

## Minutes for the USDA Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers February 10, 2021

Members in Attendance: Harvey Reed, William Miller, Dr. Dewayne Goldmon, Dr. Claude Evans, Carolyn Jones, Kimberly Ratcliff, Arnetta Cotton, Antonio Harris, Delmer Stamps, Michelle Cruz, Lois Kim, Ivan Howard, Dr. Elsa Sanchez, Cary M. Junior

Welcome was given by the Designated Federal Office, Eston Williams.

Eston introduced Jacqueline Davis-Slay Acting Director, USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement and she provided greetings. She touched on the scope of OPPE and their commitments. Jackie mentioned, we continue to seek marketing opportunities for our farmers and ranchers. This office, it is the lead and outreach and partnership, and we're continuing to communicate with private sector industry, communicate with other agencies, communicate with other federal departments on all programs, resources, and opportunities that can really serve our minority farmers and ranchers. OPPE, USDA, we are here for you. We want to hear what you have to say. We want to hear those recommendations that really can improve our programs and service to you all. Thank you again, and I look forward to continuing the work ahead.

Eston introduced the Committee Chair, Harvey Reed and he provided input from the Chair perspective. He also introduced all the committee members and provided locations. He also touched on the role of the Committee. He made mention we're here to advise that the newly USDA Secretary, when he's confirmed, he has a lot on his hand right now to help us to alleviate some of the disparity that has plagued those underserved communities that have been agreed by the funding and also outreach and technical assistance. The advisory committee was not functioning under the 2018 Farm Bill that the Congress had affirm participation and mandatory funding for us to work through. By not being there, we weren't AOL, we were just eliminated from the process under the previous administration, which declined to panel this committee, not until July of last year, we are finally here. We can't say it's too little too late, but we here, we here to serve.

After the welcome and introductions, we began to have USDA Agency Briefing.

Eston introduced Kenya Nicholas, Program Director for the USDA OPPE 2501 Program commended the committee on their great work. She also made mention the 2501 funding for this fiscal year have unprecedented dollars. She went on to say they have the regular Farm Bill funding and appropriations, which is about \$20 million this fiscal year, and for stimulus, they received 37.5 million in addition to that, that's 50% of the 75 million that was allotted for the FOTO, which is Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach program.

Eston introduced Bill Ashton, Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison for OPPE. He made mentioned of the three E's and what they stood for as he speaks to groups. They are Employment, Education, and Entrepreneur. He also mentioned in 2019 USDA hired in 1900 veterans into the offices in the United States. In 2020 they hired in 2000 veterans in U.S. As it elates to education, he works with the 1890 and the 1994 Scholars. When it comes to Entrepreneur, he works with rural America to help get business started.

Eston introduced Troy Joshua, Director Western Field Operations for National Agricultural Statistics Service. Troy added NASS employs approximately 900 employees throughout the country, servicing all 50 States and US territory. What NASS does is, we collect, assemble, process, and disseminate US agricultural data, including over 450 reports annually. We conduct the detailed census of agriculture every five years; we provide data collection and consultation services to other state and federal partners as well as other countries. We partner with the State Department of Agriculture, trade associations, universities, and others. Not only that, but we also conduct research to advance the statistical service.

Eston introduced Dr. Carrie Castille, Director of National Institute of Food and Agriculture. She went on to say, for those of you who aren't aware of NIFA, our primary mission is to invest and support research education and extension programs that solve societal problems. Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development program is a great program and it's projected to be funded at about \$16.5 million for 2021. She emphasized some of this funding is available for former co-ops, as well as other networks and partnerships. We're really geared towards socially disadvantaged veterans and really looking at geographic balance as a priority for this program.

After hearing from Dr. Castille, we had time left to have questions addressed to the speakers. The operator of the call opens the floor for Q and A. We had several questions came from the public and the speakers provided feedback.

A break was provided at 2:30 and asked that everyone return at 2:40.

Returned from break and Eston open the public meeting. He first started out by reading comments sent in from the public.

Eston read comments from Lance Green. Ms. Richie pertaining to discrimination.

Eston read comments to the public from Kamealoha Smith. This comment was pertaining to food security, employment, and housing for an Island in Hawaii.

Eston read comments from Linda Fortenberry. Her comments were pertaining to they had not received any food boxes from farmers to families.

Eston read comments from Igalious Ike Mills. He wanted to know, who made the decision to shut down committee for 3 to 4 years. He also wanted to know, how was the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement established.

Eston talked about the next comment was addressed to Mike Beatty, but it was read at the last public meeting. The document will be posted for the record.

Eston read a comment from 2016 pertaining to Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Eston read the last comment from Booker, Warren, Gillibrand. This comment was pertaining to address the history of discrimination in federal Agricultural Policy.

The operator opens the floor for comments from the public on the call. Several comments were made from the public.

The Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers went into a discussion during their time slot. The discussion was led by Chairman Harvey Reed. Several Committee members added to the discussion. Before ending the discussion, Harvey thanked all for attending.

Designated Federal Officer Eston Williams gives his thanks to all participated and adjourned the meeting at 3:54 PM CST.

*Eston Williams*

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Designated Federal Officers

Date: 3/31/2021



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Harvey Reed  
MFAC Chairman

Date: 3/31/2021