**Black Farmland Loss Needs Assessment**

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**Executive Summary**

Researchers from the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill partnered with attorneys from the Land Loss Prevention Project (LLPP) to conduct this needs assessment of Black farmers in North Carolina. The needs assessment summarized in this report aims to provide information to determine: (1) Whether land preservation needs, such as legal consultation, are being met, and if not, what needs exist and (2) The extent of mental health issues being experienced by Black farmers, especially those related to the loss of their land. The needs assessment was conducted in two phases. In the initial phase interviews were conducted with a small group of Black farmers. In the second phase, a short survey was developed and administered to Black farmers throughout North Carolina

The eight farmers we interviewed are all males and live in the Piedmont or Down East regions of North Carolina, regions of the state where most African American farmers reside. Of the eight interviewed, three had come back to farming after retiring from other careers. All reported experiences with discrimination when attempting to obtain a loan for their farm. Further, nearly all reported health effects resulting from their experiences with farming. Last, some farmers had estate plans, but not all. All farmers provided ideas that would help Black farmers to hold onto their land and thrive.

We had 45 Black farmers respond to the survey. The average age of respondents is 59 years. Exactly half of respondents are male and half were female. Over 25% of respondents have a college degree (25.6%) and nearly that many have a graduate or professional degree (23.6%). Almost half of respondents reported a yearly income range of $19,999 or less (45.2%). The average number of years farming reported was 20.7 years. Many of the respondents either worked off the farm (28.9%) or had a household member who did (30.9%). Of those who completed the survey, 44.4% reported experience with being denied a loan. Of those denied a loan, 90% felt it was because of race. More respondents reported having a plan for who would take over the farm than had an actual will (54.6% vs. 36.4%).

All of those interviewed and nearly half of those farmers who completed a survey had been denied a loan and this has occurred in every one of the last six decades up to and including the 2010s. This denial of loans has resulted in less ability to purchase up-to-date equipment and to expand the farm, making the farmers less competitive. In addition, Black farmers report experiencing disputes about land ownership and while the majority have an idea of who they want to take over their farm, far fewer actually had a will in place. Mental health issues were reported to a lesser extent than land preservation needs, but both interviewees and survey respondents had experienced conditions related to stress such as high blood pressure. The findings of this needs assessment suggest a number of recommendations that would improve the well-being of Black farmers in North Carolina. These recommendations fall into estate planning and land preservation, mental health, and funding opportunities and grant-making categories.

It is clear that Black farmers in North Carolina have experienced discrimination surrounding accessing capital for farming as seen by the large numbers of plaintiffs in lawsuits like Pigford v. Glickman and in the stories shared and data collected here. Much of this discrimination was experienced in the past, though, perhaps surprisingly, farmers are still reporting experiences with discrimination in lending. These experiences continue to affect the livelihoods of Black farmers today. These consequences include smaller, less economically viable farm operations and mental health issues brought on through the struggle to hold onto one’s farmland. These farmers, however, expressed repeatedly their love for farming, their perseverance, and ingenuity in maintaining their farmland and their vocation. Those who provide services to and work with Black farmers should come together to address the continued discrimination and develop innovative strategies to encourage estate planning and mental health care access when needed.