MOST-ANTICIPATED

"EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO UNLOCK THE GOLDEN DOOR OF FREEDOM."
-GEORGE W. CARVER

130th Annual Farmers Conference

Over 125 Years of Progressive Agriculture

"Regenerating Farms, Economies, and Communities."

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ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The first Farmers Conference was held at Tuskegee University on February 23, 1892. Its purpose was to convene farmers in an educationally stimulating environment that would arouse public sentiment and create an interest in the common, mundane, and practical affairs of life. The morning was spent identifying problems associated with farming and the afternoon portion of the conference focused on their solutions. Today, this conference has evolved into a two-day event that focuses on the problems and solutions for small-scale farmers, landowners, and their communities in managing change in agriculture. Participants are engaged in intense courses of instructions, problem-solving, and interactive demonstrations. Additionally, the conference provides an opportunity for small-scale farmers to network with colleagues and university educators. From its inception, the Tuskegee University’s Farmers Conference has retained the following objectives: (1) to share up-to-date information relevant to small-scale farmers and landowners involved in the production of traditional and alternative agricultural products; (2) to create awareness about family health, nutritional challenges, and existing resources for rural families; (3) to provide research-based information in a consumer adaptable format; and (4) to strengthen networks and partnerships that address problems of small-scale farmers and rural communities concerning local, national and global markets.
2022 MERIT FARM FAMILY

Mr. Matthew Steele and Family  
Macon County, Alabama

SPONSORED BY: FIRST SOUTH FARM CREDIT
Steele Farm

After a deal of prayer, Matthew Steele was directed to farming in which he turned out to be a natural due to his love of watching things grow and his desire to give back to his community. Once he decided to pursue farming, he reached out to Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program for assistance in applying for a USDA Farm Service Loan in 2014. The loan was granted and Matthew planted watermelons for the first two years. From there he ventured into the planting and selling of collards, turnips, and other leafy green vegetables. Now he has expanded his farming operation even further by growing a variety of fruits and vegetables. With the expansion of production, Mr. Steele needed to increase his resources so with the assistance of TUCEP and NRCS, he was able to install a solar well water irrigation system. The solar irrigation system speaks to Matthew’s commitment to further his sustainable farm management practices along with working with TUCEP in finding more ways to increase the volume of crops produced on the same amount of acreage.

Matthew is truly enjoying connecting with nature and watching his crops and business grow. Being a people-person, Matthew is most enjoying interacting with others as he moves throughout the community selling his products. He has been looked to as a community leader by advocating for small farmers and assisting with the opening of a new farmers market in Shorter, AL. Matthew donates his time, knowledge, and produce to assist in education outreach through mentoring and successful community events at the student demonstration garden in Tuskegee.

Mr. Steele has a real to commitment to agriculture as he believes it is truly his calling and plans to farm forever. Starting with only one crop and expanding his expertise to over 10 crops shows his dedication to continuing to be a pillar in the farming community. He has also diversified his farm business by expanding to value added products such as pepper sauces and preserves. He has demonstrated proof in adopting recommending extension practices with his solar irrigation system diversified crops to decrease pest and disease, and has also incorporated using cover crops to replenish his soil health. Matthew is committed to continuing to work with the Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program to practice environmental stewardship practices on soil health, crop diversification, and other sustainable and regenerative farming practices.
**Tuesday, February 15, 2022**

11:00 a.m. ................................................................. Conference Virtual Portal Opens

1:00 p.m. .......... Black History Month Lecture: Environmental Justice and Racism

**Presiding:** Raymon Shange, 1890 Extension Administrator
Director, Carver Integrative Sustainability Center
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences

**Lecturer:** Robert Bullard, Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and
Environmental Policy
Texas Southern University
Father of Environmental Justice

**Wednesday, February 16, 2022**

8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. ................................................................. Opening Session

**Presiding:** Barrett T. Vaughan, Tuskegee University

**Welcome:** S. Keith Hargrove, Provost
Tuskegee University

Keynote Speaker: Jewel H. Bronaugh, Deputy Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture

**130 Years of Farmers Conference**

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. ....................................................... Tuskegee University Cooperative
Extension Program Annual eXert Competition (check time)

**Facilitator:** Nyesa Gordon, Tuskegee University

**Closing Remarks:** Raymon Shange, Tuskegee University
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. .......................... Regenerative Farming Panel

