

Timeline: Black Farmers and the USDA, 1920 to the present

1920 – USDA records 925,708 Black farm operators – 14% of all U.S. farmers.

1933 – New Deal legislation to address low crop prices by reducing acres of farmland displaces many Black farmers.

1964 – Share of Black farm operators falls to 5.8%.

1965 – U.S. Commission on Civil Rights finds USDA discriminated against Black farmers when providing loans and conservation payments.

1968 – Commission on Civil Rights finds Black farmers continue to face discrimination when seeking farm loans and assistance.

1970 – Commission on Civil Rights finds “Discrimination persists in the operation of some Agricultural programs,” noting that “there are also no civil rights staff in the [USDA] field offices.”

1981 – USDA report notes that Black and minority farmers are “disproportionately represented in poverty groups” and that these types of farms have less access to needed credit.

1982 – Share of Black farm operators falls to 2%; Commission on Civil Rights documents discrimination that led to the decline of Black farmers.

1983 – Reagan administration dismantles USDA Office of Civil Rights.

1990 – House Committee on Government Operations report finds rampant discrimination in USDA loan programs.

1993 – Report by Westover Consultants finds USDA not held accountable for civil rights violations.

1994 – U.S. Assistant Attorney General Walter Dellinger files a memo detailing USDA’s authority to award monetary relief to Black farmers.

1995 – U.S. General Accounting Office report finds USDA fails to address racial discrimination; General Accounting Office report finds widespread underrepresentation of minority farmers on county USDA committees.

1996 – Consultant D.J. Miller report finds Black farmers do not get fair share of subsidies, disaster payments or loans; National Black Farmers Association holds demonstration outside the White House.

1997 – Share of Black farm operators falls to 0.9%; USDA's Inspector General documents a "climate of disorder" among civil rights staff; GAO report on Farm Service Agency cites lack of diversity; Congressional Black Caucus holds first-ever forum on discrimination against Black farmers; Black farmers file historic discrimination complaint against USDA; USDA publishes Civil Rights Action Team Report detailing a long history of racial bias and discrimination by the agency.

1998 – USDA report cites the role of the agency's discrimination in the decline of Black farmers.

1999 – John Boyd, president of the National Black Farmers Association, brings his mule, Struggle, to Washington, D.C., to protest USDA treatment of Black farmers; Settlement in Pigford v. USDA reached to pay Black farmers \$1.03 billion. More than 22,000 Black farmers seek claims, but only 15,645 receive modest payments. More than 61,000 Black farmers file late claims, but only 2,585 are accepted.

2000 – Senate Agriculture Committee holds hearing on discrimination against Black farmers.

2001 – Commission on Civil Rights finds Black farmers wait four times longer than white farmers for farm loans; More than 14,000 USDA discrimination complaints are filed between 2001 and 2008, but USDA finds only one has merit.

2002 – Black farmers rally outside USDA; Share of Black farm operators rises to 1.3 %; Black farmers receive \$21.2 million in farm subsidies; white farmers receive \$8.9 billion.

2004 – EWG and National Black Farmers Association issue report on USDA obstruction of Black farmer settlement.

2007 – Share of Black farm operators remains at 1.3%; Black farmers receive \$38 million in farm subsidies; white farmers receive \$10.6 billion; EWG and National Black Farmers Association issue report on subsidy gap between Black and white farmers.

2008 – GAO report details failure to address civil rights claims properly at USDA's Office of Civil Rights; House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform holds hearing on discrimination by USDA; Congress allows Black farmers originally denied payments from Pigford settlement to reopen their claims.

2009 – USDA reopens discrimination cases and finds 3,800 of 14,000 have merit but that the statute of limitations has expired. Only 760 cases are addressed.

2010 – Boyd drives a tractor around Washington, D.C., to meet with lawmakers to call for funding for USDA discrimination cases; South Carolina court rules against USDA in favor of Black farmers who faced discrimination; USDA Office of Civil Rights seeks extension of statutes of limitation for discrimination complaints but fails to persuade Congress; Congress secures another \$1.25 billion in payments for Black farmers previously denied payments.

2011 – The Pigford case's monitor report highlights USDA's failure to provide debt relief for Black farmers.

2012 – USDA reports that the share of Black farm operators rose to 1.7%; Black farmers receive \$64 million in farm subsidies; white farmers receive \$8.1 billion.

2014 – USDA reports 9% increase in the number of Black farm operators.

2016 – Share of USDA lending to Black farmers falls to 0.8%, and the USDA distorted data to discriminate.

2017 – Black farmers receive \$59.4 million in farm subsidies; white farmers receive \$9.7 billion.

2019 – Legal experts find USDA has overstated the number of Black farmers and distorted data; GAO report details challenges faced by Black and minority farmers when seeking agricultural loans; During presidential campaign, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., releases detailed plan to address past and ongoing discrimination faced by Black farmers; Black farmers and advocates send recommendations to Sen. Warren.

2020 – Sens. Cory Booker, D-N.J.; Warren and Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., introduce Justice for Black Farmers Act.

2021 – Sen. Raphael Warnock introduces bill to provide debt relief to Black and minority farmers; GAO finds Black and minority farmers have less access to credit than white farmers.