

PRESS RELEASE

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Federation/LAF Signs MOU with USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Establishes Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (Federation/LAF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in support of its Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center. This partnership will support FSC/LAF's efforts to assist minority and other socially disadvantaged landowners who own heirs property and/or land related disputes across the southern region.

The lack of clear title or heirs property is one of the greatest barriers to accessing USDA programs for historically underserved communities. The MOU provides a working framework for cooperation between OASCR and FSC/LAF to increase access to USDA programs by minority farmers and ranchers.

The primary purpose of the MOU is recognize FSC/LAF's Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center as an outreach service center with a primary focus on its membership and minority and socially disadvantaged landowners across the southern region.

Over the last 50 years, FSC/LAF's mission has been to reverse the trend of African-American land loss and to encourage land based economic development. The Regional Heirs Property and Mediation Center will work cooperatively with OASCR to identify traditionally underserved landowners within the southern states and assist them in resolving heirs property, land retention, and estate planning issues through mediation, legal assistance, outreach and education. Currently, the FSC/LAF serves as the USDA's Certified Agricultural Mediation Program in Georgia and Mississippi.

Measurable indicators will be an increase in the number of minority and socially disadvantaged landowners who are knowledgeable about the OASCR and FSC/LAF programs and services and are accessing USDA programs which support and secure their land tenure.



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