Moderator: Demetrius Hooks, Tuskegee University

Panelists: The Jackson Family, Grass Grazed Farm, Durham, NC
Harlem Comes to Cotton Farms, LLC, Notasulga, AL
Sheila Dix, Joy Haven Farm, Shorter, AL
Matthew Robinson, The Produce Tribe, Stanton, TN

Closing Remarks: Raymon Shange, Tuskegee University

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. ... USDA Heads Introduction and Farmer Success Session

Moderator: Miles Robinson, Tuskegee University

Ben Malone, State Conservationist, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Warren Ducree, Producer, Lowndes County, AL, NRCS Programs
Nivory Gordon, Jr., State Director USDA, Rural Development
Lashena Fields, Macon County Housing Programs
Clifton Warren, State Director, USDA, Farm Services Agency
Charles Sanders, Perry County, Farm Loans

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. .................... Alabama Agriculture and Industries Updates

Moderator: William A. Hodge, Tuskegee University

Bob Plaster, Assistant Commissioner
Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries

Don Wambles, Alabama Farmers Markets
Ellie Watson, Sweet Grown Alabama
10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. ........ Sustainable Strategies for Farms & Agribusinesses

Moderator: Gary Walton, Tuskegee University

Panelists: Brennan Washington, 1890 Land Grant Liaison and Limited-Resource/Minority Farmer Outreach Specialist, Southern SARE
Tammy Martin, Loan Officer, USDA – Farm Service Agency
Elizabeth Myles, Associate Director
Alcorn State University Mississippi Small Farm and Agribusiness Center
Kenneth Davis, Branch Relationship Manager, AVP
Renasant Bank, Montgomery, AL

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. ........ Tuskegee University Project Updates/Opportunities

Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension
Presenter: Raymon Shange, 1890 Extension Administrator
Director, Carver Integrative Sustainability Center

George W. Carver Agricultural Experiment Station
Presenter: Olga Bolden-Tiller, Dean and Research Director
College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences

12:00 p.m. – 12:45 p.m. ................................................................. Awards Session

Moderator: Barrett T. Vaughan, Tuskegee University

Presentation of Awards ................................................................. Raymon Shange

2022 Merit Farm Family Award
Mr. Matthew Steele and Family
Steele Farms
Macon County, Alabama

Thomas Monroe Campbell Leadership Award
Albert Essel, Executive Administrator
Association of Extension Administrators

Outstanding Partner
Association of RC&D Councils

EXERT Competition
Years of Service
Alfred Jackson
Gwendolyn Johnson
Jessie Purifoy
Yvonne Wright

1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. ............... 130th Annual Farmers Conference Closing Session

Moderator: Candace Clark, Tuskegee University

Keynote Address: Monica White, Author
“Freedom Farmers”

Closing Remarks: Raymon Shange, Tuskegee University
AGENDA AND SPEAKERS
Raymon Shange, William Hodge, Millicent Braxton, Miles Robinson, Lindsey Lunsford

AWARDS COMMITTEE
William Hodge, Carmalita Pollard, Millicent Braxton, Catrina Hoffman, LaTanya Hunt-Haralson

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING
Demetrius Hooks, Jacquelyn Carlisle, Millicent Braxton, Lindsey Lunsford, Karen Craig, Maurice Antoine

EXERT
Nyesa Gordon, Millicent Braxton, Janet Sullen, George Hunter, LeVershaun Williams, William Hodge, Raymon Shange, Lindsey Lunsford

FINANCIALS
Shannon Payne, Elizabeth Whetstone

LOGISTICS
Lindsey Lunsford, George Hunter, William Hodge

IT TEAM
Karen Craig, Doug Eaves, Peter Kanyi

REGISTRATION
Carmalita Pollard, Yvonne Wright, Karen Craig, Wanda Carpenter-Morrow, Jessie Purifoy

EVALUATIONS
John Myers, Lindsey Lunsford, Raymon Shange, Shirley Brown
SPONSORS

National Institute for Food and Agriculture, USDA
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Mid-South Resource, Conservation & Development Council, USDA
Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA (through the Rural Energy Program)
Farm Service Agency, USDA
Small Farm Technical Assistance and Outreach Program, Tuskegee University
Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Tuskegee University

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Farm Service Agency, USDA
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Forest Service, USDA
Southern Rural Development Council
1890 Universities Foundation

TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY
College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences
Cooperative Extension Program

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Walter A. Hill, Co-Chair

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USDA-NRCS/Ben Malone, Honorary Chair
USDA-FSA/Cliffton Warren, Honorary Chair

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