

# The Southern Cooperator

THE FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN  
COOPERATIVES/LAND ASSISTANCE FUND  
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Second Edition

2018 FALL & WINTER NEWS  
Advocacy \* Cooperative Development \* Land Retention

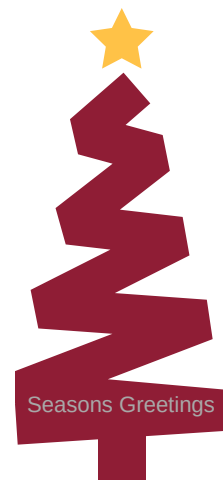


Top Left: Annual meeting workshop Top right: Bobby Wilson/Metro-Atlanta Urban Farms showcasing value-added products, Bottom Left: USDA/NRCS Staff at EW Award Dinner- James Tillman- Associate Chief, Alice Love-Natural Resource Specialist, Ben Malone-AL State Conservationist., Bottom Right: FSC Staff: Maya Crooks/MS, Bruce Harrell/LA, Darnella Winston/MS

## The 51st Annual Meeting Highlights

The Federation honored the legacy of Ralph Paige with the 17th Annual Estelle Witherspoon Award. Nearly 450 guests attended the reception and dinner. The Planning Committee Members included: Danny Glover, Willie Nelson, Dave Matthews, Neil Young, John Mellencamp, Ambassador Andrew J Young, Rep James E Clyburn, Mrs. Shirley Sherrod, Sen. Hank Sanders & Faya Rose Toure`, Rep. Sanford D Bishop Jr., Former Secretary of Agriculture Micheal Espy, Rep Bennie Thompson, and Rep. John Lewis. Thank you to the committee members

The following days, attendees had an opportunity to visit our many meetings and workshops. The second day opened with a USDA panel discussion moderated by Ms. Diane Cullo, Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture. Other workshops included: Food Safety, Farm Bill/Advocacy updates, Heirs Property/Land Access, and Cooperative/Credit Union Development & Marketing. The final morning of our meeting opened with the annual prayer breakfast. We hope to see you at the 52nd meeting August 15-17, 2019.



# Senator Doug Jones(AL) Speaks at Co-op Month Event

## National Co-op Month Symposium

We celebrated National Co-op Month at our Rural Training and Research Center(RTRC) in Epes, with US Senator Doug Jones of Alabama. Sen. Jones served as the keynote speaker at the October 31st Co-op's Month Celebration and Symposium: *Cooperatives are the Cornerstone of Rural Economies*. His address focused on an important issue affecting rural farmers, black landowners, cooperatives, and rural communities- Heirs Property. The causes of under-utilization and loss of rural black land are numerous and complex, but none is more notable than heirs property. Heirs Property is created when a landowner dies without a will, or any other form of estate planning, for the transfer of ownership of land to another prior to death. Subsequently, heirs property owners do not have clear title to the land they own. "No farmer should lose access to necessary USDA programs due to heirs property issues," says Sen. Jones in his keynote address.

Sen. Jones, Sen Tim Scott (SC), and Rep. Marcia Fudge (OH) successfully led efforts in Congress that resulted in the inclusion of legislation addressing heirs property in the 2018 Farm Bill. The proposed bill, "The Fair Access for Farmers and Ranchers Act of 2018" will provide statutory authority in the 2018 Farm Bill to allow producers farming on land that is held by undivided interests without administrative authority to secure access to USDA programs. This major legislation is a direct result of the Federation's longtime advocacy efforts in collaboration with other partners and stakeholders.

Co-op Month has been nationally recognized in October since 1964. The month is a time for co-ops to reflect on their shared principles and to educate everyone about the value of belonging to a co-op. According to Cornelius Blanding, the Executive Director of the Federation, "In the South, cooperatives are still being formed out of necessity to combat issues that are relevant to today's economic, social, and political landscape. Access to credit and markets, food security, land preservation, and climate change are all issues directly impacting the longevity of rural families. Cooperatives are vital and continue to enable rural families to retain their land, expand upon it and pass it on to a new generation."



FSC Member & Farmer Rev. Charleston with Sen. Jones



Sen. Jones with RTRC Director, Dr. Marcus Bernard



Sumter Central High School JROTC  
Volunteering and awaiting flag presentation

# **FSC/LAF Designated as the USDA Certified Mediation Service Provider for the State of Louisiana**

The Federation was designated as the USDA Certified Mediation Service Provider for the State of Louisiana effective October 1, 2018. The Federation will now oversee the Louisiana Agricultural Mediation Program (LAMP) as part of our Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center. The program and contract staff will be located throughout Louisiana. "Under the Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center, we have been successful at utilizing certified mediation services to address disputes between farmers, landowners, and various USDA agencies in the State of Mississippi since 2009 and in the State of Georgia since 2017", says Monica Rainge, the Director of Land Retention and Advocacy.

