Southern Rural Sociological Association
56th Annual Meeting



"Rural Communities: Policy, Practice, and Impact"

February 2-3, 2025

Irving, TX

Concurrent with the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS)

Welcome from the Southern Rural Sociological Association 2024-2025 President

Southern Rural Sociological Association
2025
56th Annual Meeting

February 2, 2025

SRSA Members, Guests, and SAAS Colleagues:

Rural Communities: Policy, Practice, and Impact:
Urgency for Action

Rural people, communities, and issues are getting more attention and investment into needed areas like expanding infrastructure, protecting natural resources, improving access to health care, and strengthening local and regional food systems. Proactive policy initiatives and intentionality toward rural community initiatives are pumping billions of dollars into rural communities. Yet there is still much work to be done. Many rural people and their communities are not wholly experiencing these effects highlighting the need, nay, urgency for action and call for subject matter experts, practitioners, scholars, students, and storytellers of all types to come together in efforts to elevate rural communities, strengthen rural networks, and learn best practices from each other.

Threading within this theme and the request for abstracts is a call to action for those researching, working in, and/or living in rural America, more specifically, the rural South. What roles will rural sociology play in the post-Covid era? How will rural sociology attend to both policy gaps and policy imperatives in education, workforce development, health disparities, sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, rural development, and the digital transformation, just to name a few? What practical research applications and innovations are engaging communities and achieving impact?

The 2025 Southern Rural Sociological Association Annual Meeting seeks diverse forms of scholarly work, including narratives in the form of stories to introduce or redress theoretical frameworks, and collaborations between scholars, organizations, practitioners, and communities. Authentic rural representation requires the use of our wide range of senses to explore dimensions of qualitative and quantitative research to understand both current trends and future directions of rurality. We invite the submission of papers, posters, and panels to discuss the importance of rural livelihoods and data across time, topics, communities, struggles, and actions leading to pathways of resilience for rural people and rural communities.

Marcus Bernard, Ph.D.
SRSA President 2024-2025

Thank you!

Rural Champion Platnium Sponsor

Alcorn

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AND RANCHERS POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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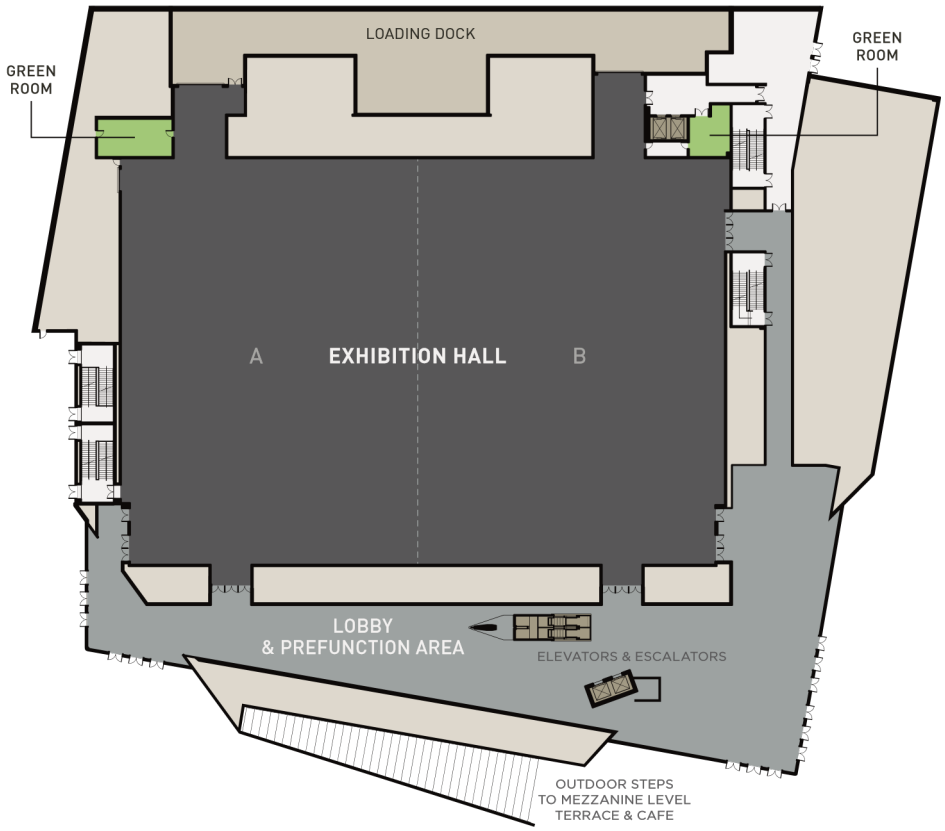
Center for Agriculture
& Food Systems
VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL

