

First Quarter of 2026 (January-March)



# Agriculture Is Our Life



## Our Mission

To improve the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of black row crop farmers.

We take pride in our resilience and passion for farming.

# 2025 Year in Review

As we look back on 2025, the National Black Growers Council continued its work to strengthen opportunities for row crop farmers across the country. Through farmer engagement, partnerships, and educational programs, NBGC remained focused on improving the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of our members. Throughout the year, NBGC hosted Model Farm Field Days across several states, providing farmers with opportunities to see innovative practices in action, exchange knowledge with fellow producers, and connect with agricultural industry partners. These events continued to serve as valuable spaces for farmers to learn directly from other farmers and industry experts.

NBGC also strengthened partnerships with agricultural companies, universities, and organizations, helping ensure farmers had access to resources, technology, and information that supported their operations in an evolving agricultural landscape.



2025 concluded with the NBGC Annual Meeting held in New Orleans, Louisiana, from December 9–12, where farmers, partners, and industry leaders came together to reflect on the year's accomplishments, share insights, and continue building a strong future for agriculture.



# Black History in Agriculture: Past, Present, and Future



Black History Month provided an opportunity to reflect on the generations of farmers, innovators, and advocates who have helped shape American agriculture. The story of agriculture in this country cannot be told without recognizing the contributions of those who built knowledge, preserved land, and passed down farming traditions from one generation to the next. Their work laid the foundation for the agricultural systems and communities we see today.

From pioneers like **George Washington Carver**, whose research on crops such as peanuts and sweet potatoes helped transform southern agriculture, to modern-day producers who continue to lead and innovate, the legacy of agriculture is one built through perseverance and ingenuity. Carver's work not only changed how farmers thought about crop diversification but also opened doors for future agricultural research and education.

Today, that legacy continues through leaders and farmers who are making an impact in their communities and across the agricultural industry. Farmers like **Mr. Bill Bridgeforth**, who have helped advance rice production and value-added agriculture, represent the strength and innovation of today's producers. Agricultural leaders such as **Fannie Lou Hamer**, Congresswoman **Eva M. Clayton**, and Congresswoman **Alma Adams** have also played significant roles in advocating for farmers and rural communities, helping shape policy, opportunity, and access within agriculture.

Across the country, producers like **Sedrick Rowe**, a young peanut farmer in Georgia, and agricultural entrepreneur **Ashley Armstrong**, who are strengthening food access and distribution in their communities, represent the next wave of agricultural leadership. Their work demonstrates how innovation, advocacy, and entrepreneurship continue to move the industry forward.

The future of agriculture is already taking shape. Young leaders like **Kendall Rae Johnson**, recognized as the youngest certified farmer in the United States, remind us that the next generation is already stepping into the field with curiosity, determination, and passion for agriculture.

At NBGC, we recognize that agriculture is not just history—it is a living legacy. From past pioneers to today's farmers and tomorrow's agricultural leaders, we are a living testament to the generations that came before us and the opportunities that lie ahead. **Every season, the farmers of NBGC continue this legacy—planting**

# Farmer Bridge Payments: What Producers Should Know

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced the **Farmer Bridge Payment program**, a one-time financial assistance initiative designed to provide short-term support to farmers following a challenging 2025 production year. Rising input costs, shifting commodity prices, and ongoing economic uncertainty placed additional pressure on many farm operations, and the bridge payments were intended to help provide some relief as farmers prepared for the 2026 growing season.

Enrollment for the program opened in **February 2026 through local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices**, where farmers were able to review and confirm their eligibility based on previously reported **2025 planted acreage**. Many producers received pre-populated paperwork from USDA using information already on file with FSA, which helped simplify the enrollment process for participating farms.

The program primarily focused on **row crop producers**, including farmers growing commodities such as **corn, soybeans, cotton, rice, peanuts, and wheat**. Payment amounts were determined based on reported acreage and were intended to help offset a portion of the increased costs many producers faced over the past year, including expenses related to fertilizer, fuel, seed, and crop protection products.

