

*Southern Rural Sociological Association*  
*55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting*



***“Rural Livelihood Stories: Past, Present, and Future”***

***February 4-5, 2024***

***Atlanta, Georgia***

***Concurrent with the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS)***

## Welcome from the Southern Rural Sociological Association 2023-2024 President

### Southern Rural Sociological Association 2024 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

February 4, 2024

SRSA Members, Guests, and SAAS Colleagues:

Welcome to Atlanta, Georgia, for the annual meeting of the Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA), held in conjunction with the meeting of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS). We are excited to have you join us for the 55<sup>th</sup> annual meeting! Our members are the heart of our organization, representing many social science disciplines. They contribute valuable work in areas of teaching, outreach and extension, research, public policy, and development. We come together in order to tell our stories, share our work, learn from each other, and build community across subject areas. It is my pleasure to welcome you to Atlanta, Georgia.

The theme for the 55<sup>th</sup> annual meeting is “Rural Livelihood Stories: Past, Present, and Future.” Rural communities are often characterized on the bases of their struggles, but rural residents also generate innovations that contribute to resilience. Sharing these insights and building partnerships across traditional boundaries may contribute to broader rural prosperity. There are several questions to pursue. How do the human, social, and material dimensions of livelihoods interconnect to shape the well-being of individuals, households, and their communities? What strategies, techniques, and institutional arrangements are utilized in pursuing livelihood pathways? What barriers are faced, and what can we learn from each other to imagine a more sustainable future?

In consultation with the SRSA Program Chair, Russ Garner, there are several program highlights I would like to share. Following a pre-organized workshop on February 3 hosted by the Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging, we begin our full conference on Sunday morning, February 4<sup>th</sup> with concurrent sessions focused on Food Systems and Community Quality of Life and Environment and Climate Change followed by a plenary panel entitled, "Collaborations Across the Boundaries that Divide Us".

We are excited about a new addition to the schedule, a short, rapid exchange session, “Building the Railway: Networking and Learning Together”, designed for conference attendees to make fast connections with current and future collaborators. The afternoon is filled with sessions addressing rural tourism, current issues in rural context, rural identity, and international development, followed by the SAAS general business meeting, and opening social. All SRSA participants are encouraged to attend both the meeting and the social. Please attend.

We continue on Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, with sessions about heirs’ property, human capital, technology implementation, and health and wellbeing in rural communities. We close out the conference with a SERA-47 Multi-State Project panel, followed by a Presidential Address Panel focused on our stories, our research, and how they connect, poster session, and presidential reception.

Thank you for joining us to discuss the importance of rural livelihoods stories across time, capturing snapshots of communities, struggles, and actions to pursue pathways to resilience that taken together will form a gallery exhibiting rural lives and landscapes at the SRSA 2024 Annual Meeting.

Eleanor McMillen Green  
SRSA President 2023-2024

## Program at a Glance

### Abbreviations

Rooms: Chastain H, Chastain G, Overlook, Savannah Ballroom, Chastain Foyer/Terrace  
Organizations

[Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists:](#)

[SAAS Southern Rural Sociological Association:](#)

[SRSA](#)

Note: All SRSA members are invited to attend SAAS sessions

### [Meeting room floor plan](#)

### Saturday, February 3, 2024

Day and Time	Location	Session Title
10:00am–4:00pm	Chastain E	Rural Population Health and Aging Proposal Writing Workshop (pre-organized)

### Sunday, February 4, 2024

Day and Time	Location	Session Title
8:00am–3:00pm	Overlook	Registration
8:15am–9:30am	Chastain G	Session 1: Food Systems and Community Quality of Life
	Chastain H	Session 2: Environment and Climate Change
9:30am–9:45am		Break
9:45am–11:00am	Chastain G	Panel 1: Collaboration Across the Boundaries that Divide Us: Explorations in Research Across Territorial and Institutional Lines (Southern Rural Development Center)
11:00am–11:15am		Break
11:15am–11:45am	Chastain G	Building the Railway Student-Faculty Rapid Exchange
11:45am–1:00pm		Lunch (on your own)
1:00pm–2:15pm	Chastain G	Session 3: Rural Tourism
	Chastain H	Session 4: Engaging with Race, Gender, and Resources in the Rural Context
2:15pm–2:30pm		Break
2:30pm–3:45pm	Chastain G	Session 5: Farm Stress
	Chastain H	Session 6: International Development
	Chastain Room 1/2	SAAS Board Meeting (2:30–3:30pm) Two SRSA leaders required to attend
3:45pm–4:00pm		Break
4:00pm–5:00pm	Chastain Room 1/2	SAAS General Business Meeting All SRSA members encouraged to attend
5:00pm	Grant Loft (Southern Exchange)	SAAS Opening Social All SRSA members encouraged to attend

**Monday, February 5, 2024**

<b>Day and Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Session Title</b>
8:00am–3:00pm	Overlook	Registration
8:00am–9:15am	Chastain G	Session 7: Heirs' Property Issues
	Chastain H	Session 8: Human Capital, Service, and Rural Communities
9:15am–9:30am		Break
9:30am–10:30am	Chastain G	SRSA Business Meeting
10:30am–10:45am		Break (poster set-up)
10:45am–11:45am	Chastain G	Panel 2: Cultivating Heirs' Property Stories: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Reach and Motivate Audiences
11:45am–1:00pm		Lunch (on your own)
1:00pm–2:15pm	Chastain G	Session 9: Technology Adoption and Diffusion
	Chastain H	Session 10: Health and Wellbeing in Rural Communities
2:15pm–2:30pm	Chastain G	Break (poster set-up)
2:30pm–3:30pm	Chastain G	Panel 3: SERA-47 Multi-State Project on Local and Regional Food Systems
3:30pm–3:45pm		Break (poster set-up)
3:45pm–4:15pm	Chastain H	Presidential Address
4:15pm–5:00pm	Chastain G	Poster Session and Presidential Reception
5:00 pm–6:00 pm	Chastain H	SRSA Executive Council Meeting

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## **Detailed Program**

### **Saturday, February 3, 2024**

10:00 am–4:00 pm, Chastain E: Rural Population Health and Aging Proposal Writing Workshop  
*John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center  
Leif Jensen, The Pennsylvania State University*

### **Sunday, February 4, 2024**

8:00am–3:00pm, Overlook: Registration

8:15am–9:30am, Chastain G: Session 1 – Food Systems and Community Quality of Life

Moderator: Millie Murphree, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service

African and Native American Foodways and Resilience from 1619 to COVID-19,  
*Lindsey Lunsford, Tuskegee University*

Resilient Regional Food Systems: A Participatory Policy

*Perspective Lia Kelinsky-Jones and Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech*

Soil Health and Water Security, the New Gold; Mitigation and Adaptive Practices in the Face of Climate Change

*Cynthia Rice and Shawn Lucas, Kentucky State University*

8:15am–9:30am, Chastain H: Session 2 – Environment and Climate Change

Moderator: Andy Smolski, North Carolina State University

Challenges and Opportunities of Emergency Managers and Vulnerable Groups Experiencing Wildfires: Some Lessons from Rural California

*Diego Thompson, Mississippi State University*

Assessing the Environmental Justice Implications of Surface Coal Mining in Eastern Kentucky

*Kabita Paudel and Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University*

Alabama Row Crop Producers' Perceptions of Weather and Climate-Based Information and Influence on Decision Making and the Adoption of Technology

*Cassie O'Connor, Michelle R. Worosz, Steve McKnight, Brenda Ortiz, Audrey Gamble, Leah Duzy, and Rishi Prasad, Auburn University*

Assessing the Ecological and Socioeconomic Impacts of Surface Coal Mining in the Appalachian Region, Kentucky

*Samuel Oshikoya, Buddhi Gyawali, Kabita Paudel, and Amrit Nepal, Kentucky State University*

9:30am–9:45am, Break

9:45am–11:00am, Chastain G: Panel 1: Collaboration Across the Boundaries that Divide Us: Explorations in

## Research Across Territorial and Institutional Lines-Southern Rural Development Center

Presenters and Facilitators: *John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center and Mississippi State University; Michelle Eley, North Carolina A&T State University and Southern Rural Development Center*

11:00am–11:15am, Break

11:15am–11:45am, Chastain H:

Building the Railway – Networking and Learning Together

*Facilitator: Kelli Russell, Auburn University*

*This short networking session is designed for conference attendees to make fast connections. During this facilitated session, participants get to introduce themselves to each other, share stories, and exchange knowledge. After the session, carry the conversations and storytelling further at lunch with your new pals.*

11:45am–1:00pm: Lunch (on your own with your SRSA friends)

