

## Congresswoman Adams, Senator Booker Introduce Justice for Black Farmers Act



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Hello Sarah,

## Congresswoman Adams, Senator Booker Introduce *Justice for Black Farmers Act*

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, **Congresswoman Alma Adams (NC-12)**, a member of the House's Committee on Agriculture, introduced the ***Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2023***, a comprehensive bill to address the sordid history of discrimination in federal agricultural policy. The ***Justice for Black Farmers Act*** will reform the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provide debt relief, and create a land grant program to encourage a new generation of Black farmers.

"This Black History Month, it's important we recognize the unjust history of farming and agriculture in America. During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Black farmers lost over \$300 billion worth of farmland and acreage – a loss that further exacerbated the wealth gap for Black Americans. That's one of the many reasons why I'm proud to reintroduce the ***Justice for Black Farmers Act***, which would enact policies to end discrimination within the USDA, protect the 50,000 remaining Black farmers from losing their land, provide land grants to create a new generation of Black farmers, and restore the land base that has been lost," **said Congresswoman Adams**. "Additionally, the ***Justice For Black Farmers Act*** provides substantial resources for 1890 Land-Grant Institutions to help Black farmers get up and running and includes funding for all HBCUs to expand their agriculture research and courses of study.

"I am proud to join Senator Booker in confronting our history, and opening the door to a brighter future with this bill," **Adams concluded**.

Original cosponsors in the House include **Representatives Joyce Beatty, Sanford Bishop, Earl Blumenauer, Lisa Blunt Rochester, Cori Bush, Andre Carson, Jahana Hayes, Ro Khanna, Barbara Lee, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Melanie Stansbury, and Bennie Thompson**.

**Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ)** introduced the legislation in the United States Senate. Adams and Booker previously introduced the legislation in 2021.

"There is a direct connection between discriminatory USDA policies and the enormous land loss we have seen among Black farmers over the past century," **said Senator Booker**. "Last year in the Inflation Reduction Act, we took a positive step by providing \$2.2 billion for financial assistance to farmers that have suffered discrimination by USDA, but there is still much more work to be done. The Justice for Black Farmers Act seeks to correct persistent injustices and help restore the land base that Black farmers have lost. I am proud to work with Representative Adams on this landmark legislation that would empower a new generation of Black farmers."

Over 100 organizations have voiced their support for the legislation.

The ***Justice for Black Farmers Act*** will:

- **End Discrimination within USDA:** Creates an independent civil rights oversight board to review appeals of civil rights complaints filed against USDA, investigate reports of discrimination within USDA, and provide oversight of Farm Service Agency County Committees. The Act also creates an Equity Commission and reforms the USDA Office of Civil Rights, including by placing a moratorium on foreclosures during the pendency of civil rights complaints.
- **Protect Remaining Black Farmers from Land Loss:** Increases funding for the Heirs' Property Relending Program at USDA to provide Black Farmers pro bono assistance, succession planning, and support for development of farmer cooperatives. The Act also creates and funds a new bank to provide financing and grants to Black farmer and rancher cooperative financial institutions, and forgives USDA debt of Black farmers who filed

claims in the Pigford litigation.

- **Restore the Land Base Lost by Black Farmers:** Creates a new Equitable Land Access Service within USDA to acquire farmland and provide land grants of up to 160 acres to existing and aspiring Black farmers. To help ensure their success, these new Black farmers will be provided access to USDA operating loans and mortgages on favorable terms.
- **Create a Farm Conservation Corps:** Creates a program for young adults from socially disadvantaged communities to be provided the skills to pursue careers in farming and ranching. Participants will be paid by USDA to serve as on-farm apprentices at no cost to socially disadvantaged, beginning, and organic farmers and ranchers with annual gross farm income of less than \$250,000. Black participants who gain experience through this program will have priority for land grants.
- **Empower HBCUs and Advocates for Black farmers:** Provides resources to 1890s and nonprofits who serve Black farmers to offer pro bono assistance in identifying land for USDA to purchase and provide as land grants; help to new Black farmers in getting up and running; technical training; and other assistance including succession planning and legal assistance. The Act also provides new funding to HBCUs to expand their agriculture research and courses of study.
- **Assist All Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers:** Increases funding for USDA technical assistance and for programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program and Rural Energy for America Program, and gives priority for these programs, as well as increased access to capital, to all socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- **Enact System Reforms to Help All Farmers and Ranchers:** In order for new and existing Black farmers to have a real chance to succeed and thrive, the Justice for Black Farmers Act substantially reforms and strengthens the Packers and Stockyards Act to stop abusive practices by big multinational meatpacking companies and protect all family farmers and ranchers.

**Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.** represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Cabarrus County) and serves on the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Education & the Workforce, where she serves as ranking member of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee. In 2015, she founded the Adams Hunger Initiative to address food insecurity across Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the 12th Congressional District.

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