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## **AAMU Team Funded to Assist Farmers and Ranchers**

Huntsville, Ala. — A team of researchers in Alabama A&M University's forestry, ecology and wildlife program (FEWP) have received first-year funding to play an important role in a USDA project specially designed for limited resource farmers and ranchers.

Dr. Colmore Christian and FEWP researchers Buddhi Gyawali and Rory Fraser, have been awarded \$300,000 by the USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach to participate in the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) project.

The program offers grants to land-grant institutions (1862, 1890 or 1994), Native American tribal governments and organizations, Latino-Serving Institutions and other organizations that work with minority farmers and assist them in owning and operating farms and participating in agricultural and USDA-specific programs.

"Funding has been approved for the first year of our project, which is estimated to cost about \$930,000 over three years," said Christian. "We are very optimistic that, if we successfully meet the project objectives for Year I, then funding for Years II & III will most likely be approved in the future."

The purpose of the OASDFR program is to assure that socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers have opportunities to successfully acquire, own, operate and retain farms and ranches, generate income, and equitably participate in all USDA programs.

Christian added that a major thrust of the team's efforts will be to introduce the target groups to state and federal cost-share programs "so that in the long term their farms will be sustainable."

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