USDA began distributing payments in **late February 2026**, providing additional cash flow support for farmers heading into spring planting. While the bridge payments were not designed to fully address the financial challenges facing agriculture, they offered temporary support as broader discussions around long-term farm policy and future farm bill programs continue.

NBGC encourages members to work closely with their local FSA offices to ensure their acreage reports and farm records are accurate and up to date. Staying informed about programs like this helps ensure farmers can access the resources available to support their operations and plan for the seasons ahead.

Sources:

<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2026/02/20/usda-announces-enrollment-period-farmer-bridge-payments>

<https://floridafarmbureau.org/news/usda-releases-farmer-bridge-assistance-payment-rates/>



# Women's History Month: Celebrating the Women Who Power Agriculture



This year carries special significance for agriculture as global leaders have recognized **2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer**, highlighting the growing leadership and influence of women across the agricultural sector. From the field to the boardroom, women continue to shape the future of agriculture through farming, research, advocacy, and agribusiness leadership.

The numbers reflect this growing impact. According to the most recent Census of Agriculture, the United States is home to **more than 1.2 million female producers**, representing approximately **36% of all farmers nationwide**. Additionally, **over half of all farms in the United States now include at least one woman involved in farm decision-making**, demonstrating the vital role women play in managing and sustaining agricultural operations.

Within the NBGC community, we are proud to work alongside remarkable women who are contributing directly to the success of American agriculture. Farmers such as **Christi Bland-Miller, a rice farmer in Sledge, MS, Katrina Williams a row crop farmer in Two Egg, Florida, and Denise Greer Jamerson, a produce farmer of Princeton, Indiana** represent the strength, innovation, and leadership women bring to farming operations across the country. Their work in production agriculture continues to inspire the next generation of farmers and agricultural leaders.

At the same time, agriculture would not function without the countless women who support family farming operations every day. Across many farms, wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters help manage finances, logistics, compliance, marketing, and daily decision making. Women like **Myra Bunton, Tracey Gilbert, Elaine Loggins, Linda Hires, and Verna Rockingham** represent the many women who help hold farming operations together behind the scenes while supporting their families and communities.

Women are also helping move agriculture forward through leadership roles in agribusiness and industry organizations. Professionals such as **Macie O'Shaughnessy (Syngenta), Seanicaa Edwards Herron (Freedmen Heirs Foundation), Jill Beck (AgDirect), Ann Thompson and Mary Streffert (Farm Credit), Jennifer Crumpler (Bayer), Dariyan Stallings (BASF), Deborah Quade and Kim Sudy (Kellanova), AJ Wilson (Mars), Nina Krause (Nuveen), Natalie McGrady (Cargill), Kiana Wilson (FMC), DeMarquine' Houston and Maria Mehok (National Peanut Board), and Ebony Webber and Ashantae Smith from MANRRS** play key roles in supporting farmers through research, finance, sustainability programs, education, and policy advocacy.

Across the rice fields of the Delta, the peanut fields of the Southeast, cattle operations in Texas, and diversified farms across the country, women continue to play a vital role in producing the food, fiber, and fuel that feed our neighbors and our nation. As we celebrate Women's History Month, NBGC recognizes that the future of agriculture depends on strong leadership, collaboration, and innovation. **From the farm field to the policy table, women are helping shape the future of agriculture—and NBGC is proud to stand alongside them.**



# Planting Season Preparation: Burn Down & Field Readiness

As the 2026 planting season approaches, farmers across the country are preparing fields, equipment, and inputs to ensure crops get off to a strong start. Early field preparation helps reduce weed pressure, prevent equipment delays, and create optimal planting conditions for crops such as rice, **soybeans, cotton, peanuts, wheat, and corn.**