The goal of the program is to provide a voluntary mediation and training program in Louisiana to resolve disputes between the USDA and its clientele through neutral mediators who guide parties involved in agricultural disputes. The mediations will involve a thorough discussion of the issues and help the parties identify and fully consider possible resolutions. The mediation program also seeks to resolve disputes between farmers and private agricultural lenders.

Mediation offers several advantages over other remedies in resolving agricultural disputes because of the process:

- Offers parties an opportunity to start working on a resolution right away, without waiting through the lengthy appeal process
- Allows parties to maintain confidentiality
- Allows parties who are most familiar with the dispute to devise their own solutions to help restore communication between disputing parties
- Preserves and enhance important business relationships
- Provides an impartial setting in which to openly discuss all issues involved, including sensitive financial matters and personal issues that might not be considered in an appeal or litigation setting
- May save everyone the time and cost involved with the appeal process or litigation

LAMP will receive significant support and capacity from the Southern University Mediation Law Clinic in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Southern University previously served as the USDA mediation service provider in Louisiana and will collaborate with the Federation to continue to provide mediation training and services. The Southern University Mediation Law Clinic will focus specifically on mediations involving the Rural Development agency while mediations from other USDA agencies will be conducted by program staff or contract mediators.





## **A Tribute to Mrs. Mattie Mack**



Mrs. Mattie Mack was born in Georgia in 1937 and attended Tuskegee for two and a half years in the nursing program. She was the devoted wife of William “Bill” Mack for sixty years and developed a 98-acre farm near Brandenburg, Kentucky with tobacco, beef cattle, and hay. She passed away on Friday, November 16th.

Mattie Mack raised and educated four children of her own and 38 foster children on a small family farm, doing chores and learning responsibility. She organized and became President and spokesperson for the Kentucky Minority Farmers Association since 1991 and served faithfully and with dedication as a member of the Federation's Board of Directors for a quarter century.

Mrs. Mattie was an outspoken and wise representative of small farmers and small tobacco farmers, throughout the South; and gave testimony to Congress on the tobacco program and other aspects of farm policy, including discrimination by USDA toward Black farmers, women farmers and other farmers of color.

We celebrate the life and legacy of Mattie Mack; and a tree will be planted in her honor in the Memorial Orchard of the Federation at Epes, Alabama.





# What We Know from the 2018 Climate Assessment Report



On November 23rd, the federal government released volume two of the Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA4), a review on the status of our changing climate. The 1600 page report is a body of two and a half years of work, hundreds of authors, and 13 participating agencies. It warns that by the end of this century, left unchecked, climate change could cause tens of thousands of deaths and hundreds of billions of dollars in losses and damage to our economy and our health. The impact would be felt most by minority and poor communities around the world. According to the report, the evidence points to human emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide as the primary contributor. While alarming, the report shouldn't leave us feeling hopeless, but challenge us to make improvements where we can.

## How Will Climate Change Impact Agriculture and Wild Life?

Many recent disasters are already believed to be related to climate change. The NCA4 predicts that hurricanes will get more intense more quickly and will drop more rain, droughts will be more frequent, and the number of wildfires will increase in areas where they aren't common. Due to rising earth and ocean temperatures, the sea level will also rise, corals will die, fish will die, and fresh water will become scarcer. Food production and water access are expected to be largely impacted.

## What can we do to address or adapt to climate changes?

Agriculture will be highly impacted and must be involved in solutions that address extreme weather shifts. The private and public sector can do more in lessening greenhouse gases as well as prepare us for the changes that we are already experiencing and yet to come. Here are some actions and options that could collectively benefit the climate:

- Mitigating greenhouse gases by improving technology, livestock management, and other sustainable farming practices

- Reducing deforestation. When cutting down huge areas of forest, replacing the trees that we are removing can have a huge impact. Forests are vital as they are home to millions of species, prevent soil erosion, play a crucial role in water cycle by returning water vapor back into the atmosphere, absorb greenhouse gases that fuel global warming, keep the soil moist by blocking the sun, produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide

- Incorporating greater diversity of plant species and cultivating a broader range of plants with greater resilience to heat, drought, and moisture

- Incorporating practices that make the soil better able to hold moisture, reduce erosion, and increase biodiversity in the system help in making farm production and income more resilient and stable

- Considering cover crops and crop residues that protect soils from wind and water erosion, and legume intercrops, manure, and composts that build soil rich in organic matter. Additionally, enhancing soil structure, are all ways to help increase water infiltration, hold water once it gets there, and make nutrients more accessible to the plant.

The NCA4 report on the internet is on <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>. For more support and guidance to help your farming practices, please call our office.