Exhibitors



Exhibition Hall Level

FIRST FLOOR



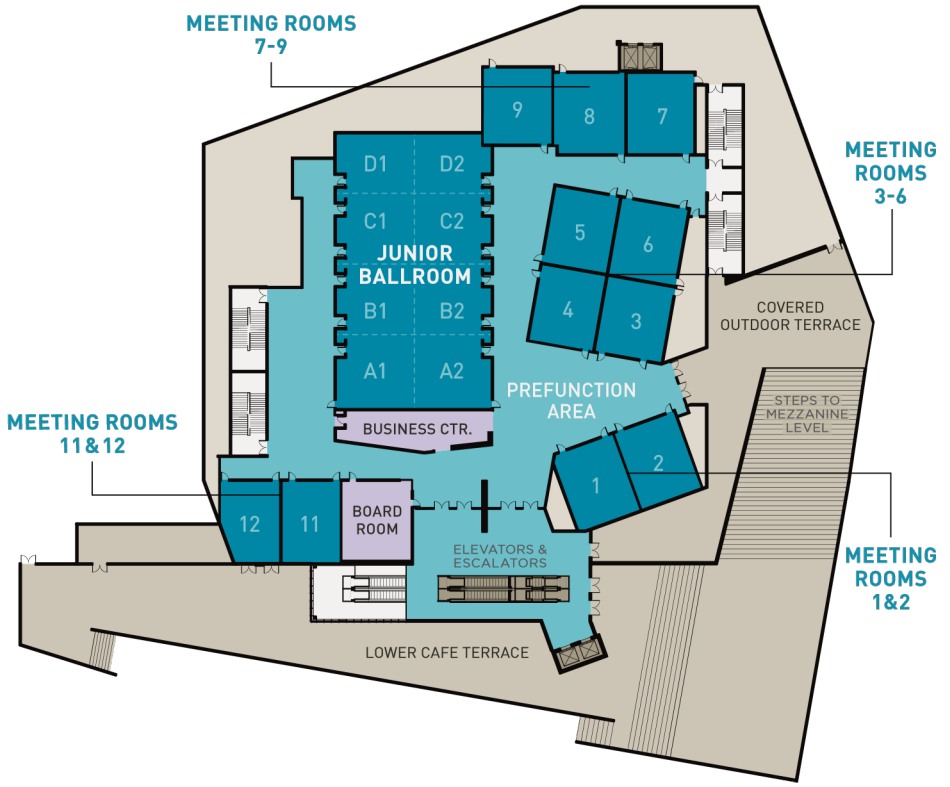
EXHIBITION HALL LEVEL	SIZE		CAPACITY					
	L x W x H	SQ. FT.	BANQUET 72" ROUNDS	RECEPTION	THEATER	CLASSROOM	8' x 10' BOOTHS	10' x 10' BOOTHS
EXHIBITION HALL	184 x 264 x 35	48,576	2,500	4,860	4,500	2,500	288	218
Exhibition Hall A	184 x 132 x 35	24,288	1,180	2,420	2,184	1,260	154	109
Exhibition Hall B	184 x 132 x 35	24,288	1,180	2,420	2,184	1,260	155	109
PREFUNCTION AREA	—	18,862	—	1,880	—	—	12	12