1:00pm–2:15pm, Chastain G: Session 3 – Rural Tourism

Moderator: Brooklynn Wynveen, Sam Houston State University

Land Zoning, Permits, and Tax-Related Guidelines for Agritourism Operators in the Commonwealth of Virginia

*Gabriel Kwesi Yeboah and Jayesh Samtani, Virginia Tech AREC Hampton Roads*

Wake Up Downtown – An Analysis of Main Street Revitalization Efforts and Community Perception

*Rachael Carter, Mississippi State University Extension; Gene Theodori, Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Lamar University; Kase Kingery, Mississippi State University Extension; William Poindexter, Mississippi State University Extension; Sumner Davis, Mississippi State University Extension*

Cultural Tourism and Its Role in Rural Placemaking in Mississippi Delta Communities

*Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited*

1:00pm–2:15pm, Chastain H: Session 4 – Engaging with Race, Gender, and Resources in the Rural Context

Moderator: Becky Smith, Mississippi State University

Barriers Faced by Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers —Policy Center Research Analyst Update

*Kara A. Woods, The Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center*

Gender Gap in Farmland Access, Myth or Reality? The Case of Tennessee

*Mary Mafuyai and Abdelaziz Lawani*

Collective Agency as a Pathway for Black Farmer Resiliency in Virginia

*Nicole Nunoo, University of Georgia*

How do social networks influence the social support Cambodians and Laotians received after the disasters  
*Hosik Min, University of South Alabama*

The Rural Narrative of the Hispanic Community in Southwest Oklahoma  
*Laura Ruiz, Oklahoma State University*

2:15pm–2:30pm, Break

2:30pm–3:45pm, Chastain G: Session 5: Farm Stress

Moderator: Matthew M. Brooks, Florida State University

Stress and Succession Planning: Perceptions and Support Needs of Agricultural Advisors  
*Carrie N. Baker and Sarah A. Bush, University of Florida*

Race, Agrarian Frames and Navigating Farm Stress

*Andrew R. Smolski and Michael D. Schulman, North Carolina State University*

Farmer Perspectives on Farm Stress

*Roshan Saha, Kelli Russell, and Mykel Taylor, Auburn University*

2:30pm–3:45pm, Chastain H: Session 6 – International Development

Moderator: Eunice Waweru, Tuskegee University

The Impact of Parental Labor Migration on Children Left Behind in Kyrgyzstan  
*Ayday Koshmatova and Patricia Maloney, Texas Tech University*

Understanding the Intersection of Gender and Urban-Rural Residence on Wasting Among Children Under Five in Nigeria

*Aramide Kazeem, University of West Georgia, and John M. Musalia, Western Kentucky University*

Social Science Research Opportunities in Northern Queensland, Australia

*Brooklynn Wynveen, Sam Houston State University*

Exploring Beginning Agricultural Educators Questions Regarding International Development

*Meikah Dado, Texas A&M University*

3:45pm–4:00pm, Break

2:30pm–3:30pm, Chastain Room 1/2: SAAS Board Meeting, two SRSA leaders required.

4:00pm–5:00pm, Chastain Room 1/2, SAAS General Business Meeting, all invited and encouraged.

5:00pm Grant Loft (Southern Exchange), SAAS Social, all invited and encouraged.

**Monday, February 5, 2024**

8:00am–3:00pm, Overlook: Registration

8:00am–9:15am, Chastain G: Session 7– Heirs’ Property Issues

Moderator: Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University

Linking Two Literatures: Common Property and Heirs' Property  
*Conner Bailey and Ryan Thomson, Auburn University*

Death and Dirt: A Bibliometric Analysis of 50 Years of Heirs' Property Scholarship  
*Ryan Thomson, Auburn University*

Landownership Challenges in Tillery Farms: Heirs' Property in a 1935 African American Resettlement Community  
*James H. Patterson III, Tuskegee University*

The Impact of Race and Region on Heirs' Property in Rural Alabama  
*Obianuju Egiebor and Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University*

8:00am–9:15am, Chastain H: Session 8 – Human Capital, Service, and Rural Communities

Moderator: Marcus Bernard, Kentucky State University

Interdisciplinarity as a Path Towards Sustainability and Service  
*Steven McKnight and Oliver Nell, Auburn University*

From Gravel Roads to City Streets  
*Rachael Carter and Lauren Colby Nickels, Mississippi State University Extension*

The USDA SARE Program, Social Sustainability, and Quality of Life  
*Douglas H. Constance, Sam Houston State University; Jin Young Choi, Sam Houston State University; Jeff Jordan, SSARE/University of Georgia-Griffin; Candace Pollack-Moore, SSARE/University of Georgia-Griffin*

Food, Farming, and Community: An Interactive, Story-Based Curriculum Exploring Local Food Systems and Career Paths for Diverse Kentucky Youth  
*Nicole Breazeale, Ashley Smith, Stacy Vincent, Dallas Cooks, and Michelle Howell, University of Kentucky*

9:30am–10:30am, Chastain G: Business Meeting

10:30am–10:45am, Break

10:45am–11:45am, Chastain G: Panel 2: Cultivating Heirs' Property Stories: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Reach and Motivate Audiences

Panelists: *Becky Smith, Mississippi State University; John Green, Southern Rural Development Center; Portia Johnson, Auburn University Extension; Sandra Thompson, South Carolina State University Extension; Ryan Thomson, Auburn University; Kara Woods, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University; Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University; Sam Cook, North Carolina State University; Rachel Welborn, Southern Rural Development Center*

11:45am–1:00pm: Lunch (on your own)

1:00pm–2:15pm, Chastain G: Session 9– Technology Adoption and Diffusion

Moderator: Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University

Factors Influencing the Adoption of Precision Agriculture Technology among Small Farmers  
*Shreesha Pandeya, Amrit Nepal, Suraj Upadhyaya, and Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University*

Adoption Status and Prospects of Precision Agriculture in Farms in Kentucky, USA  
*Dipesh Oli and Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University*

Making Visible Subjugated Knowledge in Co-op Theory and Practice  
Rural Sociologist.  
*Thomas Gray, USDA, RBCS-Program on Co-operatives*

Key Informant Perceptions of Factors Influencing Sustainable Rice Farming Practices in the Southern United States  
*Mark Schafer and Naduni Jayasinghe, Louisiana State University AgCenter*

1:00pm–2:15pm, Chastain G: Session 10 – Health and Wellbeing in Rural Communities

Moderator: Anne Cafer, University of Mississippi

Community Health Conditions: Does Rurality Matter?  
*Kevan Lamm, University of Georgia*

A Community-Based Participatory Approach to Research on Health Equity and Social Vulnerability of Farm Workers and Agricultural Laborers in Virginia  
*David Smilnak and Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech*

Why did Medicaid Expansion Increase Rural Mortality? Disentangling Impacts by Race, Age, and Cause of Death  
*Matthew M. Brooks, Florida State University, J. Tom Mueller, University of Kansas Medical Center, Regina S. Baker, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

2:15pm–2:30pm: Break and Poster Set-Up (Chastain G)

2:30pm–3:30pm, Chastain G: Panel 3: SERA-47 Multi-State Project on Local and Regional Food Systems

Presenters and Facilitators: *John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center and Mississippi State University; Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited*

3:30pm–3:45pm, Break

3:45pm–4:15pm: Chastain G: Presidential Address: Our Stories, Our Research, and How they Connect.

