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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture
Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and
Department Operations
Room 1301, Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6001

(202) 225-2171

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Naomi Earp
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Deputy Assistant Secretary Earp:

I write to express my serious concern about the significant decrease of black farmers and ranchers across the country. The 2017 Census of Agriculture found that black farmers make up a mere fraction (45,508) of the nation's 3.2 million farmers, representing a 3 percent (38,447) reduction since 2012. This downward trend is alarming as it reflects the residual impact of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) long history of discrimination against black farmers.

USDA has a documented history of inequitable treatment against farmers of color, also referred to as socially disadvantaged farmers. This prejudice has resulted in loss of land, delays or rejection in farm credit loans, and lack of access to technical assistance for farm programs. While USDA has settled some longstanding discrimination lawsuits, the effects of those unfair actions that served as the basis for those lawsuits can still be felt today by black farmers.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, it is your duty to make helping this shrinking population of farmers a top priority. I strongly believe it will take continued effort by the current Administration to undo the systematic damage to black farmers. To that end, I have several questions that I would like addressed regarding the Department's current outreach efforts and continued endeavors to resolve allegations of discrimination.

1. What is the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) doing to resolve civil rights complaints filed by black farmers and ranchers?
2. What type(s) of training is required for employees on customer service and diversity resolution?

3. What outreach efforts are being utilized to engage with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers besides those prescribed in the 2018 Farm Bill?
4. Over the last five years, which grantees have received funds from the program formerly referred to as Section 2501? What has been the outcomes of these grants? What metrics has the Department used to ensure the program is meeting the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers?
5. Generally speaking, how has OASCR expanded diversity and inclusion in USDA programs?
6. How many black farmers and ranchers have received direct Farm Service Agency loans in the last three fiscal years?
7. How many black farmers are currently participating in Title II programs? How is the Department seeking to further promote these programs to minority producers?
8. How is each USDA agency administering the Receipt for Service?
9. What metrics does OASCR, or other relevant USDA agencies, employ to measure the success of outreach efforts to socially disadvantaged farmers, particularly black farmers?
10. What plans does OASCR, or other offices like the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, have to further increase or expand USDA outreach to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers?
11. What is the current demographic makeup of the employees working in the OASCR?
12. How many positions are currently available in the OASCR?
13. How many positions in OASCR have been filled by minorities during your tenure?

I look forward to your response, and I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marcia L. Fudge
Chair
House Agriculture Committee
Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight
and Department Operations