MEETING ROOMS & JUNIOR BALLROOM LEVEL	SIZE		CAPACITY			
	L x W x H	SQ. FT.	BANQUET 72" ROUNDS	RECEPTION	THEATER	CLASSROOM
MEETING ROOMS						
Meeting Room 1	34 x 27 x 12	918	50	90	98	56
Meeting Room 2	34 x 27 x 12	918	50	90	98	60
Meeting Room 3	32 x 29 x 12	928	50	90	105	55

Meeting Room 4	27 x 27 x 12	729	40	75	88	47
Meeting Room 5	33 x 26 x 12	858	50	85	97	52
Meeting Room 6	33 x 29 x 12	957	50	95	105	55
Meeting Room 7	34 x 29 x 12	986	50	95	119	66
Meeting Room 8	32 x 28 x 12	896	50	90	105	62
Meeting Room 9	32 x 28 x 12	896	50	90	105	62
Meeting Room 11	35 x 25 x 12	875	50	85	91	54
Meeting Room 12	35 x 22 x 12	770	50	75	87	51
BOARD ROOM	31 x 28 x 12	868	—	—	—	—

Meeting Rooms & Junior Ballroom Level

THIRD FLOOR



MEETING ROOMS & JUNIOR BALLROOM LEVEL	SIZE		CAPACITY			
	L x W x H	SQ. FT.	BANQUET 72" ROUNDS	RECEPTION	THEATER	CLASSROOM
JUNIOR BALLROOM	120 x 57 x 12	6,840	470	680	702	396
Junior Ballroom A & B	62 x 57 x 12	3,534	230	350	376	186
Junior Ballroom C & D	57 x 57 x 12	3,249	200	325	338	162

Junior Ballroom A, B & C	92 x 57 x 12	5,244	370	525	588	318
Junior Ballroom B, C & D	87 x 57 x 12	4,959	350	500	520	270
Junior Ballroom A	57 x 33 x 12	1,881	140	180	200	102
Junior Ballroom B	57 x 30 x 12	1,710	90	170	156	90
Junior Ballroom C	57 x 30 x 12	1,710	90	170	156	90
Junior Ballroom D	57 x 27 x 12	1,539	80	150	156	81
Junior Ballroom A1	28 x 33 x 12	924	50	90	123	64
Junior Ballroom A2	28 x 33 x 12	924	50	90	123	64
Junior Ballroom B1	28 x 30 x 12	840	50	85	96	48
Junior Ballroom B2	28 x 30 x 12	840	60	85	96	48
Junior Ballroom C1	28 x 30 x 12	840	60	85	96	48
Junior Ballroom C2	28 x 30 x 12	840	60	85	96	48
Junior Ballroom D1	28 x 27 x 12	756	50	75	84	45
Junior Ballroom D2	28 x 27 x 12	756	50	75	84	45
PREFUNCTION AREA	—	10,976	—	1,100	—	—
COVERED TERRACE	—	5,383	120	540	—	—
LOWER CAFE TERRACE	—	18,862	446	1,900	—	—

Grand Ballroom Level

FOURTH FLOOR



GRAND BALLROOM LEVEL	SIZE		CAPACITY					
	L x W x H	SQ. FT.	BANQUET 72" ROUNDS	RECEPTION	THEATER	CLASSROOM 18" TABLES	8' x 10' BOOTHS	10' x 10' BOOTHS
GRAND BALLROOM	112 x 172 x 24	19,264	1,260	2,000	1,936	1,070	108	86
Grand Ballroom G1-G5	112 x 113 x 24	12,762	800	1,265	1,440	831	—	—
Grand Ballroom G4-G8	112 x 117 x 24	13,153	810	1,310	1,550	840	—	—
Grand Ballroom G1-G4	112 x 86 x 24	9,957	620	965	1,040	570	—	—
Grand Ballroom G5-G8	112 x 86 x 24	9,429	620	965	1,040	570	—	—
Grand Ballroom G1-G3	112 x 55 x 24	6,111	380	615	702	378	—	—
Grand Ballroom G4	112 x 31 x 24	3,724	200	350	350	228	—	—
Grand Ballroom G5	112 x 27 x 24	2,805	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grand Ballroom G4-G5	112 x 58 x 24	6,529	400	650	728	378	—	—
Grand Ballroom G6-G8	112 x 58 x 24	6,624	400	650	728	372	—	—
Grand Ballroom G1	55 x 37 x 24	2,005	130	200	192	105	—	—
Grand Ballroom G2	55 x 38 x 24	2,093	130	210	192	126	—	—
Grand Ballroom G3	55 x 37 x 24	2,013	120	200	192	126	—	—