4:15pm–5:00pm: Chastain G: Poster Session and Presidential Reception

4:45pm–5:30pm: Chastain G: SRSA Executive Committee

Monday, February 5, 2024, 3:45 pm–4:45 pm, Chastain G: Poster Session

Title	Author(s)
Product Preferences of Piedmont Triad, North Carolina Farmers	Godfrey Ejimakor, North Carolina A&T State University
Identifying Communication Determinants of Healthy Eating Behaviors in Rural Communities to Increase Self-Efficacy	S.J. Dossani, K.E. Gibson, and A.J. Lamm, University of Georgia
Backyard Grower-Consumer Perceptions of Rabbit Meat Consumption in Rural Mississippi	Millie Murphree, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, Escambia County Extension
Climate Change and Underserved Stakeholders	Cynthia Rice, Kentucky State University
Examining the Impact of Community Garden Engagement on Mental Health in Rural Communities: A Literature Review	E. Ramsey, C. Sanders, V. Stage, A. Bennett, M. Babb, C. Stallings, and A. Walker, North Carolina State University
Building Community Networks: The Role of Farmer Organizations and Keystone Leaders	Camille Ingram, Andrew Smolski, and Michael Schulman, North Carolina State University
Recent SNAP Participation in Farmers Markets: Market Managers' Perspectives	Laura Fincher, Texas A&M University-Commerce
It is not a Leaky Bucket: Developing a Community Reform Model in Rural Communities	Jihyun Shin, Pennsylvania State University
Delta Scholars: Cultivating Change Through Young Leaders	Eleanor M. Green, Kecia R. Johnson, Tommy Anderson, and Muneebah Umar, Mississippi State University; John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center

## Abstracts

### Session 1: Food Systems and Community Quality of Life

Food, Farming, and Community: An interactive, story-based curriculum exploring local food systems and career paths for diverse Kentucky youth

*Nicole Breazeale, Ashley Smith, Stacy Vincent, Dallas Cooks, and Michelle Howell, University of Kentucky*

Local food systems are vital for communities, as they can provide economic, social, environmental, and health benefits. However, there is a lack of comprehensive and inclusive curriculum that can educate and empower youth to learn about and engage in local food systems, especially geared for middle school agriculture educators and 4-H Agents. This presentation showcases “Food, Farming, and Community,” a local food systems curriculum that we developed in collaboration with Black Soil, Need More Acres Farm, and University of Kentucky Agriculture Education & Community Development faculty and students. The curriculum uses digital storytelling to feature a racially diverse array of farmers and local food systems practitioners in Kentucky, including a former UK football player and NFL retiree who serves as a social influencer and advocate for local food systems. The curriculum also uses a popular education approach to create 10 interactive lessons that cover topics such as local vs. global food, sustainable agriculture, food access, and local food system career paths for diverse Kentucky youth. The curriculum concludes with a group social action project. We piloted the curriculum with eight middle school agriculture educators. 4-H agents are currently adapting the lessons for a club context. The presentation will share more details about the curriculum development, pilot testing, and implications for local food systems education.

African and Native American Foodways and Resilience from 1619 to COVID-19

*Lindsey Lunsford, Tuskegee University*

The COVID-19 pandemic is flooding and splitting “efficiency” fault lines in today’s industrialized food system. It also exploits centuries of historical traumas, White supremacy, and systemic racism to kill non-White people at triple the rates of Whites. In 1619, an English ship landed on the shores of the Powhatan confederacy, or, as the English called it, Point Comfort, Virginia. The ship delivered stolen people onto stolen land. This was a first step in founding today’s U.S. food system. Until that time, the people of North America and West Africa had lived off the land for millennia, foraging, hunting, and cultivating food. But 400 years ago, the twin European colonial influences of invasion and enslavement entwined the lives and, to some extent, the foodways of Native Americans and West Africans in what is now the U.S. Yet, these communities are still resilient. This paper offers re-stories about how African American and Native American communities have adapted and maintained foodways to survive, thrive and renew, from 1619 to COVID-19. Methods include historical and literature reviews, interviews, and brief auto-ethnography. Even in the face of a pandemic, Native American and African American communities still leverage their foodways to survive and thrive. Some of these food system strategies also illustrate shifts that could be made in the United States food system to help everyone thrive.

Resilient Regional Food Systems: A Participatory Policy

*Perspective Lia Kelinsky-Jones and Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech*

A regional approach is essential to building resilient food systems as climate change effects tend to be regionally similar. Climate modeling suggests regions of the U.S. currently heavily farmed may become intolerable by 2050, whereas other regions, like Central Appalachia (CA), may become a possible agricultural hub. However, the historical legacy of environmental injustice and extraction in the region underscores the importance of ensuring that regional food system growth proceeds sustainably and

equitably. Regional governance can strengthen regional food systems, but such efforts must be inclusive of multiple stakeholders and knowledge forms. Despite its growing importance, research on food system governance is lacking, especially regionally. Joint Fact Finding (JFF) is a participatory approach to policy lever identification that fosters deliberations among diverse food system stakeholders. The methodology has the potential to support regional food system governance, but we lack empirical data on its use for this purpose. As part of my USDA NIFA Postdoctoral Fellowship, I am employing JFF in four Central Appalachian states Southwest Virginia, Western North Carolina, West Virginia, and Southeast Ohio. In this session, I will discuss the conceptual and methodological possibilities of JFF as a model for inclusive participatory research and as a vehicle for advancing resilience in regional food systems through policy efforts. I will also share preliminary methodological insights, including strategies and barriers encountered in its application.

## Session 2: Environment and Climate Change

Challenges and Opportunities of Emergency Managers and Vulnerable Groups Experiencing Wildfires: Some Lessons from Rural California

*Diego Thompson, Mississippi State University*

Worldwide, wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense. In recent years, these natural disasters have had significant consequences in rural California. Wildfires have been often preceded or followed by cascading hazards that impact vulnerable groups and communities. This study uses data from focus groups with emergency managers and individuals working with vulnerable rural groups (i.e. seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income and homeless residents, Spanish-speaking communities, and Tribal groups) in rural California. This research examines and identifies challenges and opportunities from people dealing with wildfires and related hazards. Findings show the needs to improve communication tools that could successfully reach out to vulnerable residents. Participants highlighted lack of trust and cultural barriers among some rural residents as significant challenges in case of emergencies. Findings also show opportunities from the use of community engagement strategies that could mitigate hazards and/or facilitate successful adaptive responses. These findings provide good lessons for practitioners and scholars working on community disasters and/or wildfires in rural contexts.

Assessing the Environmental Justice Implications of Surface Coal Mining in Eastern Kentucky  
*Kabita Paudel and Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University*

Surface coal mining in Eastern Kentucky has significantly impacted the region, particularly the local population from an environmental justice perspective. However, there has been limited research on how this activity affects the quality of life for nearby residents. This study aims to investigate the sociodemographic changes brought about by coal mining and the impact of coal mining on health-related quality of life in specific Eastern Kentucky mining sites. To conduct this analysis, we employ Geographic Information Systems (GIS), specifically ArcGIS Pro, using tools such as hotspot analysis, proximity analysis, and statistical measures. Data sources encompass historical mining records, socio-demographic data, health-related information, and environmental data. We explore how socio-demographic factors, including population, median household income, employment, and housing values, have evolved alongside coal mining activities. We also assess social and health vulnerabilities, such as poverty, lack of health insurance, health hazards, mortality, hospital visits, and incidence of pollution-related diseases to understand the impact of coal mining on local communities. Buffer zones are created around selected mining locations, and we analyze variations in these impacts at different distances. Our hypothesis is that community indicators closer to mining sites will exhibit more adverse conditions compared to those at greater distances. The study's findings aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex environmental justice issues associated with coal mining in the region. This understanding will inform policy discussions and interventions aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of mining.

activities on local communities while promoting equitable development and fostering the long-term resilience of Eastern Kentucky.

### Alabama Row Crop Producers' Perceptions of Weather and Climate-Based Information and Influence on Decision Making and the Adoption of Technology

*Cassie O'Connor, Michelle R. Worosz, Steve McKnight, Brenda Ortiz, Audrey Gamble, Leah Duzy, and Rishi Prasad*

To better assist producers with on-farm decision-making, research and extension teams need to understand their perceptions and how these perceptions might influence on-farm production practices. While the literature on producer decision-making has grown, there are significant gaps in knowledge specific to weather and the relationship between weather perceptions and the use of climate-smart tools and practices. In this project we ask "What are stakeholders' perceptions about weather and climate and how do they influence on-farm decision-making about climate-smart technology?"

The Future of Farming is a 6-year transdisciplinary project that began in 2020. The project team collaborates with stakeholders—producers, extension field agents, crop consultants—to understand the barriers to the adoption of climate-smart technologies. Data were collected during a series of regional learning network meetings (i.e., field days) that took place between the summers of 2020 and 2023 (n=20). Individual interviews were also conducted (n=26 producers). All data were video recorded, transcribed, and loaded to Nvivo for analysis. These data were coded according to three factors: 1) the primary project objectives, 2) the relevant research question for this sub-project, and 3) the data itself. Therefore, the codes included keywords such as cost, return, risk, and uncertainty, as well as a range of terms associated production, weather, and climate. Preliminary analysis suggests that producers: 1) distrust the weather information that they obtain, and 2) the barriers to adoption reach beyond economics, alone; and 3) there are gaps in knowledge and skills that influence perceptions and hinder adoption of climate-smart agriculture.

