

March 25, 2021

Statement from Sedrick Rowe to the U.S. House Agriculture Committee
Congressman David Scott, Chairman

My name is Sedrick Rowe. I am a young Black first generation farmer. I have a Bachelors Degree in Plant Science with a concentration Horticulture and a Masters of Public Health with a concentration in Environmental Health. I own a 30- acre organic farm where I grow peanuts, watermelons, sunflowers and hemp. I was one of the first three farmers in my area to establish a market for organic peanuts and I am a founding member of the Georgia Organic Peanut Association. I have been involved in agriculture all of my life and that experience continues to show me what it takes to develop a successful farm business. Unfortunately, I did not inherit land, so I built my farm from the ground up by purchasing land. I have seen and experienced racism and discrimination within the agricultural system, as have so many other Black seasoned as well as young farmers. My experience has allowed me to witness firsthand, the difficulties Black farmers have when attempting to access funds from the United States Department of Agriculture. I personally have been unable to access those funds while watching my white counterparts having little, if any, problem doing so. I have applied for micro-loans as well as Beginning Farmers Assistance and was denied: reasons given included insufficient collateral, market contracts were insufficient and tax returns for the previous year did not show enough income to pay the loan. It is extremely difficult for a beginning farmer to meet these criteria. Loan criteria has to be more flexible and equitable – and should include a combination of loans and grants.

Even when funds are supposedly put in place to assist Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers, the rules, regulations and paperwork make them difficult to access, for example, farming history and matching funds. Although FSA is supposed to be the “go to” agency for farmers who are having difficulty securing loans from commercial or other sources, it falls way short when it comes to Black farmers – again this comes from personal experience.

Although I consider myself to be a successful young Black farmer, it is difficult for me to convince others to join me if I cannot assure them that if they do all of the right things, they will have the backing of the USDA.

Although Black farmers make up a small percentage of all farmers, they play a critical role in making sure that marginalized people and communities throughout the Black Belt Region have access to healthy and affordable food. We need to make sure they not only remain in business but that their number increases.

Community organizations also need support as they are often the only thing standing in the way to keep people like me from losing their farms. I once worked with one organization (The Southwest Georgia Project). I saw how these organizations advocated on behalf of farmers of color and worked through the red tape when farmers could not do so themselves. In many instances they helped mitigate the lack of trust between the USDA and farmers of color. So their continued existence and sustainability is critical.

In the end, it is the responsibility of the USDA to level the playing field so that Black and other minority farmers can not only survive, but also prosper.

Thank you.

**Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Nongovernmental Witnesses**

House rules require nongovernmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: Sedrick Rowe
2. Organization you represent:
Self
3. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee: Farmer Fly-ins 2018, 2019

4. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee: Policy boards I currently sit on related to Agriculture

5. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:

**PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF
TESTIMONY.**

My name is Sedrick Rowe I am a young farmer from Albany Georgia where I own and operate Rowe organic farms LLC which is a certified farm where I grow organic hemp, canola, watermelon and peanuts. I created a South Georgia Young Farmer Coalition chapter in my community to be able to teach upcoming farmers and beginning farmers the language and policies in the farm bill. I also serve on the agriculture committee board for the Camilla high school, along with the National Board of Young Farmers Coalition. Being a founding member of Georgia Organic Peanut Association (GOPA) where I help start the organic peanut market in Georgia. I am an example to my community by been able to show them that the work can be done and we need more people to be involved in agriculture. I am the first and youngest male organic hemp growing in South Georgia.

Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form

In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5)* of the *Rules of the House of Representatives*, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form electronically by filling in the provided blanks.

Committee: Agriculture

Subcommittee: _____

Hearing Date: 03/25/2021

Hearing Title :

"A Hearing to Review the State of Black Farmers in the U.S"

Witness Name: Sedrick Rowe

Position/Title: Farmer

Witness Type: ☐ Governmental ☒ Non-governmental

Are you representing yourself or an organization? ☒ Self ☐ Organization

If you are representing an organization, please list what entity or entities you are representing:

FOR WITNESSES APPEARING IN A NON-GOVERNMENTAL CAPACITY

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

Are you a fiduciary—including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent—of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing? If so, please list the name of the organization(s) or entities.

N/A

Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) related to the hearing's subject matter that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

Please list any contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government and related to the hearing's subject that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the amount and country of origin of each contract or payment.

N/A

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

- ☒ I have attached a written statement of proposed testimony.
- ☐ I have attached my curriculum vitae or biography.

*Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5), of the U.S. House of Representatives provides:

(5)(A) Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof.

(B) In the case of a witness appearing in a non-governmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include— (i) a curriculum vitae; (ii) a disclosure of any Federal grants or contracts, or contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (iii) a disclosure of whether the witness is a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing.

(C) The disclosure referred to in subdivision (B)(iii) shall include— (i) the amount and source of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (ii) the amount and country of origin of any payment or contract related to the subject matter of the hearing originating with a foreign government.

(D) Such statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the privacy or security of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness appears.