Grand Ballroom G1-G2	75 x 55 x 24	4,098	250	410	391	261	—	—
Grand Ballroom G2-G3	75 x 55 x 24	4,106	250	410	391	267	—	—
Grand Ballroom G6	58 x 37 x 24	2,250	130	215	216	123	—	—
Grand Ballroom G7	58 x 38 x 24	2,228	130	220	252	132	—	—
Grand Ballroom G8	58 x 37 x 24	2,146	130	215	228	129	—	—
Grand Ballroom G6-G7	75 x 58 x 24	4,478	280	435	487	282	—	—
Grand Ballroom G7-G8	75 x 58 x 24	4,374	280	435	492	282	—	—
PREFUNCTION AREA	—	10,526	300	1,180	—	—	25	20

* MAY BE USED FOR HOSPITALITY OR BACK-OF-HOUSE SERVICE ONLY.

Program at a Glance

Abbreviations

Rooms: Junior Ballroom C2-Irving Convention Center (ICC), Meeting Room 2 and Meeting Room A2 Irving Convention Center, Meeting Room 3 Irving Convention Center, Pre-function Area-Irving Convention Center, and Little Chapel A-Texican Hotel

Organizations

Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists: SAAS Southern Rural Sociological Association: SRSA

Note: All SRSA members are invited to attend SAAS sessions

Meeting room floor plan

Sunday, February 2, 2025

Day and Time	Location	Session Title
7:30am-8:00am	Junior Ballroom C2: ICC	SRSA Executive Committee
8:00am–3:00pm	Pre-function Area	Registration
8:15am–9:30am	Meeting Room A2: ICC	Session 1: Heirs Property and Land Tenure
	Junior Ballroom C2: ICC	Session 2: Black/African American Agricultural Experience & Heritage
9:30am–9:45am		Break
9:45am–11:00am	Meeting Room C2: ICC	Panel 1: Relocation Rural: A new rural narrative is needed as the majority of the nation's net positive population migration shifts to rural
11:00am–11:30am	Meeting Room C2: ICC	SRSA Introductions and Rapid Exchange
11:30am–1:00pm		Lunch (on your own)
1:00pm–2:15pm	Meeting Room 2: ICC	Panel 2: Rural Lawyers on the Frontline: A Discussion with the Heirs' Property Practitioner Network (HPPN)
2:15pm–2:30pm		Break

2:30pm–3:45pm	Meeting Room 2: ICC	Session 3: Rural Communities: Strategies for Success, Quality of Life, Aging, and Policy
	Junior Ballroom C2: ICC	Session 4: Agricultural Innovation and Challenges
	Junior Ballroom B: ICC	SAAS Board Meeting (2:30—3:30pm) Two SRSA leaders required to attend
3:45pm–4:00pm		Break
4:00pm–5:00pm	Junior Ballroom B: ICC	SAAS General Business Meeting All SRSA members encouraged to attend
5:30pm	Bar Louie Toyota Music Factory	SAAS Opening Network Social All SRSA members encouraged to attend