**Below are key activities many producers are focusing on as they prepare for planting season.**

## Burn Down & Weed Control

- Apply burn down herbicides early to control winter weeds such as henbit, ryegrass, marestail, and pigweed
- Target weeds while they are still small for better control and fewer applications later
- Evaluate fields for herbicide-resistant weeds and adjust programs accordingly
- Ensure sprayers are properly calibrated for accurate application rates
- Monitor weather conditions before spraying to reduce drift and maximize effectiveness

## Field Preparation

- Walk fields to identify ruts, drainage issues, or compaction areas from the previous season
- Repair or smooth ruts created during harvest to ensure even planting depth
- Check field drainage and tile systems where applicable
- Prepare beds or rows depending on crop and regional production practices
- Inspect irrigation systems and levees, particularly for rice production



Scan the QR Code below to save the NBGC Spring Field Preparation Checklist directly to your phone for easy reference while you're in the field.



**Continued activities:**

## Equipment & Shop Work

- Service tractors, planters, and spray rigs before the season begins
- Calibrate planters to ensure accurate seed spacing and population
- Check hydraulic systems, hoses, and wiring
- Replace worn parts such as discs, bearings, and chains
- Inspect spray nozzles and pressure systems for herbicide applications

## Spring Field Preparation Checklist

Farmers can use this quick checklist as they prepare their operations for the upcoming season.

- Apply burn down herbicides before weeds become established
- Walk fields and identify drainage or compaction issues
- Prepare levees and irrigation systems for rice fields
- Monitor soil temperature and moisture conditions
- Calibrate planters and sprayers
- Service equipment and replace worn parts
- Confirm seed and input availability
- Review financial and marketing plans for the upcoming season

# In the Field with Odis Hill



*NBGC Agricultural Specialist*

As we are in the heart of the planting season for 2026, many of us as farmers are looking at the same challenges—tight margins, higher input costs, and uncertainty in the markets. Because of that, preparation in the field and in the shop are more important than ever this year.

One thing we know as farmers is that starting with a clean field can make all the difference. Whether you're using herbicides or doing some tillage, it's important to make sure fields are clean before planting. Early weed control helps our crops get established faster and reduces the pressure we deal with later in the season.

Another thing we should all be paying attention to right now is our planters. Before we head to the field, we need to make sure our row crop planters are ready to go. That means checking seed meters, chains, discs, and hydraulic systems. Even something simple like making sure the tires on the planter have the right air pressure can affect planting depth and spacing.

At the same time, we're all seeing the pressure of rising input costs. Urea fertilizer prices have increased roughly \$50 per ton in recent years, and diesel prices have gone up more than 60 cents per gallon, adding additional costs to field operations and planting preparation.

We're also hearing across the industry that there may be shortages of corn and soybean seed supplies, so it's important for us as producers to make sure we secure the best seed varieties available for our type of soil and production system.

Many farmers should also be seeing their bridge payments hitting their accounts, which may provide some short-term relief as we move into the planting season. While it may not solve all of the financial pressures we're facing, it can help support operations as we prepare for the year ahead.

There's also some positive news on the regulatory side. NBGC and other producer groups have worked to ensure that farmers will continue to have access to over-the-top dicamba formulations on genetically modified cotton and soybean crops, giving us another important tool to manage weeds during the season.

As we get ready to plant, I encourage farmers to use the NBGC Spring Field Preparation Checklist to stay organized and make sure the important steps are covered—from burn down applications to equipment checks and field readiness.

At the end of the day, we as farmers love what we do. Farming is more than an occupation—it's a way of life. We all deserve a strong crop year in 2026. Even though experts are predicting another year of lower crop prices, higher inputs, and tight margins, we'll continue doing what farmers have always done—work hard, adapt, and keep producing for our communities and our nation.

