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**HAPPY
JUNETEENTH!**

**VOL 1
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FREEDMEN HEIRS HIGHLIGHTS

WHY WE CELEBRATE

What Juneteenth means to Freedmen Heirs Foundation

Over two years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, slaves in Galveston, Texas received news of their newfound freedom by way of Union Army troops. The following year, the "freed" men and women of Galveston commemorated the day as Juneteenth. Although the history behind Juneteenth depicts a dark and disastrous past, it is embraced and celebrated because it represents the resilience and hope embodied by Black Americans. This day marked a new beginning for "Freedmen", sprouting the roots to initiate the Freedmen Heirs legacy. Freedmen Heirs observes and reflects on the hardships endured and contributions to agriculture made by our ancestors during this period in history.



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello Freedmen Friends,

What an interesting time to be involved in agriculture. Opportunities abound but so are challenges. I believe we are on the cusp of a major shift in U.S. agriculture of which equity, innovation, and collaborative partnerships will be key. The U.S. agriculture industry can no longer afford to rely solely on the "old ways" to remain viable. Diversity, equity and inclusion in agriculture and food systems is more important now than ever and should be prioritized. Not only because diversity reduces risks, but also because diversity leads to equitable opportunities across the industry. A new paradigm must be created, led by innovative thought leaders and disruptors, the creation of bold and progressive initiatives, transformational partnerships, and expert knowledge. We already know what it looks like if we do nothing. But imagine what could be if inequities are eliminated and the right partnerships and collaborations are formed.

In this regard, we need your help. It is important that we hear from you. We are interested in learning about your views, ideas, and thoughts.

Please enjoy this month's issue of The Minority AgVocate and Happy Juneteenth!

Seanicaa Edwards Herron



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SUCCESSION PLANNING

Succession Planning: Preparing Your Farm For Future Generations

Written by: Patrice Lazard, Agricultural Economist, Freedmen Heirs Project Manager

Most farms in the United States are family-owned and the likelihood of those farms being passed down to the next generation is very high. While a business plan may be in place, succession plans are often overlooked due to the inability to commit to another time-consuming task, which involves discussions with family members and planning meetings with lawyers, bankers, accountants, etc.

One of the most important components of the succession planning process centers around passing down an entire farm estate – land, equipment, capital, and other assets – to the next generation. Succession planning will include financial and operational strategies to ensure the success of the farm and its longevity.

Succession planning isn't a one-size-fits-all approach and differs from farm to farm. Therefore, it is imperative to create a succession plan that is tailored to a unique farm operation. While this list is not exhaustive, it provides an overview of the many considerations a farmer should think through when preparing a succession plan.

Be proactive and identify your successors. Prior to beginning the succession planning process, it's important to identify who will inherit the farm operation. Including the right individuals in this process is imperative. Doing so will ensure decisions are made in the farm's best interest. Succession planning may be difficult to discuss with family members; however, it's important to include everyone in the dialogue, including present and future generations. Being intentional in the beginning of the process contributes to the success of your plan.

Create a succession timeline. Succession planning can be overwhelming for many farmers. The consequence of waiting to develop a detailed succession plan often results in a poorly constructed product. Developing a timeline to help execute your succession plan will eliminate the problems procrastination can cause and provide the opportunity to give your heir(s) time to get accustomed to their new role(s).

Discuss the difficult questions. When creating a succession plan, it's important to discuss not only the future of the farm but other unexpected circumstances that may occur during the planning process. Several difficult questions may arise that must be answered. While those questions may not have a simple or easy answer,

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SUCCESSION PLANNING

it's beneficial to discuss them while you're capable of making sound decisions during the planning process. This will alleviate any ambiguity should something happen to you prematurely.

Use professionals to help with the process.

Creating your transition team prior to developing your succession plan will alleviate the burden of preparing and executing your plan alone. Your team will help you make impartial decisions and should include professionals with no personal or financial interest in your estate. Those professionals should include but aren't limited to an insurance agent, an arbitrator, an estate planner, a tax attorney, a banker, and an accountant. It's also beneficial to find professionals who have succession or estate planning experience.

Assess finances and risks. When creating your succession plan, you must take into consideration your farm's finances. Examining your farm's cash flow in the beginning of the transition period can indicate whether your farm's financial trajectory is headed in the right direction and if your successor can operate a successful operation. Additionally, having crop or livestock insurance in place can provide a cushion to your operation if revenues fall short due to an unforeseen event. You can also obtain an estimate on different plans offered by USDA. It's important to discuss insurance plans with your agent so that you can establish an affordable plan that's best suited for your operation.