Monday, February 5, 2024

Day and Time	**Location**	**Session Title**
8:00am–3:00pm	Pre-function Area	Registration
8:00am–9:15am	Meeting Room 2	Session 5: Education Initiatives
	Meeting Room 3	Session 6: Social Issues, Demographics, and Policy Impact
9:15am–9:30am		Break
9:30am–10:15am	Meeting Room 2	SRSA Business Meeting: All invited and encouraged to attend
10:15am–10:30am		Break (poster set-up)
10:30am–11:15am	4th Floor Lobby Area ICC	Poster Session: All encouraged to attend
11:15am-11:30am		Break, transition to luncheon location
11:30am–12:45pm	Little Chapel A: Texican Hotel	Presidential Luncheon and Speaker
12:45pm-1:00pm		Break, transition from luncheon location
1:00pm–2:10pm	Meeting Room 2	Panel 3: Heirs Property Research Ethics: Dialogue to Inform Problem-Solving for Researchers and Educators
2:10pm-2:15pm		Break (poster take-down)
2:15pm-3:30pm	Meeting Room 2	Panel 4: SERA-47 Multi-State Project on Local and Regional Food Systems Panel
3:30pm-3:45pm		Break
3:45pm–5:00pm	Meeting Room 2	Session 7: Agricultural Perspectives

	Meeting Room 3	Session 8: Community: Changes and Challenges
5:00 pm–6:00 pm	Meeting Room 3	SRSA Executive Council Meeting

Detailed Program

Sunday, February 2, 2025

7:30 am–8:00 am, Junior Ballroom C2: ICC: SRSA Executive Committee

8:00 am–3:00 pm, Pre-function Area: Registration

8:15 am–9:30 am, Meeting Room A2: ICC: Session 1 – Heirs Property and Land Tenure

Moderator: Robert Zabawa

Heirs Property Volunteer Navigators: An Initiative to Support Community Engagement *Portia Johnson, Auburn University; Sandra Thompson, Lady Heirs Property*

The Impact of Heirs Property Across Three Regions in Alabama
Obianuju Egiebor, Tuskegee University; Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University

Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level
Francine Miller, Vermont Law and Graduate School; Portia Johnson, Auburn University; Kara Woods, SDFR Policy Research Center

8:15 am–9:30 am, Junior Ballroom C2: Session 2 – Black/African American Agricultural Experience & Heritage

Moderator: Russ Garner

Perceptions of Black Producers Toward Their Role in United States Agriculture: A Q Methodology Study
Tania Peebles, Tuskegee University; Courtney P. Brown, Oklahoma State University; Angel Riggs, Oklahoma State University; Josh Campbell, Oklahoma State University

Black Agrarianism and Southern SARE
Jeff Jordan, University of Georgia - Griffin; Brennan Washington, Fort Valley State University; Douglas Constance, Sam Houston State University

"We might not have had a lot of money, but we never had an empty belly": The Role of Black Women Farmers in Virginia's Rural Food Sovereignty Movement
Nicole Nunoo, PhD, University of Georgia; Kim Niewolny, PhD, Virginia Tech
Resilience & Representation: The Narratives of Black Women Farmers in Rural North Carolina
Elisabeth Ramsey, North Carolina State University; Dr. Annie Hardison-Moody, North Carolina State University; Dr. Katie Sanders, North Carolina State University; Dr. Katherine McKee, North Carolina State University; Dr. Micheal Schulman, North Carolina State University; Dr. Andy Smolski, Penn State University

9:30 am–9:45 am, Break

9:45–11:00 am, Meeting Room C2: ICC Panel 1—
Relocation Rural: As the majority of the nation's net positive population migration shifts to rural areas, a new rural narrative is needed.

Presenters and Facilitators: *John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center, Elaine B. Crutchfield, Communities Unlimited; Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited*

11:00 am–11:30 am, Meeting Room 2: ICC:

Building the Railway – SRSA Introductions, Networking, and Rapid Exchange

Facilitator: Eleanor M. Green, Mississippi State University
This short networking session is designed for conference attendees to make fast connections. During this facilitated session, participants get to introduce themselves to each other, share stories, and exchange knowledge. After the session, carry the conversations and storytelling further at lunch with your new pals.