# Events

## Farm Aid Festival 2018

Each year, Farm Aid board members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp, and Dave Matthews host Farm Aid concert activities to bring together a wide variety of artists, farmers and fans for one mission: keeping family farmers on the land. Farm Aid is an all-day festival that brings together incredible music, good food, and hands-on activities to get folks in touch with the roots of our food. Since 1985, Farm Aid has raised more than \$53 million to help family farmers thrive all over the country while inspiring millions of people to take part in the Good Food Movement. The Federation has always had a great partnership with Farm Aid. This year, members from South Carolina and Mississippi attended the festival along with FSC Staff.



Farm Aid 2018 FSC Staff & Members:  
Eboni Thomas-Executive Assistant, Ed  
Wilson- Double Lifetime Member, Kimberly  
Williams-Lifetime Member

## Disaster Relief & Recovery Efforts

Our staff hosted information sessions for local farmers affected by recent hurricanes in Georgia and South Carolina. We are coordinating disaster relief and recovery efforts in states affected by recent hurricanes. Please contact our office for relief assistance information or send an email to [info@federation.coop](mailto:info@federation.coop)



FSC Staff Cornelius Key oversee GA disaster relief meeting with Congressman Sanford Bishop Jr. on Nov 5th.

## Bush Cook Chef Cook St. Croix, Virgin Islands

Congratulations are in order to our members Dale, and Yvette Browne for a successful Virgin Islands Bush Cook, Chef Cook local food celebration and event on October 19th -21st. Seventeen local chefs competed for the title of the best chef. Chefs were provided with the same basic ingredients and were allowed to use anything on the farm to create a meal including goat, lamb, and chicken. The three-day event featured a local farmers market, cooking demonstrations, farm tours, and a five-course farm to table dinner. FSC/LAF staff served as volunteers.



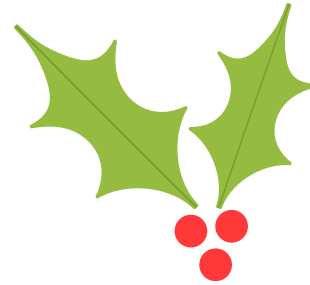
Restaurant Baltar Chef competitor and VI kids get market tour

## FSC 2018 Board & Staff Strategic Planning Retreat



FSC Staff Terence Courtney lead disaster relief meeting in Kingstree, SC on Nov 19th

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



## **We are Thankful for our Membership, Staff, Partners, and Supporters**

This is the time of year when I reflect thankfully on all we have done together as a collective body. The year started with bringing on new staff, celebrating our 51st annual meeting, and launching our capital campaign. This year we also mourned the loss of a few Federation giants; founder and past board member Gonza Twitty (SC); former Executive Director Ralph Paige, and board member Mrs. Mattie Mack (KY). They all left an amazing legacy of hope and a solid trail for us all to follow and thrive as servants of the Federation.

I remain honored to serve the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund and its membership, staff, and partners. As we continue to transition from one generation to another. I am excited about the work we just completed in developing our new five-year strategic plan that builds upon our mission and guides our work around cooperative economic development, land retention, and advocacy.

We continue to serve black farmers, landowners, and cooperatives throughout the southern region. Our renewed focus is on rebuilding our local and regional food systems for the betterment of our membership, rural communities, the South, our nation, and this world.

Thank you in advance for your continued support of our mission, work and focus on building a locally owned and controlled regional food & marketing system that will support our member farmers and cooperatives and put our organization on a path towards sustainability.

I would like to also ask that you join our efforts in raising five million dollars for our capital campaign and maintain your financial support and advocacy of the Federation.

We wish all of you a safe and happy holiday and a prosperous new year!

Cooperatively,

Cornelius Blanding  
Executive Director

*Merry Christmas!*



# Save the Dates



- Georgia Farmer Conference February 14th-15, Albany Georgia
- Mississippi Small Farmer Conference Mid-March
- Coop Econ- April 2019
- Capital Campaign Event: Bridging Art & Farming Expo
- Membership fees are due in July 2019

## Make your TAX-DEDUCTIBLE Contributions

2769 Church Street  
East Point, GA 30344  
Tel: (404) 765-0991  
[www.federation.coop](http://www.federation.coop)



 @federation1967  
 @federationsotherncooperatives

**Invest in Change**

We are a non-profit with a strong mission driven focus. We develop cooperatives as a means for people to enhance the quality of communities; and we work to save, protect, and expand the landholdings of Black and limited resource farmers in the South.

**This Year Alone:**

Our Heirs Property & Mediation Center provided services to 500 Families affecting 30,000 Acres of land with a tax-assessed value of \$2 Million

We conducted 100 Co-op Workshops

30+ Meditations for farmers challenging decisions made by USDA Agencies

We Distributed \$40K in emergency relief grants to support farm families

Our field staff helped numerous limited resource farmers with applications for bank loans, business plans, and farm support

**[www.give2federation.org](http://www.give2federation.org)**



.HAPPY.  
*New Year*