Create your succession plan and stick with it.

The average time it takes to develop a succession plan ranges between 12 to 24 months and this does not include pre-planning or negotiation agreements. It's important to follow your plan as closely as possible, but it's acceptable to also include a contingency plan in case unexpected events arise that cause deviation from the original plan.

Put your plan into writing. While this step may seem the most obvious, it's never a bad idea to mention it. Although your succession plan may be well thought out, it is good practice to document your plan properly. Having an estate planner and an attorney on your transition team will help make this process an easy one. Together, you will be able to document what roles everyone will play during the transition process and your expectations of those roles. Once it's drafted and filed with the appropriate authorities, your succession plan becomes legally binding.

Evaluate your succession plan annually. Your succession plan should be a living document which means changes should be made when necessary to meet the objectives of your farm operation. Evaluating your succession plan also creates the opportunity for growth and the inclusion of new business opportunities as they emerge.

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FOOD SAFETY

Minimizing Foodborne Illness Through Proper Food Safety Practices

Written by: Jasmine D. Hendrix, PhD, Food Scientist, Freedmen Heirs Director of Programs

The American consumer's food palate has become more diverse due to their interest in and desire for fresh and innovative food products. There is also an increasing consumer demand for nutritious, safe, and high quality foods, and the agriculture industry has responded to this demand. Agribusinesses are diligently delivering advanced food production technologies that support the processing, distribution, and safe consumption of food products. The production of these foods is essential in building a resilient and safe food supply and sustainable agriculture sector.

U.S. agriculture and food sectors continuously face foodborne illness outbreaks that distort supply chain functionality at all levels. Significant economic loss occurs when recall protocols are employed, brand credibility diminishes, and most detrimental, millions of consumers suffer from the harsh side effects contaminated foods can cause. The CDC (2011) estimates that approximately 1 in 6 Americans are medically treated for foodborne illnesses annually and roughly 3,000 cases result in death due to the application of poor food safety practices.

Food safety is a major concern that can't be overlooked. Food can become contaminated at various points along the food supply chain, beginning at the farm level and ending at consumption. Therefore, regulated food safety

measures and practices must be implemented to reduce potential foodborne risk factors during farm to fork processes.

In efforts to combat these threats, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) provide science-based recommendations, Good Agricultural and Handling Practices (GAP/GHP), to mitigate food safety risks associated with pre and post harvest food applications. The concepts of GAP and GHP stemmed from the development of FDA's guidelines to reduce the risk of contamination among fresh produce via the [Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables](#). Implementing GAPs and GHPs addresses common food hazard concerns such as agriculture water quality, safe use of manure and compost, worker health and hygiene, contamination from animals, facilities and equipment sanitation, and pest control management (80 FR 74353).

USDA and third party services currently offer GAP and GHP audit verification programs that emphasize the implementation of safe operational efforts by farmers to minimize the risk of contamination among fresh fruits and vegetables. GAP and GHP audits are voluntary verification programs, and it is not federally mandated for farmers to be GAP and GHP

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FOOD SAFETY

certified; however, obtaining a food safety certification like GAP and GHP is beneficial for farmers via opportunities for: 1) Market access to large wholesalers, retailers, or processors and potential for increased profits, 2) Building trust among consumers that showcase high regards towards their safety and health, and 3) Increased compliance with food safety regulations.

Below are some basic GAP and GHP recommendations for farmers to employ:

- Be committed to food safety.** Everyone has a responsibility to minimize food safety risks in food production. It is recommended that food safety principles be embedded in the policies and culture of the farming operation. Having a focus on food safety practices can protect farming operations and the people served.
- Create a food safety manual.** Be proactive and create a guide that identifies food safety hazards for the entire farming operation and establish methods to prevent or decrease the likelihood of food hazard occurrences. Templates to guide development of a food safety manual can be found [here](#).
- Decrease risks of contamination.** Develop and implement processes for frequent and effective cleaning and sanitation. Keep farm vehicles, equipment, tools, and supplies washed and cleaned from dirt and debris. Ensure all contact surfaces (e.g., containers, tables, storage shelves) are properly cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected to eliminate risks of cross-contamination.
- Conduct best farm practices.** Utilize appropriate and accurate operational procedures (e.g., application of compost and manure as fertilizers) to ensure safety of food, livestock, and workers.
- Build and train an impact team.** Train team members to be aware of food safety risks and how to follow proper on-farm procedures to prevent food contamination. Training can include, but not limited to, hygiene practices such as hand washing; accident prevention procedures, and other standard food safety procedures for farming operations. Team accountability is important for all food safety management plans.