### Assessing the Ecological and Socioeconomic Impacts of Surface Coal Mining in the Appalachian Region, Kentucky

*Samuel Oshikoya, Buddhi Gyawali, Kabita Paudel, and Amrit Nepal, Kentucky State University*

This study examines the ecological and socioeconomic effects of surface coal mining in the Appalachian region, with a focus on Eastern Kentucky. The research involved 292 respondents, averaging 63 years of age, and residing in the region for about 50 years. Surveyed participants reported various environmental changes due to surface mining, including landscape alteration (19%), forest degradation (42%), increased storm runoff (66%), fish and wildlife population decline (100%), reduced air quality (28%), elevated noise levels (63%), and compromised land stability (84%). Over 59% of respondents support collaboration with mining operators. More than half had experienced prior mining activities on their property, with an average surface-mined area of 49.79 acres. Additionally, 63% currently live on or near mining property, emphasizing their proximity to these activities, which have occurred for an average of 14.15 years in the area. Regarding government support, 48% had not received any assistance for land reclamation, conservation, or agriculture, while about 15% had received such support, with 37% not responding to this query. These findings underscore the significant ecological and socioeconomic impact of surface coal mining in the Appalachian region, highlighting the necessity for collaborative efforts between residents and mining operators to address these concerns and promote sustainable development. The study's insights can inform policy recommendations and best practices to mitigate the environmental consequences of surface mining while safeguarding the well-being of affected communities.

### Soil Health and Water Security, the New Gold; Mitigation and Adaptive Practices in the Face of Climate Change

*Cynthia Rice and Shawn Lucas, Kentucky State University*

The traditional farming model is no longer sustainable. Soil health includes recovering degraded soil, regenerative practices to increase fertility, understanding the soil biome, tilling practices, sustainable methods and best management practice. Water security includes potable water, gray water and its usage, black water, issues in surface water, issues in ground water, rainfall vs municipal water sources, water rights and water retention and storage, precipitation, flooding and new flood plain maps. Climate change is changing up the use of both soil and water with an increased focus on mitigation and adaptation of solutions to handle the projected impact in the near- and long-term timeframe for urban and rural areas. Special emphasis is given to underserved population subsets.

### **Session 3: Rural Tourism**

Land Zoning, Permits, and Tax-Related Guidelines for Agritourism Operators in the Commonwealth of Virginia

*Gabriel Kwesi Yeboah, Virginia Tech AREC Hampton Roads*

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper was to create a piece of one-stop communication about important land zoning and land use, permits and tax guidelines for farmers venturing into agritourism in the Commonwealth of Virginia, USA. It also examines and complements prior studies on the distribution of agritourism in Virginia. **Approach:** A systematic literature review is conducted.

**Findings:** Foundational legal prerequisites for agritourism and other emerging factors for the distribution of agritourism in Virginia are identified. **Practical implication:** Farmers must invest in what they are legally expected of and also learn how best to protect themselves and their business from law infringement before and during agritourism operations. Additionally, the complementary findings of the factors of agritourism distribution can guide farmers strategically in Virginia. **Theoretical implication:** This article contributes to agritourism literature and demonstrates the relevance of safety and protection against avoidable liability. **Originality:** This article provides excellent grounds to begin conversations with specialists such as attorneys, tax analysts, and insurance companies who can help Virginia farmers assess risk and put their businesses on the best track.

Wake Up Downtown – An Analysis of Main Street Revitalization Efforts and Community Perception

*Rachael Carter, Mississippi State University Extension, Gene Theodori, Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Lamar University, Kase Kingery, Mississippi State University Extension, William Poindexter, Mississippi State University Extension, Sumner Davis, Mississippi State University Extension*

In rural Mississippi, as is the case across much of the rural United States, pressing needs exist for local community and economic development. Mississippi Main Street Association—an economic development organization focused primarily on downtown revitalization—assists rural community leaders and their constituents as they work to build, strengthen, and/or maintain local economies. In this study, we collected data from a nonprobability sample of residents living in 36 Mississippi Main Street communities to assess several major topics, including shopping patterns, preferred community improvements and/or businesses, levels of community engagement, and perceptions of the community's future. Results revealed connections between Main Street's locality-oriented development efforts and residents' levels of community engagement and local shopping behaviors, as well as clear patterns for preferred future community improvements and/or businesses. Possible implications of the findings for rural community leaders, community and economic development practitioners, and the Mississippi Main Street Association are advanced, as are suggestions for future research.

Cultural Tourism and Its Role in Rural Placemaking in Mississippi Delta Communities

*Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited*

In the latter half of 2022, USDA agencies Rural Development (RD), United States Forestry Service (USFS), and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to coordinate activities aimed at supporting the economy of communities that are adjacent to National Forests and Grasslands (gateway communities) and the sustainable development of the recreation economy nationwide, demonstrating a clear mission in strengthening rural tourism. Tourism is Mississippi's fourth largest industry, with over 23 million visitors spending over \$7 billion in fiscal year 2022. Mississippi, and in particular, the Mississippi Delta, has a rich civil rights, Blues, and agricultural history that attracts both domestic and international visitors. This presentation will examine challenges and opportunities for rural Delta communities, focusing on cultural tourism and its role in rural placemaking and revitalization, with the goal of new businesses and jobs, improved levels of service, refurbishment of derelict buildings, a renewed sense of place, and an uplift in community confidence. Engaging with Race, Gender, and Resources in the Rural Context

#### **Session 4: Engaging with Race, Gender, and Resources in the Rural Context**

Barriers Faced by Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers —Policy Center Research Analyst Update  
*Kara A. Woods, The Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center*

The Research Analyst from The Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center (The Policy Center) will provide an update on ongoing research projects dealing with food insecurity for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs). Food insecurity has a significant impact on rural life and the survival of farm operations for socially disadvantaged farmers, landowners, families, and communities. Discussion will provide impactful data highlighting the effects and barriers of food insecurity and government programs. The update will include an overview of the varying research project methods, data analysis, and recommendations for the upcoming Farm Bill.

Gender Gap in Farmland Access, Myth or Reality? The Case of Tennessee  
*Mary Mafuyai and Abdelaziz Lawani*

Over the years, men and women have struggled for equality in all areas of daily life including agriculture. Traditionally, women face significant challenges establishing credibility, acquiring capital, hiring farm labor, and securing essential resources for accessing farmland. In 2017, women represented approximately 33 percent of all farmers in the United States. Despite these obstacles, today, women perform important roles including marketing, farm business planning, record-keeping, and financial management. This paper addresses the following objectives: 1) investigating gender differences in farmland access in Tennessee and, 2) analyzing the relationship between farming experience and gender differences in Tennessee. This paper uses data collected in 2023 through direct mail, face-to-face contact, and online Qualtrics survey administered to farmland owners, farm operators and others interested in agricultural land. A questionnaire, developed by the Farmland Tenure, Planning, and Transfer Project Team at Tennessee State University was used for collecting data. Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency distributions, chi-squares, and logistic regression procedures were applied. An examination of distributions showed that 55% of the respondents were males and 45 percent were females. Forty percent of the respondents were new to farming with less than two years of experience, 21 percent had between 2 and 10 years, while 39 percent had more than 10 years. Chi-square test of independence revealed that women and men differed significantly in the issues they faced in accessing farmland in Tennessee.

Collective Agency as a Pathway for Black Farmer Resiliency in Virginia  
*Nicole Nunoo, University of Georgia*

Black farmers in the United States have long grappled with systemic challenges, from historical land dispossession, discriminatory lending practices, exclusion from agricultural support programs to contemporary barriers that threaten their agricultural livelihoods. These injustices have resulted in a significant decline in the number of Black-operated farms over the years. Amidst these challenges, Black farmers have continued to persevere, adapting, and innovating to sustain their agricultural heritage. The Black farmers' struggles have been well-documented, yet their resilience and agency in the face of adversity are often overlooked. This study, centered in Virginia, delves into the critical role of collective agency as a strategy for bolstering the resiliency of Black farmers. Through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the research uncovers how Black farmers have harnessed collective agency to navigate the complex web of challenges they face. By organizing in both rural and urban spaces, they not only enhance their own resiliency but also empower themselves to shape their futures, highlighting the significance of collective agency in fostering self-determination. The study reveals the multifaceted dimensions of collective agency, including the development of community networks, engagement in advocacy efforts, and multi-sectoral collaborations. The findings underscore the interconnections between human, social, and material aspects of farming, illustrating how collective agency contributes to the well-being of individuals, households, and their communities. By shedding light on their experiences and the power of collective agency, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the resilience and determination of Black farmers in the face of systemic challenges.

How do social networks influence the social support Cambodians and Laotians received after the disasters  
*Hosik Min, University of South Alabama*

This study examined the association between the social network variables and support from the government or family for Cambodians and Laotians in Alabama. A total of 223 Cambodians and Laotians aged at least 18 years old participated in this study. Social network variables were significantly associated with social support; however, the directions of associations differed by the type of support they received. The governmental support was associated with egos or alters who were fluent in English, experienced relocation, had more kin members in their ego network, and had financial difficulties. In contrast, family support was associated with egos or alters' higher level of education, strong ties among alters, a larger effective size, and physical health problems. Policymakers, emergency responders, and other stakeholders need to understand and consider community networks' importance, such as social relations and interactions, when planning or executing emergency plans. The study identified the need to increase translation services and financial support.

