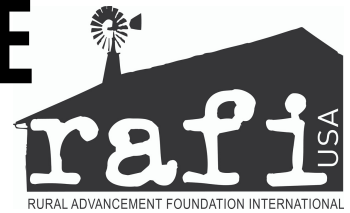


THE RURAL ADVOCATE

*Farmer-focused News and Resources from
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA*



Farmers and RAFI-USA staff met with legislators and staffers about the Undue Preference Rule.

IN THIS ISSUE

FARMER FLY-IN

FARMERS OF COLOR NETWORK UPDATE

SOLDIER TO AG

SEED CO-OP UPDATE

FARMER SPOTLIGHT

#StandWithFarmFamilies Takes The Capitol!

RAFI-USA staff, along with farm families from across the country, took to Capitol Hill on July 16th to expose decades of abuse by the nation's largest meat companies. Anthony Grigsby, an Alabama law-enforcement officer-turned-poultry-grower and his wife Christy, whose family has grown chickens for three generations, were two of the farmers on the trip. As Anthony described, "Corporate bullying, intimidation and a mafia-like mentality has taken control of the chicken industry. In 2019, as a result of retaliation for speaking out, we had to file for bankruptcy. Like many other farmers, we've lost everything--our farm, our family home and the house where we planned to spend our retirement."

In the coming weeks to months, the USDA will release a rule governing Undue Preference between large meat packing corporations and individual farmers & ranchers. This rule would make it illegal for any meat packing corporation to give Undue Preference to any person, and conversely to show any undue prejudice to any person. While the intent of this rule's mandate is clear, the details will show how the agency intends to enforce this rule, and whether or not farmers will be protected from corporate retaliation, abuse and exploitation.

During the July trip, farmers made 33 Hill visits, spoke to USDA representatives, met with staffers from the Senate and House Ag. Committees and held a Congressional briefing. During their press conference, farmers launched a petition to the USDA and shared stories of predatory contracts, rigged markets and retaliation in the poultry industry.

On October 10th, we delivered the petition to the USDA with over 84,000 signatures! Learn more and check out photos and a livestream of the delivery: rafiusa.org/blog/petitiondelivery



Farmers, RAFI-USA staff and Amanda Hitt, Government Accountability Project at the press conference

The USDA will release the rule soon. We need your help to bombard the 60-day comment period following the rule release to ensure a strong rule! Join our email list (rafiusa.org/subscribe) so we can let you know when to submit comments. To learn more about this program contact Tyler Whitley, tyler@rafiusa.org.

Farmers of Color Network Events

Second Annual Farm Tour

On August 20th, the Farmers of Color Network hosted their second annual farm tour. Farmers in the Network had expressed interest in observing intensive growing operations, diversified niche products and unique farm models. The tour covered four NC farms, including Abanitu Organic Farm, Lil Farm, Faithful Farms, Tierra Negra Farm and Earthseed Collective. Lunch was prepared by chef, activist and documentarian Gabrielle Eitienne who also led a discussion about cultural food-ways in NC.



Farmers & Buyers Connect Event

On November 6th, the Network hosted a Farmers & Buyers Connect at Zweli's Piri Piri Kitchen in Durham, NC. More than 50 local farmers of color, chefs, and retail and wholesale buyers participated. Learn more about this event & the Network by visiting rafiusa.org/FarmersofColorNetwork or by contacting Laketa Smith, laketa@rafiusa.org.



Soldier to Agriculture Disaster Recovery Training



September 12th marked a day for growth and collaboration for the farmer veteran community! Sixteen current and aspiring farmers participated in a Soldier to Agriculture Disaster Recovery Training led by RAFI-USA's Scott Marlow and The Veteran's Farm of NC. Participants learned how to access information from the USDA and received a database of resources regarding crop insurance, FSA loan programs and more. Following the training, all 16 participants reported having a better understanding of how to access information about federal programs and said they would feel more confident going into USDA offices for themselves or with other farmers. To learn more, contact Scott Marlow, scott@rafiusa.org.

Milestone for Farmer Seed Co-op

For those who aren't up-to-date on the work of our Just Foods Program, we are in the early stages of developing a farmer seed co-op. We launched this project in 2017 after surveying the needs of local farmers. We found that local farmers needed more choices of organic varieties of corn, soybeans, wheat and peanuts. There is a lack of organic varieties of these seeds specifically bred for the Southeast and we felt that the seed co-op could work to address this problem.

After many trials, farmers in the co-op developed a viable double-cross corn hybrid from four inbred lines. Organic seeds of this corn planted in test plots have begun yielding positive results. By continuing to refine their growing techniques, the co-op has been able to increase their amount of seed production each year. To learn more, contact Kelli Dale, kelli@rafiusa.org.



Farmer Spotlight: Sankofa Farms

As an individual grant recipient in 2018, collaborative project grant recipient in 2019 and Farmers of Color Network member, Kamal Bell has moved his vision for Sankofa Farms forward by creating an educational learning space for youth and expanding production. In 2018, Kamal used his grant to offer the Agricultural Academy Program for youth to become directly involved in farm operations. With funding for implements and tools, youth cultivated an acre of land for vegetable production.



In 2019, the grant supported the creation of the Sankofa Cover Crop Collaborative - an initiative between four nearby farms to acquire and share equipment needed to incorporate cover cropping into their operations. Combined, the two RAfi-USA grants have helped Kamal develop Sankofa Farms into a center for ag education, regenerative agriculture practices and community-based collaboration. Stay up to date with Sankofa Farms by following them on Facebook or Instagram @SankofaFarms



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IN THIS ISSUE

FARMER FLY-IN

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