References and Additional Resources:

[Estimates of Foodborne Illness in the United States - Burden of Foodborne Illness: Findings](#)

[FSMA Final Rule on Produce Safety](#)

[Food Safety, Nutrition, and Health Program Area](#)

[Tools for Writing a Farm Food Safety Plan](#)

[USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture - Food Safety](#)

[USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture - Food Safety on the Farm](#)

[Food as a Business](#)

[Food Safety Begins on the Farm – A Grower's Guide](#)

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AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

Providing A Voice for Farmers of Color

How farmer and nonprofit CEO, Mr. P. Wade Ross serves his local agricultural community

Established by the parents of Mr. P. Wade Ross in 1998, Texas Small Farmers & Ranchers Community-Based Organization (TSFR/CBO) is recognized around the state of Texas as one of its flagship community-based organizations. Providing a voice and educative channel for small farmers of color, TSFR/CBO has been credited by many for the large number of responses from Black farmers in Texas to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture, which is said to be unprecedented for the state.

Mr. Ross is a fourth generation farmer and co-owner of Hoaganie Farm Products, a cattle and grass farming operation just outside of College Station, TX, on land that has been in his family since the 1800's.

Mr. Ross also serves on the Board of Directors for Texas Center for Local Foods, and is one of the establishing members of the Texas Disaster Relief Collaborative and Texas State Advisory Committee. In the past year, Mr. Ross has been featured by *CNN*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Austin Chronicle*. These articles surround the critical topic of racial equity and social justice.



Mr. Ross is currently in the final stages of becoming certified as a Natural Soil Biology Consultant. He plans to utilize his extensive knowledge base to further the mission of providing small farmers with access to resources. Over the next 2-3 years and beyond, the focus of Texas

Small Farmers & Ranchers CBO is to form a clear path for small growers and producers of color to become key participants in local food systems in Texas, monetizing their land, creating wealth, growing healthy food, and establishing a culture and legacy of prosperity to be enjoyed for generations to come.

For more information on Texas Small Farmers & Ranchers/CBO, visit www.tsfrcbo.org.

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AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

BlackCotton: Reclaiming The Culture of Cotton

Fifth-generation farmer, Mr. Julius Tillery, changing the narrative of cotton production

As a fifth-generation farmer, North Carolina native Julius Tillery grew up seeing firsthand the disparities and injustices between Black-owned farms and that of their white counterparts. Tillery's family farm sits on 125 acres, growing soybeans, peanuts, and cotton. Mr. Tillery received his Economics degree with a minor in Entrepreneurship from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. Mr. Tillery also serves on Southern SARE's Administrative Council and North Carolina Forestry Advisory Council.



Tillery founded BlackCotton in 2016 with a mission to maintain the sustainability of his family farm, educate and empower the Black community, and establish a positive narrative associated with cotton production. Tillery's business features genuine and distinguished home



decor, jewelry, and accessories handmade with cotton that is cultivated and cared for on local Black-owned farmland. BlackCotton also offers agritourism, which is an essential piece in educating visitors of Tillery's multi-generational farm and business. BlackCotton is a thriving, culture-focused company that prides itself on highlighting the production of cotton in a new way.

In addition to farming and expanding the BlackCotton brand, Julius also focuses his time on Black farmer advocacy programs and educating local college students on modern agriculture.

To learn more about Julius Tillery and BlackCotton, visit www.blackcotton.us.

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AGRIPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

Paving The Way for Young Entrepreneurship

How Mr. Ethan Holmes, founder of Holmes Made Foods, LLC is building a legacy for the next generation

In 2008, at the age of 15, Shaker Heights, Ohio native, Ethan Holmes launched Holmes Made Foods, LLC by using his grandfather's homemade applesauce recipe, and relying on his ambitious dreams of entrepreneurial success. From humble origins in his family's kitchen – acquiring raw materials as Christmas gifts during his childhood – Holmes built his brand of all-natural applesauce through a combination of sweat equity and persistence.

Over the past decade, Holmes has diligently grown his operations and distribution by leveraging his community network, working with apple farmers, pitching his product at every opportunity, and heeding the advice of business mentors. Along the way, Holmes and his company have won a number of entrepreneur pitch competitions, earning capital infusions to fuel business growth, including an investment from The Cleveland Foundation, and being chosen for The Chobani Incubator, SKU Coca-Cola Accelerator, and Next-Gen Apple Fellowship.