11:30 am–1:00 pm: Lunch (on your own with your SRSA friends)

1:00 pm–2:15 pm, Meeting Room 2: ICC: Panel 2 –
Rural Lawyers on the Frontline: A Discussion with the Heirs' Property Practitioner Network (HPPN)

Presenters and Facilitators: *Francine Miller, Vermont Law School; Mavis Gragg, HeirShares ; Ryan Thomson, Auburn University*

2:15 pm–2:30 pm Break

2:30 pm–3:45 pm, Meeting Room 2: ICC: Session 3 – Rural Communities: Strategies for Success, Quality of Life, Aging, and Policy

Moderator: John Green

Satisfaction and Autonomy at End of Life in Rural vs Urban Settings
Elizabeth Muchmore, Sam Houston State University; Jin Choi, Sam Houston State University; TzeLi Hsu, Sam Houston State University

Engaging Rural Policy Makers in Community and Economic Development – Strategies for Success
Rachael Carter, Mississippi State University Center for Government and Community Development; Sumner Davis, Mississippi State University Center for Government and Community Development

Evaluating the Relative Importance of Quality-of-Life Components for Underserved Communities Employing Best-Worst Scaling Method
Terrence Thomas, North Carolina A&T State University; Murat Cankurt, North Carolina A&T State University

2:30 pm–3:45 pm, Junior Ballroom C2: ICC: Session 4 – Agricultural Innovation and Challenges

Moderator: Ryan Thomson

Transitioning Smallholder Minority Farmers to a Climate-Smart Agriculture: Extension's Strategic Pathway for Community Economic Development
Lila B. Karki, Dipendra Gurung, Sahil Ojha, and Prem Bhandari; University of Maryland Eastern Shore

How Farms are Adapting to Technology
William Rogers, Andy Ong, Rachel Eldridge, Buddhi Gyawali and Jeremy Sandifer; Kentucky State University

Challenges in Agriculture: Farmer and Industry Perspectives
Kelli Russell, Auburn University; Mykel Taylor, Auburn University

A Commodity System Analysis of Cotton Seeds: From GMOs to Organics
Douglas H. Constance, Sam Houston State University; Jin Young Choi, Sam Houston State University; Hunter Brackett, Sam Houston State University; Elizabeth Fenstermacher, Sam Houston State University

2:30 pm–3:30 pm, Junior Ballroom B: ICC: SAAS Board Meeting (Two SRSA leaders required to attend)

3:45 pm–4:00 pm, Break

4:00 pm–5:00 pm, Junior Ballroom B: ICC, SAAS General Business Meeting, all invited and encouraged.

5:30 pm Location Bar Louie, Toyota Music Factory, SAAS Opening Network Social, all invited and encouraged.

Monday, February 3, 2025

8:00 am–11:30am, Overlook: Registration

8:00 am- 9:15 am, Meeting Room 2: Session 5– Children, Youth, and Education

Moderator: Marcus Bernard

Supporting Rural Communities: Implementing Solutions and Driving Change through Hispanic Agricultural Education
Marcus Bernard, Noel Novello, Buddhi Gyawali, Laura Rogers; Kentucky State University

The Intersection of Child's Gender and Place of Residence in Under-Five Nutritional Status in Nigeria
Aramide Kazeem (University of West Georgia), and John M. Musalia (Western Kentucky University)

A Needs Assessment of Rural Youth Leadership Skills
Madeline Drake, Katie Honeyman, Lauren L. Cline, J. Shane Robinson; Oklahoma State University

Applications of the 5-4-3-2-1 Strategy for Critical Thinking in College Settings *Brooklyn Wynveen, Sam Houston State University*

Cultivating Equity in Agriculture: Advancing Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers through Comprehensive Research and Youth Empowerment
Kenisha Thomas, FAMU; Conchita Newman, FAMU; Dreamal Worthen, FAMU

8:00 am- 9:15 am, Meeting Room 3: Session 6– Social Issues, Demographics, and Policy Impact