The Rural Narrative of the Hispanic Community in Southwest Oklahoma  
*Laura Ruiz, Oklahoma State University*

There is limited research related to the Hispanic community experience in rural America. Although the Hispanic community is cited as an integral component to the economic vitality of rural, farm-dependent towns, the leadership role of Hispanic people is often overlooked and unreported in rural research and narratives. The purpose of this research was to empower the leadership perspectives of rural [STATE REGION] through the lens of the local Hispanic community. This qualitative study included nine personal interviews with Hispanic members of in four [REGION] counties of [STATE]. The participants were purposively selected through various recruitment efforts by the researcher including networking with the local county Extension office, attending local churches, and engaging in community volunteer efforts as a community resident during the summer of 2023. Data were collected and transcribed in Spanish to maintain the voice of participants. Transcriptions were coded and analyzed to reveal five emergent preliminary themes portraying the experiences of leadership as described by local Hispanic community members: 1) overlooked and undervalued for work contributions in the community; 2) "it's not for me" – awareness of need for representation in local leadership but skeptical of systems; 3) lived experiences of racism; 4) this community is my home – appreciative of opportunities and quality of life in their community; and 5) setting

the record straight. Further opportunity exists to better understand the experience and narrative of Hispanic community members to inform more equitable, representative, and empowering leadership within rural communities.

## Session 5: Farm Stress

### Stress and Succession Planning: Perceptions and Support Needs of Agricultural Advisors

*Carrie N. Baker and Sarah A. Bush, University of Florida*

Rural communities have been plagued by urban sprawl with farmland being sold for residential development. While this at times is attributed to high premiums, it also relates to difficulty with succession planning. With the average age of a farmer at 57.5 years old, many farmers need to be actively planning to retire, sell, or transfer their business to successors—usually relatives or family members—to sustain the rural way of life. Planning for succession requires farmers to confront the viability of their business, make difficult decisions, and have tough conversations. Without proper support, planning can cause considerable stress and impact farmers' mental health. In preparation for transition, farmers turn to trusted advisors (e.g., consultants, estate planners, lawyers, accountants) to help navigate this process. Advisors are positioned to support farmers through stress, though many feel ill-equipped. Given outlooks for farm succession, it is important to understand how planning impacts farmer health and how to equip individuals facilitating succession. We conducted interviews with agricultural advisors to explore perceptions of stress during succession planning from their perspective, examine behaviors they exhibit to help lead families through change, and better understand their perceived challenges and needs to better support clients navigating succession planning. Advisors recognized familial conflict, lack of communication, and navigating uncertainty as some factors contributing to stress. Many noted their background prepared them for some encounters, but discussed the need for additional training. We recommend creating an advisor support network for resource sharing, and enhanced programming for navigating conflict and life changes.

### Race, Agrarian Frames and Navigating Farm Stress

*Andrew R. Smolski and Michael D. Schulman, North Carolina State University*

The literature on agrarianism demonstrates its role in framing a diverse set of actions, from farming practices to mobilization. Additionally, this research shows that agrarianism is differentiated into types based on farmers' historical and contemporary racialized experiences. In this study, we explore how the differentiation of agrarian frames provides an interpretative framework for understanding how farmers navigate risk factors, barriers to care, and strategies to address farm stress. We conduct a comparative thematic analysis of thirty interviews with Black and White farmers in three Southern states. Results show the existence of distinct, but overlapping agrarian frames based on a farmers' race. While both Black and White farmers frame being small-scale as increasing their risks and barriers to care, the frames diverge in terms of the role of discrimination and strategies. A Black agrarian frame tended to frame discrimination as having a role in increasing financial risk, and was more likely to emphasize collective action and solidarity. In contrast, a Neoliberal agrarian frame tended to emphasize individual action, express distrust of fellow farmers, and emphasize strictly economic barriers. These findings highlight the need for awareness of how frames can operate as a barrier to care and as a basis for resilience.

### Farmer Perspectives on Farm Stress

*Roshan Saha, Kelli Russell, and Mykel Taylor, Auburn University*

The purpose of this project is to further understand farmers' needs regarding farmer distress and resiliency by examining farmers and farm household members' experiences and needs in navigating adaptations, changes, and challenges in agriculture. While the economics and politics of farm production

dominate the news and scholarly study, the perspectives of actual farmers involved in agriculture are often ignored. Building on farm stress and farm resiliency literature that emphasize a need to better understand farm stress from the experiences and knowledge of the farmer and farm household, we aim to further understand farmers' perceptions of their experiences of stress and the resources that they use to navigate stress. Using grounded theory to guide all facets of data production and analysis, data for this paper come from interviews and field notes from the initial portion of a larger study of farm stress and farm resiliency in the deep south.

## Session 6: International Development

The impact of parental labor migration on children left behind in Kyrgyzstan  
*Ayday Koshmatova and Patricia Maloney, Texas Tech University*

Due to economic pressures in Kyrgyzstan after the break-up of the USSR and the lack of well-paying jobs, there is a 20-year history of parental labor migration from Kyrgyzstan to countries like Russia and Kazakhstan to support their families. This creates obvious social, academic, and developmental issues for the children who are left behind. Mostly, these children stay with relatives, but, also, they are left in residential institutions, all of which are situated in rural areas. This research study examines the perceptions of these children and the professionals who take care of them. We use non-repeated, semi-structured interviews to authentically learn about the perspectives of these respondents. Given the inaccessibility of these respondents and unlikelihood that they would respond to surveys, we argue that the previous attempts by the state at large-scale quantitative data collection have missed nuances that could only come from their perspectives. Preliminary results indicate that this population has a highly increased rate of juvenile delinquency as well as higher rates of educational dropout, and susceptibility to violence and human trafficking. The social workers report feeling helpless and overwhelmed in the face of child's needs. The final results will include policy recommendations for the government that focus on best meeting the children's needs.

Understanding the Intersection of Gender and Urban-Rural Residence on Wasting Among Children Under Five in Nigeria

*Aramide Kazeem, University of West Georgia, and John M. Musalia, Western Kentucky University*

The literature on the gender gap in young children's nutritional status in sub-Saharan Africa was mainly restricted to children three and under; these studies were situated in eastern and southern Africa. The studies find that boys are more likely than girls to experience wasting or stunting (Adekanmbi et al. 2013; Demissie and Worku 2013; Keino et al. 2014; Novignon et al. 2015; Yaya et al 2022).

Given the unavailability of secondary data, prior studies have mainly examined the direct association of gender on anthropometric measures without consideration of its interaction with other explanatory variable, such as urban-rural location, which also contributes to disadvantage nutritional status in children (Omigbodun et al. 2010; Babatunde et al. 2011; Olack et al. 2011; Demissie and Worku 2013; Novignon et al. 2015). The observed gender differences may be worsened by whether children reside in rural areas compared to urban areas as research shows that children in rural in contrast to urban places have lower nutritional status (Keino et al. 2014; Novignon et al. 2015; Novignon et al. 2015; Yaya et al 2022).

This research answers the questions that pertain to the intersectionality of gender and urban-rural residence among children in a West African country, Nigeria, through analyzing the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (2018 NDHS). The questions are -- does rural residence compared to urban residence increase susceptibility to wasting, measured through weight-for-height z-score, for both boys and girls? If yes, is the effect of rural residence more pronounced for boys than for girls?

Social Science Research Opportunities in Northern Queensland, Australia  
*Brooklynn Wynveen, Sam Houston State University*

Alternatively titled, “What I Did Over My Summer Vacation,” in this presentation, I will outline a number of potential research opportunities available for social scientists with interests in Northern Queensland, Australia. These opportunities include projects focused on topics such as recreation, tourism, community development, indigenous culture, environmental conservation, and historical preservation, among others. Locales covered encompass: Townsville, Magnetic Island, Hidden Valley, Ingham, Mungalla Station, Mount Molloy, Mission Beach, Atherton, Cape Tribulation, Port Douglas, and Cairns. These areas boast a wide variety of human and natural resources that are rife with social science research opportunities. In this conceptual piece, I look forward to sharing these ideas with conference attendees, in hopes that they will begin to likewise view their own “places” with an eye toward research and expanded understanding.