Not only is Mr. Holmes committed to providing an all-natural, farm-fresh recipe for consumers; Holmes Mouthwatering



Applesauce is built upon strong core principles that foster growth, value, and opportunity for the community.

Working in conjunction with the applesauce business,



the Holmes Entrepreneur Initiative was founded with a purpose to teach entrepreneurship to students in underserved communities through the production and selling of applesauce. Since 2015, over 5,000 students have participated in and have been impacted by its programming. Today,

Holmes Mouthwatering Applesauce has its vision set on both national and international markets for its products, and continuing to develop its entrepreneurial programs that expose business opportunities for students in the community.

To learn more about Holmes Mouthwatering Applesauce, visit holmesmouthwatering.com.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**NBGC'S 2023 MODEL
 FARM SERIES**

Next Farm Tour Date: July 20th
Hosted By: Thomas Farms Corporation
 Altheimer, AR
 &
 Haynie Farms
 Altheimer, AR

For more information, visit
<https://www.nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com>

2023 NBGC Model Farm Series



Date	Location	Host	Focus Group
May 19, 2023	Tanner, AL	Darden Bridgeforth & Sons	Crop protection in variety trials on Cotton, Corn & Soybeans
June 2, 2023	Byromville, GA	Jibb's Vineyard	Variety trials for Cotton, Corn & Wheat Harvest
July 20, 2023	Altheimer, AR	Thomas Farms Corporation	Specialty crops & Crop protection
July 20, 2023	Altheimer, AR	Haynie Farms	Rice, Corn, Soybean production, crop protection & irrigation practices
July 21, 2023	Bastrop, LA	J & A Farm Partnership LLP	Corn & Soybean production
August 11, 2023	Sledge, MS	CMB Farms LLC	Rice and Soybean production & irrigation practices
September 8, 2023	Rowesville, S.C.	Mahogany Farms LLC	Corn, Cotton, Soybean production & conservation practices

For more information go to:

<https://nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com/> or call (202) 641-4197

Annual Meeting December 2023 – Information coming soon



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FARMER RESOURCES

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP): NAP provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. Visit this [link](#) for more details.

USDA Invites Input on Crop Insurance Coverage for Prevented Planting: USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is looking at possible changes to prevented planting crop insurance coverage and wants to hear what producers think and have to say about it. So, it is hosting in-person listening sessions in 11 states and additional ones virtually from June through August and looking for written feedback by Sept. 1. RMA has posted the full details and the schedule of listening sessions on its [website](#).

USDA NASS Crop Production Report: This monthly report contains crop production data for the U.S., including acreage, area harvested, and yield. The report also contains a monthly weather summary, a monthly agricultural summary, and an analysis of precipitation and the degree of departure from the normal precipitation map for the month. Link to current and archived reports can be found [here](#).

USDA Supply and Demand Report: The *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* (WASDE) report is prepared and released by the World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB). This report is released monthly and provides annual forecasts for supply and use of U.S. and world wheat, rice, coarse grains, oilseeds, and cotton. The report also covers U.S. supply and use of sugar, meat, poultry, eggs, milk, and dairy products; as well as Mexico's supply and use of sugar. The WAOB chairs the Interagency Commodity Estimates Committees (ICECs), which include analysts from key USDA agencies who compile and interpret information from USDA and other domestic and foreign sources to produce the report. Link to current and archived reports can be found [here](#).

Secretary of Agriculture Briefings on the *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* (WASDE) report and the *Crop Production* report can be viewed live each month starting 12:05pm ET, following the release of the WASDE report, on [NASS's YouTube channel](#).

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FARMER RESOURCES

USDA Previews Emergency Relief Assistance for Agricultural Producers Who Incurred Losses Due to 2022 Natural Disaster Events: Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced plans to roll out \$3.7 billion in Emergency Relief Program (ERP) and Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) assistance to crop and livestock producers who sustained losses due to a qualifying natural disaster events in calendar year 2022. USDA is sharing early information to allow producers time to gather documents in advance of program delivery. Click [here](#) for more information.

Funding Opportunity: USDA is making \$45 million available to community-based and nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education and tribal entities that help underserved and veteran farmers and ranchers own and operate successful farms through the 2501 grant program. Based in local communities and rural areas, 2501 Program partners increase equitable participation in USDA's programs and services. Application Deadline: **July 25th, 2023**. For more information on how to apply, visit this [link](#).



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Your support is greatly appreciated!

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OR

send us an email at info@freedmenheirs.org.

We would love to connect with you!

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