Moderator: Kara Woods

Impacts from the 2019 Large Immigration Raids in Central Mississippi: A Community Capitals Framework Approach.
Diego Thompson, Mississippi State University; Silvina Lopez Barrera, Mississippi State University

Barriers faced by Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers —Policy Center Research Analyst Update
Kara Woods, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center

Community-Focused Ecological Restoration and Regenerative Agriculture in the Development of PostExtraction Rural Communities
Lauren, Traitz, Kentucky State University; Shmikler, Richard, Kentucky State University

9:15 am–9:30 am Break

9:30 am–10:15 am, Meeting Room 2: SRSA Business Meeting – All are invited and encourage to attend

10:15 am–10:30am Break (Poster Set-Up)

10:30 am–11:15 am, Poster Session: All encouraged to attend on the 4th Floor Irving Convention Center.

Health and Fresh Produce: Analyzing Household Factors Affecting Dietary Choices
Binula Illukpitiya, Lipscomb University; R.H.S. Wishvajith, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View A&M

A Novel Approach to Improving Health Outcomes in Rural Oklahoma: Unique Variables and SurveyBased Findings Exploring Attitudes and Knowledge Regarding Diabetes, Nutrition, and Exercise in Sequoyah County
Emily Nunan, College of Veterinary Medicine, Oklahoma State University; Diana Garcia, Oklahoma State University; Madeline Drake, Kansas State University; Joshua T. Butcher, College of Veterinary Medicine, Oklahoma State University

Rural Communities, the Rural Workforce, and Forest Products Businesses in Alabama
Kelli Russell, Auburn University; Garrett Antonio Martinez, Auburn University; Amelia Pugh, Auburn University; Mykel Taylor, Auburn University

What's Up Mangum: Studying Rural Youth News Consumption for Citizen Journalism
Rosemary Avance, Oklahoma State University; Molly Moody; Oklahoma State University

Assessing Flood Insurance Participation Rates in the Southern United States
Omowunmi Odeyomi, Godfrey Ejimakorm North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University

11:15 am–11:30 am, Break and transition to luncheon location

11:30 am–12:45 pm, Little Chapel A: The Texican Hotel: Presidential Luncheon and Speaker

12:45pm -1:00pm, Break and transition from luncheon location

1:00pm-2:00pm, Meeting Room 2: Panel 3–
Heirs Property Research Ethics: Dialogue to Inform Problem-Solving for Researchers and Educators

Presenters and Facilitators: *Ryan Thomson, Auburn University; Kara Woods, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center/Alcorn State University; Portia Johnson, Auburn University; Roseanne Scammahorn, Southern Rural Development Center/Mississippi State University; Sarah Stein, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta; John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center/Mississippi State University*

2:00 pm–2:15 pm: Break and Poster Takedown

2:15 pm–3:30 pm, Meeting Room 2: Panel 4:
SERA-47 Multi-State Project on Local and Regional Food Systems

Presenters and Facilitators: *Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited; John J. Green, Southern Rural*

Development Center and Mississippi State University; Kenrett Jefferson-Moore, North Carolina A&T State University; Kaylee Smith, Virginia Tech

3:30 pm-3:45 pm : Break

3:45pm-5:00 pm: Session 7, Meeting Room 2–Agricultural Perspectives

Moderator: John Green

Perspectives of Female Producers in Oklahoma Agriculture
Mariela Kundak, Oklahoma State University; Linnea Harvey, Oklahoma State University

Backyard grower-consumer perceptions of rabbit meat consumption in rural Mississippi
Millie Murphree, PhD, Alabama Cooperative Extension System: Kirk Swortzel, PhD, Mississippi State University

How growers' value affects decisions in choosing strawberry varieties in the USA: A High-Order Construct PLS-SEM Approach.
Gabriel Kwesi Yeboah, University of Urbino and San Francisco Bay University; Carlo Bo; Jayesh Samtani, Virginia Tech; Giovanni Marin, University of Urbino, Carlo Bo