### Exploring Beginning Agricultural Educators Questions Regarding International Development *Meikah Dado, Texas A&M University*

International experiences serve as a tool to increase soft and hard skill development (Vatalaro et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2019). Specifically, beginning agricultural educators involved in international experiences encounter perspective changes, increased self-awareness, and understanding of cultural differences (Dado et al., 2023; Vatalaro et al., 2015). In turn, this increases career development and personal success through developing cultural empathy and improving teaching abilities (Serin, 2017). However, much of the previous research involved short term experiences, resulting in a lack in the literature regarding the impact of long-term exposure on new educators. Therefore, this study explored beginning agricultural educators experiences in a long-term international experience. Researchers used a phenomenological qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The population involved a census of [Program] of eight individuals who lived ten months in [Country] communities. They worked as agricultural educators, youth organization advisors, and extension agents. Researchers discovered three themes using Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative method: culture, sustainability, and development philosophy. Culture depicted what participants appreciated and were challenged by when experiencing a new culture. Sustainability described their thoughts regarding [Program] being one year; including how they felt discouraged and found grant programs to be “flaky” because of potential unsustainability. Development philosophy included participants’ positive and negative thoughts toward development that formed throughout their experience. Examples included becoming “more pragmatic” or describing “international development is a tool to keep [Country] reliant on outside resources.” Altogether, participants became integrated in [Country] culture and crafted their philosophy surrounding international development.

### Session 7: Heirs Property Issues

#### Linking Two Literatures: Common Property and Heirs Property *Conner Bailey and Ryan Thomson, Auburn University*

We tend to think of property ownership as being either private or public, one thing or another. Two bodies of research literature – heirs property and common property – make clear that this division is an oversimplification. Despite shared social equity concerns, the two literatures have developed largely in ignorance of each other, an unfortunate state of affairs we address in this paper. Common property research has focused on governance and collective use of natural resources by a defined group of users whose rights often are recognized by tradition but not by law. Much of this research focused on fisheries, forestry, and irrigation systems in non-industrialized nations. Heirs property research has focused on real property passed down across multiple generations in the absence of a probated will among African Americans in the southeastern United States. Despite obvious differences, these two property systems both embody collective rights and responsibilities limited to a definable group of people who are faced with serious obstacles imposed by formal legal systems. We provide brief summaries of the two literatures and identify insights in each that might be useful to the other.

Death and Dirt: A Bibliometric Analysis of 50 Years of Heirs' Property Scholarship  
*Ryan Thomson, Auburn University*

Heirs' property as a policy topic and field of study has come a long way since Scott Graeber's canonical study (1978). While the issue is finally on the radar for many policy-makers and academics, the biggest problem most people have never heard of still has a long way to go. Heirs' property, a form of tenancy-in-common ownership, remains a primary source of persistent poverty that traps intergenerational wealth while deteriorating housing stock and hindering productive land use. Francis et al. (2022) conservatively estimated that this legal form of dispossession stripped Black families of \$326 Billion between 1920 and 1997. Covid further exacerbated tangled title issues with millions of families affected by this issue. The interdisciplinary body of research stems from rural sociology, forestry, legal studies, and policy analysis. The following research uses bibliometric network analysis to examine and visualize over 200 articles sub-themes, keywords, and common citation patterns across the growing field of study.

Landownership Challenges in Tillery Farms: Heirs Property in a 1935 African American Resettlement Community

*James H. Patterson III, Tuskegee University*

Tillery Farms, established in 1935 as part of the New Deal's Resettlement Administration, was a beacon of hope for African American families during a time of racial segregation and economic hardship. The community, situated in rural North Carolina, was created to provide land and housing to African American families, many of whom had been sharecroppers or farm laborers. However, the issue of heirs property, where land was passed down without clear titles, became a significant concern within the community. This abstract delves into the historical context of Tillery Farms, highlighting the unique challenges that heirs property posed. The land use, ownership with clear title and loss via heirs property is quantified. With limited legal protection and a lack of clear land titles, many families in Tillery Farms struggled to maintain ownership and secure their future. The absence of legal clarity often led to disputes and the potential loss of generational wealth. This abstract explores the impact of heirs property on the Tillery Farms community, shedding light on the broader historical implications for African American landownership and the ongoing struggle for land rights in the United States.

The Impact of Race and Region on Heirs Property in Rural Alabama  
*Obianuju Egiebor and Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University*

Heirs property is land passed down to surviving family members after the original landowner dies without a succession plan or probated will. This form of land ownership disproportionately impacts racial and ethnic minorities in the US. Heirs property significantly lowers the overall asset value for its owners when compared to properties with clear titles. This study considers the extent of heirs property in two regions; one predominantly African American – the Black Belt in South Central Alabama and the other predominantly white – the Tennessee Valley in North Alabama and explores the impact of race and region on this form of land ownership (heirs property). A cross-section of land tenure data from county GIS maps will be analyzed using T-test and chi-square. We anticipate that the results will show that heirs property ownership, with a focus on the intersections of race and region, will have an impact on the incidence of heirs property as well as the assessed value of heirs property in the region with a higher population of racial minorities. The finding of this research will unravel the complex relationship between race, region, and heirs property in the rural south and US, its implications for individual landowners as well as the communities(counties) where heirs property impedes wealth accumulation and contributes to land loss and underscoring the urgent need for targeted policy interventions aimed at addressing the disparities that persist in heirs property ownership. **Keywords:** Land. Heirs Property, Race, Region, Blackbelt

## Session 8: Human Capital, Service, and Rural Communities

### From Gravel Roads to City Streets

*Rachael Carter and Lauren Colby Nickels, Mississippi State University Extension*

Farm to table dinners are fun! Many of us love going to the local farmers market or ordering locally sourced products in restaurants on those special nights out. Local food is a popular community and economic development strategy, but why do local food businesses and farmers markets fail? What are the barriers to what sounds like a very simple strategy for rural development and issues with healthy food access. How can communities grow their local foods industry, support farmers, and increase access to healthy food?

"From Gravel Roads to City Streets" is a local foods initiative conducted by MSU-Extension, Mississippi Main Street, Main Street Directors, and the Northeast Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. Session attendees will not only learn about the positive aspects and successes of developing local food initiatives, but the challenges of creating sustainable development in rural areas. The presentation will include pitfalls as well as best practices for supporting local food, growing farmers markets and "foodie" tourism, while navigating barriers to successful local food initiatives. Participants will get a glimpse of a foodie trail, a farm to table documentary, best practices guides, and a farmers market business planning curriculum for youth.

### Interdisciplinarity as a Path Towards Sustainability and Service

*Steven McKnight and Oliver Nell, Auburn University*

Faculty and extension agents at public universities serve a unique role as both academics and public servants. Projects aimed at solving complex problems – often funded by federal grants – create opportunities for these employees to gather diverse sets of citizens to work towards a common goal. In the case of large research projects involving faculty and extension agents from various fields, multidisciplinary is often built into the structure of the university team. Whether or not that coalition leads to collaborative interdisciplinarity depends on the actions and attitudes of the individual members of the team. The Future of Farming Project in Alabama is used as a case study to investigate how these actions and attitudes impact services for citizens. Our preliminary findings regarding perceptions of sustainability are explored in this paper. The variety of views regarding the concept of sustainability provide a challenge for faculty and extension agents who seek to explore sustainability solutions that are co-produced with members of the community.

### The USDA SARE Program, Social Sustainability, and Quality of Life

*Douglas H. Constance, Sam Houston State University, Jin Young Choi, Sam Houston State University, Jeff Jordan, SSARE/University of Georgia-Griffin, Candace Pollack-Moore, SSARE/University of Georgia-Griffin*

The climate change crisis requires major changes in the structure of the global agrifood system to reduce the negative externalities of conventional agriculture and to increase sustainability and resilience. This research investigates the role of USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research Education Program (SARE) toward this end. SARE was created in 1990 to enhance the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of agriculture. These dimensions are referred to as the three legs of the SARE stool. Researchers have noted that from its inception SARE was controversial in USDA and that the social sustainability leg of the stool has been the least funded. This paper investigates the balance within the SARE grants portfolio regarding the three legs of the stool with particular attention to efforts within SARE to enhance social sustainability and quality of life at the national and regional levels.