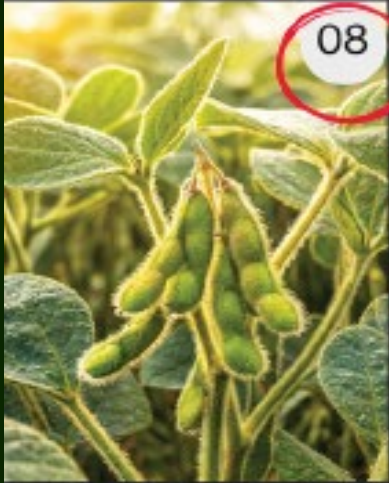


If you have questions, feel free to reach out. If I don't answer right away, I may just be out in the field—but don't hesitate to leave a message or send a text.

— Odis Hill

# Save *the* Date

National Black Growers Council  
2026 Annual Meeting

## December

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
 <p>08</p>	 <p>09</p>	 <p>10</p>

Raleigh, North Carolina

# Board Member Spotlight



Willis Nelson Sr.

**NBGC Board Chair**

The National Black Growers Council is proud to recognize Willis Nelson Sr. as our current Board Chair. Willis is a respected farmer and agricultural leader who brings decades of experience in row crop production and farm management.

As Board Chair, he plays an important role in helping guide NBGC's mission to improve the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of row crop farmers across the country.

Known for his humility, strong family values, and dedication to the next generation of farmers, Willis continues to lead by example both in the field and within the agricultural community.



Antron Williams

**NBGC Board Treasurer/Secretary  
& SC Board Member**

NBGC is also proud to highlight Antron Williams, who serves as the organization's Board Secretary. Antron is a dedicated farmer and leader who remains actively involved in supporting farmers throughout the Southeast.

Antron has played an important role in organizing farmer engagement opportunities, including NBGC regional meetings that bring together producers, industry professionals, and agricultural experts to share information and resources.

Through his leadership and commitment to agriculture, Antron continues to help strengthen connections within the farming community while supporting the mission and work of the National Black Growers Council.

# Staff Spotlight



Brielle Wright

**Program Director**

NBGC is proud to highlight **Brielle Wright**, a dedicated agricultural leader and long-time member of **MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences)**.

Brielle began her MANRRS journey in **2007 as a student at North Carolina A&T State University** and has continued to support the organization throughout her undergraduate, graduate, and professional career. Her continued involvement reflects her commitment to developing the next generation of agricultural leaders and expanding opportunities within the agricultural industry.

# Membership Spotlight



## Lonnie Gilbert

NBGC is proud to highlight Lonnie Gilbert, a Florida farmer and member of the National Black Growers Council.

Lonnie recently completed the Peanut Leadership Academy, where he gained valuable insight into the peanut industry and the role farmers play in supporting communities and agriculture across the country.

We are proud of farmers like Lonnie who continue to grow as leaders while helping strengthen the future of agriculture.

## AMP Program Update: Opportunities for Farmers

The **National Black Growers Council (NBGC)** is currently implementing an **Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) grant**, a program that helps farmers and ranchers access new market opportunities while implementing sound conservation practices. NBGC is implementing this project in **two phases**.

### Phase 1 (Currently Underway)

- 25 farmers are currently participating
- Each farmer committed 100 acres
- Farmers are implementing regenerative practices such as:
  - No-till or reduced tillage
  - Cover crops
  - Crop rotation
  - Improved nutrient management
  - Soil health practices

These practices are designed to help improve soil health, water retention, and long-term farm productivity.

### Phase 2 (Now Recruiting Farmers)

NBGC is preparing to launch Phase 2 of the program and is looking to recruit:  
100 additional farmers  
Farmers participating in Phase 2 will:

- Commit 50 acres
- Acres cannot already be enrolled in another conservation program
- Implement regenerative practices similar to Phase 1

Farmers will receive \$140 per acre for participating in the program.

If you are interested in participating, contact us for more information at:

Email: [nbgc@nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com](mailto:nbgc@nationalblackgrowerscouncil.com)

# Sustaining Members Corner

## Business Basics for Beginning Farmers (Provided by Farm Credit)

By: Chris Laughton

What does success mean for you? One of the great things about owning or starting your own business is that you determine your business goals and how you want to achieve them. Often agricultural businesses have goals beyond profitability, but if you're not at least breaking even, your business is not going to be sustainable over the long term. So, what are the business basics that help you remain profitable so you stay on track toward achieving your business goals?

