation Districts. **The second tier, meanwhile, explicitly sought projects led by historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) and other minority-serving organizations. Critics saw this funding discrepancy as a tacit acknowledgement that the organizations most likely to engage farmers of color lacked the resources to manage a \$90 million federal grant. "Can we do it? Yeah," says Ibrahim Katampe, a professor and administrator at Central State University, a public HBCU in Wilberforce, Ohio. "But it will just be a lot of outsourcing."**

Bonnie said the two pots of money reflect the fact that HBCUs and nonprofits focused on minority growers would be at a disadvantage competing directly against the likes of the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol or Truterra, the sustainability arm of Land O'Lakes, both of which are leading \$80-\$90 million projects. "The idea was, let's try to build something that had equity that cuts across everything, but to provide a particular option for smaller groups, smaller landowner groups, historically underserved producers, minority-serving institutions, and others that may not get in the larger grants," he said.

In other words, while anyone can say they will make equity a priority, a minority-serving university or organization of tribal growers will have an advantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining participants who USDA has historically not served. Even if they have fewer resources.

"There've been so many decades of **persistent underfunding**, which then leads to a state of not having capacity over a long period of time," said Antonio McLaren, who spent some 20 years managing grants at USDA and is now vice president of programs at the **1890 Universities Foundation**, which represents historically Black land-grant schools that were founded in response to Blacks being denied access to states' original land-grant universities. He said these schools tend to be much smaller than their original land-grant counterparts in terms of faculty, facilities, student enrollment, and other resources. But they also are deeply connected to their local communities of color, and exploiting that could benefit both the farmers and USDA. "The 1890s do play a large role in helping Black farmers," McLaren said. Their outreach and technical support efforts—sometimes supported with federal money—lead to Black farmers "being able to trust them, but also to trust USDA as well."

Because of these connections, the smaller projects should be nearly guaranteed to achieve their equity goals, which according to their proposals are often more specific and ambitious. He said these schools tend to be much smaller than their original land-grant counterparts in terms of faculty, facilities, student enrollment, and other resources. But they also are deeply connected to their local communities of color, and exploiting that could benefit both the farmers and USDA. "The 1890s do play a large role in helping Black farmers," McLaren said. Their outreach and technical support efforts—sometimes supported with federal money—lead to Black farmers "being able to trust them, but also to trust USDA as well."

Because of these connections, the smaller projects should be nearly guaranteed to achieve their equity goals, which according to their proposals are often more specific and ambitious. The larger projects, meanwhile, are primarily focused on big farms, where they see greater potential for climate benefits. But their equity goals tend to be fuzzy.

The **Iowa Soybean Association**, for example, received \$95 million to "expand markets for climate-smart corn, soybeans, sugarbeets, and wheat" in 12 Midwest and Great Plains states and support "farmer implementation and monitoring of climate-smart practices." For-profit partners include Cargill, JBS, PepsiCo, and Coca-Cola. It had enrolled more than 200 farmers through Sept. 30, and will not update its numbers again until January 2024. The project's equity goal is for 20 percent of participating farmers to be women, veterans, and BIPOC producers, but the plan for meeting that goal is not spelled out.

The **situation at Central State University** looks very different. It's running a \$5 million project that will convert manure from a woman-owned cattle feedlot into organic fertilizer and distribute it to BIPOC and other underserved farmers in urban and high poverty areas in Ohio and southeast Michigan.

The project will reduce the feedlot's methane emissions through an innovative manure management system that prevents the liquids and solids from separating. Without the separation, there will be fewer bacteria feeding on the manure and no need to agitate it before it gets pumped onto fields as fertilizer. The agitation, coupled with the bacteria feeding frenzy, is what leads to release of methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide. The resulting nutrient-rich slurry will lower both the farmers' operating costs and their carbon footprint, as they will no longer have to purchase synthetic fertilizer that's produced using fossil fuels.

Funding for the project was announced in December 2022, but Central State didn't receive its final go-ahead until late November. So recruiting participants is barely underway. But the university's extension program has built a network of Black farmers that gives project coordinator Ibrahim Katampe confidence that urban and small rural vegetable farmers will sign on when he is ready for them, "especially those that have a minimum of 1,000 square feet to up to an acre of land." And that group is a sweet spot for meeting USDA's equity goal, Katampe said, because "unless you have targeted programming, it will seem to fall through the cracks."

Sharifa Tomlinson, who runs Arrowrock Farm in Riverside, Ohio, is the kind of farmer Katampe hopes to enroll. Tomlinson, a 62-year-old African American nurse, came to agriculture later in life. "Being my age and being my race and being my sex, we did not think that we could be farmers," she said. "No one said, 'Oh, Sharifa, when you grow up, you could be a farmer.'"

In 2021, she started selling tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkins, blueberries, and other produce at farmers markets. Later, she added laying hens to her operation. This year, she joined **Ohio CAN**, a USDA-backed program administered by the state agriculture department, that buys, processes, and freezes chicken for distribution at food banks. Raising chickens for Ohio CAN quickly became a major part of Tomlinson's business. Through another USDA program, Tomlinson got funding to install a high tunnel—a semi-permanent structure that protects plants

from severe weather and extends the growing season. "That's going to be a whole new ballgame," she said, enabling her to scale up her vegetable production. "That's going to be a whole new ballgame," she said, enabling her to scale up her vegetable production.