## Session 9: Technology Adoption and Diffusion

Factors influencing the adoption of precision agriculture technology among small farmers  
*Shreesha Pandeya, Amrit Nepal, Suraj Upadhyaya, and Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University*

The rise in global population has led to an increased demand for food, which poses a significant threat to global food security. To meet the growing demand for food, farmers need to enhance agricultural productivity since land resources are limited. Evidence suggests adoption of precision agriculture technology contributes to enhancing productivity. The farmers' technology adoption behaviors are influenced by different farm and farmers' characteristics. Therefore, understanding these factors is crucial for increasing the adoption of technology. Using a binary logistic regression, we investigated the role of different demographic and economic attributes of Kentucky's small farmers on the adoption of precision agriculture. Our results of analyzing 98 respondents revealed that farmers who have been farming for longer periods of time are significantly less likely to adopt precision agriculture. Furthermore, male farmers are significantly and more likely to adopt precision agriculture. The results also show that the income of the farmers is positively related to the adoption of the technology, implying that the farmers with a high level of income are more likely to adopt precision agriculture. Our results may help policymakers and other stakeholders to understand how the majority of Kentucky farmers are likely to adopt precision agriculture to enhance productivity, profitability, and other ecological benefits. In addition to this, the results may further assist precision agriculture technology suppliers and service providers for targeted marketing purposes.

Adoption status and prospects of precision agriculture in farms in Kentucky, USA  
*Dipesh Oli and Buddhi Gyawali, Kentucky State University*

The precision agriculture-based farming approach employs the use of advanced technologies to enhance crop yields tackling global problems like food security and environmental issues. The use of advanced tools and equipment is necessary to develop farm decision support systems improving productivity and sustainability. This study was conducted to understand the perception of farmers on the use of precision tools in agriculture and their prospects. The data was collected from 97 farmers. The results suggest that 65 % of the respondents are interested in learning about adopting new technologies in farming practices. The logistic binary regression model has been used to study the effects of various sociodemographic factors on the learning attitude of farmers about adopting new technologies in farming. Education level, age, income level, and expertise in agriculture production have positive effects on the learning attitude of farmers. 45 % of respondents are the late majority and 24 % are the early majority in the adoption of technology. This result suggests that proper demonstration of new technology is necessary to encourage farmers to adopt the technology. Results indicate that technical difficulties, high cost, lack of human resources to run technology, and lack of extensive services are some of the major concerns associated with the adoption of technology in agriculture. Findings show that 18% and 11% of respondents believe in the extreme importance of precision-based technology in crop and livestock production respectively. These findings could be useful to strengthen the extension activities related to precision-based technology adoption in farming communities enhancing agricultural productivity.

Making Visible Subjugated Knowledge in Co-op Theory and Practice  
Rural Sociologist.  
*Thomas Gray, USDA, RBCS-Program on Co-operatives*

Following related literature development in the larger sociology around "subjugated knowledge," this paper addresses work by black scholars and practitioners in the theorization and practice of co-operative organization. Gordon-Nembhard (2014) has reported that a perception in the Academy has existed that "African-Americans don't do co-ops and that is the problem." However Gordon-Nembhard as well as Gray (2021) have found this is not the case. There has been a highly active African-American involvement at the intellectual and practitioner level of cooperative advocacy, formation and operation. Involvement has not always been reported openly due to security needs consequent to

oppression dynamics in the larger societal context. This paper assembles and reviews co-op related theory and practice positions of several African-American scholars and advocates to bring some greater visibility generally, as well as better contextualization historically. The paper is an expansion of earlier work by the author and Gordon-Nembhard.

Key information perceptions of factors influencing sustainable rice farming practices in the southern United States

*Mark Schafer and Naduni Jayasinghe, LSU AgCenter*

My paper presentation will highlight factors that key informants (including AgCenter extention agents, leadership of grower associations, and research faculty, and others involved in the industry, broadly defined) speculate either facilitate or constrain the capacity (ability and willingness) of rice farmers in the southern US to adopt more climate resilient rice varieties and more sustaible rice farming practices. My research is part of a collaborative NIFA-funded project entitled Climate Resilient Innovations in Sustainable Production of Rice (CRISP-Rice)

## **Session 10: Health and Wellbeing in Rural Communities**

Community Health Conditions: Does Rurality Matter?

*Kevan Lamm, University of Georgia*

Although the differences between rural, urban, and metro communities is well established, the role of rurality in health conditions remains an ongoing area of investigation. The present study provides an empirical analysis of health-related questions, specifically focused on metro, urban, and rural audiences in [STATE]. A total of 3,358 responses were obtained using non-probability opt-in sampling including metro (n=2,797), urban (n=505), and rural (n= 56) respondents. The data were collected as part of a larger research study. Respondents were asked to indicate the health conditions on three scales, 1) perceptions of current health conditions in their community on a five-point scale ranging from 1-Terrible to 5-Excellent, 2) a binary response indicating whether health conditions in their community are getting better or worse, 3) a health issues indication scale with 13 potential issues present in their community. When analyzed by group, Metro respondents most frequently indicated health conditions were Good (42.7%) and getting Better (74%). There were an average of 3.45 (sd=2.54) health conditions identified. Urban respondents most frequently indicated health conditions were Average (44.8%) and getting Better (64.4%). There were an average of 3.71 (sd=2.66) health conditions identified. Rural respondents most frequently indicated health conditions were Average (44.6%) and getting Better (57.1%). There were an average of 3.89 (sd=2.35) health conditions identified. Overall results indicated rural communities had more health related issues, as well as lower perceptions of health conditions. Study results provide empirical benchmarks related to rural community health conditions.

A Community-Based Participatory Approach to Research on Health Equity and Social Vulnerability of Farm Workers and Agricultural Laborers in Virginia

*David Smilnak and Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech*

In Virginia, as well as in other U.S. southern states, the agricultural industry relies on the labor of farm workers and agricultural laborers (FW&AL) to support the efficiency of mass-market food production and food supply chains. The FW&AL community is not monolithic and may include wage workers, contract workers, permanent workers, seasonal workers, migrant and settled workers, and those laborers who participate in the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program. As a vulnerable population, however, the health and wellness of FW&AL is a rising public health issue as most recently demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current literature also illustrates social equity, economic resiliency, and food security concerns related to farm worker health, safety, and wellness. Drawing upon the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention's social vulnerability index as a systems framework, this paper shares preliminary findings of a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project that seeks to understand the social and environmental vulnerabilities affecting FW&AL in Virginia. This mixed-method research project is a partnership among Virginia's 1862 and 1890 land-grant universities, cooperative extension, and a national labor advocacy organization to provide community-based and culturally appropriate program and policy solutions from a healthy equity and food systems lens. Survey and literature review results illustrate critical health, safety, wage, housing, and wellness measures and vulnerabilities of FW&AL in Virginia. We also discuss how current findings will guide interview and focus group data collection with farm laborers and employers. Recommendations for CBPR partnership development will also be explored.

Why did Medicaid Expansion Increase Rural Mortality? Disentangling Impacts by Race, Age, and Cause of Death

*Matthew M. Brooks, Florida State University, J. Tom Mueller, University of Kansas Medical Center, Regina S. Baker, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Medicaid expansion has the ability to significantly reduce mortality in the U.S. as well as diminish currently sizeable rural-urban and Black-White mortality disparities. Unfortunately, recent work has shown that while expansion may have reduced rural White-Black disparities, it did so via an increase in White mortality and no change in Black mortality. Importantly, the underlying reasons as to why remain unknown. We aim to fill this critical evidence gap by disaggregating the impact of Medicaid expansion on overall, Black, and White mortality in rural areas by age group and specific cause of death. Utilizing innovative difference-in-difference models, we evaluate both the overall impact of expansion on Black-White mortality and how impacts may have changed over time. Our results can be used to inform policy regarding how Medicaid can be altered to best suit rural populations, and how to effectively reduce expansion-related Black-White disparities such as unequal access to preventive care.

## Posters

Product Preferences of Piedmont Triad, North Carolina Farmers

*Godfrey Ejimakor, North Carolina A&T State University*

Selling food locally helps farmers to keep a larger portion of each dollar spent on food. However, local food markets may limit the volume of sales that a farmer may achieve. Delays in the marketing of farm products such as produce may result in a higher spoilage rate with adverse financial consequences for a farmer. This could affect the resiliency of farm families especially limited resource ones. Farmers interested in selling food locally will have to be careful in their product selection. Consideration must be given to the shelf life of the product in addition to the product's suitability to local demand and weather conditions. We used survey data to identify farm products that are popular with farmers in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina. We requested local farmers who have an interest in local food marketing to list all the products that they produce. We used the listings to generate a frequency distribution for the products. We then ranked the products to identify the most and least produced ones. Our study will assist new and existing farmers to determine the products that are more suitable for the local food market.