1. Build your network. There are three basic areas of business skills — production, marketing and financial. It's rare for someone to excel in all three of these areas, so as you get started, it's important to assess your skills, recognize blind spots and partner or hire where you're lacking.
2. Record keeping and financial management are essential. Good records allow you to manage your business, create budgets and compare performance to projections.
3. Review financials regularly. There are three main financial statements: balance sheet, income statement and cash flow statement. These should be reviewed regularly as they provide snapshots of the business's financial health, profitability over time, and actual cash position.
4. Cash flow budgeting is critical. Cash flow budgeting allows you to foresee potential lean periods and ensure adequate funds to cover expenses month-to-month. Many farms have seasonal cash flow that can lead to problems if not budgeted accordingly. Read strategies for managing liquidity from this previous blog article.
5. Gross margin must cover overhead/fixed costs to be profitable. Gross margin is revenue minus variable costs. To manage gross margin, a producer should carefully manage costs like labor, inventory, shrink and marketing. They should analyze pricing to improve margins. And align production with demand to limit waste.
6. Set realistic expectations. When starting out, it's easy to dream big. But sometimes those big dreams may not be attainable right away. Use business planning tools and advisory services to set realistic goals and evaluate and adjust your strategies to achieve those goals along the way.
7. Engage in continual learning. Education and training can help build confidence in areas you may not be as knowledgeable. For example, Farm Credit East offers GenerationNext seminars to help the next generation of managers advance their management skills and business knowledge. Additionally, growing practices and technology are constantly evolving, so staying up to date is imperative. Most industry trade groups, farm bureaus and local extensions offer conferences, trainings and workshops for continual learning.
8. Explore financing options. Equity financing, like personal investment, is usually needed to start a business. Off-farm income can help early stage borrowing. Debt financing from lenders supports ongoing operations and growth. Lenders like Farm Credit, FSA, and state programs for beginning farmers evaluate the 5 Cs of credit – character, capacity, capital, collateral and conditions — when making financing decisions.

Farm Credit East also offers FarmStart investments. FarmStart is a unique financing program that aims to bridge the gap for beginning farmers to obtain some operating funds as they start their new agricultural enterprise. The program invests up to \$75,000 in new and beginning agricultural enterprises that show promise of success. FarmStart recipients have five years to repay the investment or roll it into conventional financing. Learn more about FarmStart.

For a deeper dive into business basics for beginning farmers, review this one-hour webinar recording that goes into detail about:

Financial Statements: What they are, how to read them and why they are useful

Budgets and Cash Flow: How to put together a budget and why it's important to your enterprise

Credit and Financing: How to approach a lender, sources of financing and how credit decisions are made

<https://www.farmcrediteast.com/resources/todays-harvest-Blog/240618BusinessBasicsForBeginningFarmers>

We appreciate our sustaining members:



JOHN DEERE



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CREDIT



nuveen  
NATURAL CAPITAL



# Model Farm Field Days

- **June 19:** Waterproof, LA: Bales & Bushels LLC: James Davis
- **July 17:** Timmonsville SC: Candy Friday Farms LLC: Ronald Friday
- **August 7:** Sledge, MS: CMB Farm LLC: Christi Bland-Miller
- **September 4:** Woodburn, KY: Bunton Farms and Trucking

*Thank you for reading!*

Don't forget to share your stories, accomplishments, and highlights for a chance to be featured in this monthly newsletter.

Use the QR code below to submit your information and let your voice be heard!



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NBGC remains committed to ensuring farmers are informed and supported when navigating heirs' property challenges. We will continue sharing resources and exploring opportunities to address this issue in partnership with legal advocates, policy leaders, and our sustaining members.





