Project Summary

**Facilitating Equitable Access to USDA Programs, Resources and Markets for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers in Alabama**

Funded by

USDA/Office of Advocacy and Outreach
Outreach Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (OASDFR)

Alabama A&M University seeks funding to assist socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers (SDFRs) and forest landowners in Alabama. SDFRs face many challenges to succeed in farming business. Some of the commonly cited challenges include lack of or limited access to capital, markets, land, training, and overall technical assistance; ineffective or obsolete farming techniques; lack of experience in management and marketing; language and cultural differences; and inability to access federal programs and services. The number of SDFR-owned farms and ranches in Alabama has increased since 2007; however, SDFRs have usually been unsuccessful in obtaining or accessing USDA programs, benefits or services. In collaboration with partners (ASAN and ACES), and other community-based organizations, this project will: (1) Develop and assemble culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials and training modules, for effective training and timely dissemination of educational resources (Element 3); (2) Assist SDFRs in owning and operating farms and ranches by facilitating their equitable access to and participation in, the full range of USDA programs, services, and resources; assist SDFRs with the USDA class action and claims processes (Elements 1 and 2); (3) Assist SDFRs in accessing viable markets and in developing cooperative marketing initiatives for mutual marketing benefit and production efficiency by minimizing production, processing, and marketing costs, and by focusing on Alabama’s niche/ethnic and local markets (Element 4); and (4) Provide targeted and need-based technical assistance, education, and training in a wide range of key areas of need in crops, livestock, agro-forestry and forestry production and processing, farm financial management, and overall risk management (Element 4). Over three years, this project will train at least 750 SDFRs and deliver outreach services to a diverse group of 3,877 SDFRs (African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, and Hispanic Americans) from Alabama’s 38 economically depressed counties with low farm productivity and underserved by USDA programs. The expected overall outcomes are: increased SDFRs’ participation in USDA programs, improved farm production, management, marketing, and computer skills, increased revenues from value-added products, enhanced networking among SDFRs for peer-to-peer learning for cooperative production and marketing of agricultural products, and ultimately improved use and retention of farmlands.