Identifying Communication Determinants of Healthy Eating Behaviors in Rural Communities to Increase Self-Efficacy

*S.J. Dossani, K.E. Gibson, and A.J. Lamm, University of Georgia*

Rural communities face physical, economic, and social barriers to accessing healthy food, emphasizing the need for interventions that increase access. Previous studies have found increased self-efficacy is positively related to healthy eating behaviors in rural communities. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine if

social media health information seeking patterns and sources used to obtain health information predicted rural residents' self-efficacy related to healthy eating behaviors so health promotion interventions can effectively target healthy eating behaviors. The data was gathered through the [Project], which is a public health initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that aims to increase access to healthy foods and physical activity opportunities in five rural [state] counties. Data were collected from 780 rural [state] residents in 2022 using non-probability opt-in sampling with an online survey using Qualtrics. Respondents were asked both Likert-type and demographic questions. The findings indicated respondents' received their health information from health professionals (67.7%), websites (53.1%), and by word of mouth (32.2%). Regression analysis revealed social media health information seeking habits and health information sources significantly predicted self-efficacy related to healthy eating behaviors. Variables were relevant, but only explained 7.6% of the variance in self-efficacy, therefore further research is needed to determine what could be informing rural residents' self-efficacy related to healthy eating behaviors.

#### Backyard Grower-Consumer Perceptions of Rabbit Meat Consumption in Rural [State] *Millie Murphree, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, Escambia County Extension*

Every country in the world is affected by malnutrition. Malnutrition presents a double burden of both obesity and undernutrition, even within the same populations (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Excess weight and obesity are growing problems contributing to climbing rates of chronic conditions like Type II diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and heart disease (Toole, 2016). Obesity and noncommunicable diseases associated with obesity are largely preventable. Food-based approaches have a strong potential for meeting the challenges of reducing or eliminating micronutrient malnutrition (Tontisirin et al., 2002). Rabbit meat production and consumption is a possible solution to malnutrition worldwide (Petrescu & Petrescu-Mag, 2018). However, its consumption falls behind other protein sources like beef, pork, chicken, and turkey (Petrescu & Petrescu-Mag, 2018). Understanding backyard grower-consumers' perceptions of rabbit meat consumption could improve support and adoption of backyard rabbit programs leading to the generalization of consuming this healthy protein source worldwide. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the perceptions of backyard rabbit meat growers in [state] and to identify parallels of both relative advantages and potential barriers. This study addressed these research questions: (1) What were the perceptions of backyard rabbit growers in [state]? (More specifically, what influenced growers' decision to raise rabbits and to utilize them as a protein source?) (2) How were growers' practices, relative to rabbit rearing and consumption, affected by external variables outside of the growers' control? This study provided insights to the reasons some raise backyard meat rabbits for consumption.

#### Climate Change and Underserved Stakeholders *Cynthia Rice, Kentucky State University*

Underserved Stakeholders face many issues in relation to climate change. Gentrification due to climate change relocation from revised flood plains and resulting flooding. Increased disasters with less response available to economically depressed areas. Human health issues unevenly experienced by underserved and low-income population subsets, including elderly and youth/children. Public services unavailable or targeted to more affluent or new areas creating issues of inequity and injustice. Environmental services availability not convenient via current transportation routes or unaffordable. Heating and cooling options not feasible for economically distressed population subsets. Food deserts/food hubs not assessable to majority of low-income neighborhoods. Food security/sovereignty at risk leading to hunger and wasting hunger issues with associated health issues.

#### Examining the Impact of Community Garden Engagement on Mental Health in Rural Communities: A Literature Review

*E. Ramsey, C. Sanders, V. Stage, A. Bennett, M. Babb, C. Stallings, and A. Walker, North Carolina State University*

Community gardens are dynamic spaces, offering access to fresh produce and empowering members to cultivate their own food. Beyond their agricultural function, community gardens foster physical activity and social interaction. The purpose of this study was to utilize a thematic literature review to explore the role and impact of community gardens on mental health in rural communities, focusing on the demonstrated social, economic, and environmental benefits. Key search terms for the literature review included "community gardens," "rural communities," "mental health," and "low-income communities". Researchers identified improvements in community cohesion and enhanced mental well-being as emergent themes from the reviewed scientific literature. More research is needed to comprehensively understand the impact of community gardens on mental health, as current literature is notably more abundant in addressing their effects on physical health. This discrepancy arises from a variety of factors including the diverse array of assessment methods for mental health compared to the more established metrics used for physical health, such as BMI or dietary habits. These findings highlight the positive reception of research on community gardens in rural areas and underscore the strong interest in creating spaces that promote community and food cultivation.

**Building Community Networks: The Role of Farmer Organizations and Keystone Leaders**  
*Camille Ingram, Andrew Smolski, and Michael Schulman, North Carolina State University*

In this project, we investigate how farmer-led organizations develop, operate, and function. In particular, we seek to understand how they build and maintain networks and vet the resources they share with their members. In 2023, four farmer-led community-based organizations participated in semi-structured interviews. The interview process allowed these organizations to tell how they were established, who they serve, and how they vetted the web of resources they provide to their communities. Analysis shows that one main community member leads these farmer-led organizations. This keystone community leader serves their organization in myriad ways depending on the goals of the organization and on the identities of the communities they serve. Identity-based organizations emphasize social services for their members, while production-oriented organizations emphasize network building. Therefore, the organizations create a web of resources that suit their members' needs. In addition, they can reject resources that they deem lacking a "cultural grounding/understanding" of the lived experiences of their members. The basis of these organizations and their dependence on a keystone community leader are both assets and limitations for their functioning and delivery of resources. In conclusion, farmer-led organizations create bonding networks among their members and bridging networks with outside resources.

**Recent SNAP Participation in Farmers Markets: Market Managers' Perspectives**  
*Laura Fincher, Texas A&M University-Commerce*

As the 2023 farmers market season is the first in three years without SNAP Emergency Allotments, SNAP participation in farmers markets is likely to decrease, which could have negative impacts for farmers market earnings and community relations. The purpose of this study was to examine farmers market SNAP participation and the impacts of the expiration of SNAP Emergency Allotments from the perspective of market representatives in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Statistical Area. A sample of seven farmers market representatives was interviewed, and observations of farmers market sites and online media were gathered. The interviews and observations were analyzed to find common themes among the data. The study found that, although there was regular SNAP participation in small amounts, there was a decrease in SNAP participation this year, compared to the previous seasons with Emergency Allotments. Market matching programs and product quality were the main motivators for SNAP participation, and the farmers markets used signage and online media for SNAP promotion. However, access to transportation, work and family responsibilities, limited promotion, and perceived social stigma were all barriers to SNAP

participation. The farmers markets did not significantly change or adapt their SNAP programming in response to the expiration of Emergency Allotments. The farmers markets promoted a community-minded and food security-related mission. The results of this study shed light on gaps in farmers market SNAP programming and nutrition policy that need to be addressed to fulfill this mission.

It is not a Leaky Bucket: Developing a Community Reform Model in Rural Communities  
*Jihyun Shin, Pennsylvania State University*

Rural communities have experienced brain drain; outmigration of the young educated. There are several reasons for young outmigration: absence of belongings (family and/or romantic relationship), limited career building and job opportunities, or recreation facilities, etc. In other words, a rural community with resourceful jobs and career opportunities will come up with more young returnees with high satisfaction in residence. It will give rise to better infrastructure and guarantee a high quality of life for the elderly and children either. The most critical question is how a rural area does have a community level of self-efficacy. Most extension-related studies are program and county specific, and it is hard to generalize. Furthermore, they exist to develop a community by means of education, but less trying to give a hand to transform the structure of a rural community.

Is it a leaky bucket to give attention to rural communities? With an economic lens, developing and adapting a new policy to the rural areas could be reflected as a degrowth. This research develops a community reform model (Young-Professionals Program) by counteracting Economists' pessimistic view of policy adaptation in rural areas.

Delta Scholars: Cultivating Change Through Young Leaders

*Eleanor M. Green, Kecia R. Johnson, Tommy Anderson, and Muneebah Umar, Mississippi State University; John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center*

The Delta Scholars Program is a two-part academic and community engagement program for college students interested in moving Mississippi and the Multi-State Delta region towards a brighter tomorrow. The program is led through the Mississippi State University Shackouls Honors College, with additional partners through the Delta Directions Consortium (DDC), an interdisciplinary network of individuals, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and foundations that work together to inform and advance community and regional development in the Multi-State Delta Region.

These partners include the Southern Rural Development Center, University of Mississippi, Harvard University (Harvard College, Harvard Law School, and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health), Rutgers University, and well as Brandeis University. The Summer Institute is an immersive program through which students are exposed to the history of the Multi-State Mississippi Delta Region, through significant cultural sites and speakers. They also participate in an Innovation Tour of the Delta, where they meet and learn from researchers, non-profit organizations, and community members who have a long-standing track record of working to tackle difficult issues in their community through bold new approaches and community-led efforts.

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