In this area of the corn belt, Central State University has played an outsized role in creating a network for producers of color. Tomlinson was pleasantly surprised when she discovered other Black farmers like her, and it was one of them who encouraged her to apply for the high tunnel. She says now she's ready to help someone else tap into a USDA program. "USDA did do some junky stuff back in the day," she said. "It's trying to right its wrongs now. And, so, I'm part of that."

Jordan Roach, who grows herbs, garlic, and berries at Bidby Bobbie Farm near Yellow Springs, Ohio, said she's interested in free fertilizer, but would want to see where it's coming from to ensure that it meets her farming objectives. Hearing that Central State would be the catalyst to connect her with the product increased her confidence. "We already have really good established relationships so that would be something I would trust," said Roach, who identifies as Black and Indigenous.

Rosemary Galdamez would love to have access to that kind of network. She is responsible for signing up minority farmers for the Iowa Soybean Association project—but first she has to find them. She hopes to do that by "connecting with other organizations in the Midwest that work with underserved farmers to build those relationships," she said in an interview. So far, she's produced outreach materials in Spanish and met with groups that support women and veterans in agriculture. The premise of the Soybean Association's program is to pay farmers for measurable emissions reductions, regardless of what strategies the farmers use to achieve them. Galdamez recognizes that across the Midwest and Great Plains states, where the project is based, and in the target commodities of corn, soybeans, sugarbeets, and wheat, most farmers are white men. "There are some underserved farmers who grow corn and soybeans," she said, "but in the Midwest specifically it is somewhat limited."

Participating farmers are asked to complete a voluntary demographic survey, which is how the project is tabulating its outreach success. In a follow-up email, Galdamez said that as of Sept. 30 "we have 49 contracts (21 percent) with participants from underserved groups. The contracts are with beginning farmers, veteran (former military) farmers, women farmers, and socially disadvantaged farmers." She declined to provide specific data regarding whether any of those contracts are with farmers of color.

McLaren, the former USDA grant manager, said the equity goals for a project like this one may have been undercut even before it was funded because none of the project's official partners focus on BIPOC producers. "The main driver for any successful collaboration or partnership -is developing intentionality and making sure that there is trust established from the very beginning," he said.

A project led by the grain buyer and broker ADM, for instance, included the [National Black Growers Council](#) (NBGC) from the start. Paul Scheetz, who manages ADM's investments and partnerships in climate-smart solutions, said that was a natural outgrowth of the company's existing relationships with the council and with the Black farmers it does business with. "Prior to the grant, we were working directly with them," he said, noting that the company has participated in field days sponsored by the council where it meets with farmers potentially interested in selling to ADM.

Scheetz said that during a brainstorming session about how to structure the grant's incentive payments to growers, a Black farmer noted that "some of the ground that we farm isn't always the most productive ground." ADM had been thinking payments would be based on bushels of grain produced, but that comment prompted a reconsideration. They decided instead that payments would be based on the number of acres a farmer commits to conservation practices; that way, lower-yielding fields are not penalized.

Torre Anderson, an agriculture specialist with NBGC, said the council will connect grantees—ADM as well as a number of other big projects the council is participating in—to the farmers they need to meet their equity goals. Anderson said ADM will require farmers who participate to join the council, which will boost its membership and help it track the number of Black farmers involved. NBGC is still working out the details of how other projects it's working with will recruit and retain Black growers. ADM plans to enroll 3,000 farmers over the five-year life of the program, and Scheetz says all \$90 million of the federal grant will go directly to them. ADM and its partners, which include Costco, Field to Market, Farmers Business Network, and Keurig-Dr. Pepper, are putting up nearly \$48 million in matching funds to cover all other project expenses. ADM said that of the 500 farmers enrolled as of December 1, more than 100 are members of NBGC.

The range of approaches to equity amid a vast and varied set of climate-smart projects means this USDA investment will reach every state and territory in some way. How much of an impact it has on communities that have historically been mistreated, or ignored, by federal programs will become clear over the next several years.

The advantage that [HBCUs](#) and groups like the NBGC have as trusted advisers in their communities makes them critical for getting funding to farmers who might not seek them out.

"We're a conduit to help alleviate some of the tension from USDA," Anderson said. Farmers are more likely to engage in a conversation with someone from the Black Growers Council rather than with USDA, he added, even if the subject is how to get money from USDA.

Donnetta Boykin, who owns Endigo's Herbs and Organics in Trotwood, Ohio, is part of the Black farmer network in her area. She said even if they recognize that a bit of USDA money has trickled down to them in recent years, some [Black farmers remain hesitant to engage](#) directly, especially if that means a farm visit from a stranger. "I have to trust you to welcome me into my space," she said. "There

needs to be some healing done" between federal officials and Black farmers. "And that's not happened."

Source: [npr news](#)

Below are traditional entrees served during Thanksgiving!



Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner w/all the trimmings



Shrimp & Andouille Gumbo



Sweet Potatoes w/Brown Sugar & Pecans



Mashed Potatoes w/Bacon & Parsley



Collard Greens w/smoked turkey wings