De/Restructuring Co-operatives for Re-Democratization
Thomas Gray, Program on Co-operatives, RD, USDA

3:45pm-5:00 pm: Session 8, Meeting Room 3–Community: Changes and Challenges

Moderator: Kelli Russell

Youth LEADERS: Using Photovoice to Inform a Community Development Project
Lauren L. Cline, Emma Long, Jodie Spivey, Joan York, J. Shane Robinson, Oklahoma State University

Florida PROSPERs: Lessons Learned on Capacity-Building in Rural Florida Communities
Dale Pracht, University of Florida; Sarah Hensley, University of Florida; Abbey Tharpe; UF/IFAS Extension Taylor County; Beth Moore, UF/IFAS Extension Madison County; Beth Kerr, UF/IFAS Extension Hamilton County; Shawn Jackson, UF/IFAS Extension Lafayette County; Katherine Sims, University of Florida; Larry Forthun, University of Florida

A Grounded Approach to Community Information Needs in Rural Oklahoma
Rosemary Avance, School of Media & Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University Andrew Abernathy, School of Media & Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University Molly Moody, Rural Renewal Initiative Rural Scholar, Oklahoma State University

Connecting Communities: Exploring Media Consumption and Social Interactions in Rural Oklahoma

Laney Reasner, Oklahoma State University; Linnea Harvey, Oklahoma State University; Audrey E. H. King, Oklahoma State University

5:00 pm-6:00 pm: Meeting Room 3–SRSA Executive Council Meeting

Abstracts

Heirs Property Volunteer Navigators: An Initiative to Support Community Engagement *Portia Johnson, Auburn University; Sandra Thompson, Lady Heirs Property*

Gaining community engagement in heirs property education can be challenging. Partnering with trusted leaders can help bridge the gap. The Heirs' Property Volunteer Navigator (Navigator) offers a potential solution. Session attendees will learn about Navigator, a component of Southern Rural Development Center's Understanding Heirs Property at the Community Level. Participants will walk away with a blueprint for recruiting respected community leaders to elevate heirs property conversations, grow support links and resources for owners, enhance confidence and comfort with discussing heirs' property issues, and strengthen social and community connections to protect families from land loss related to heirs' property.

The Impact of Heirs Property Across Three Regions in Alabama
Obianuju Egiebor, Tuskegee University; Robert Zabawa, Tuskegee University

Heirs property refers to land passed down without a probated will, resulting in shared ownership among surviving family members. This form of land tenure disproportionately affects racial and ethnic minorities, leading to lower asset values and hindering wealth accumulation. This study investigates the prevalence and economic impact of heirs property across three regions in Alabama: the Black Belt, Tennessee Valley, and Wiregrass. By analyzing land tenure data from county GIS maps and local revenue offices, and using Ttests, chi-square, and 3-way ANOVA statistical methods, the research explores how race and region intersect to influence heirs property rates and property values. The hypothesis is that regions with higher minority populations will show a greater incidence of heirs property and lower assessed property values. Findings will provide insights into the socio-economic effects of heirs property on individuals and communities, underscoring the need for targeted policy interventions to address disparities in land ownership, retention, and wealth.

Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level
Francine Miller, Vermont Law and Graduate School; Portia Johnson, Auburn University; Kara Woods, SDFR Policy Research Center

Heirs' property is property passed to family members by inheritance, usually without a will or without an estate planning strategy. The heirs own the property as "tenants in common," which means they each own an interest in the undivided land. For the heirs, owning property as tenants in common without clear title leads to many problems. It's estimated that millions of acres of land and billions of dollars' worth of property is held as heirs' property. This workshop will be led by a panel of people who lead "train the trainers" workshops on heirs property with cooperative extension agents. We will educate people about heirs' property: what it is, how it was created over time, and some initial strategies for prevention and resolution. We will also discuss the role of cooperative extension and other technical service providers in supporting holders of heirs' property to reduce their vulnerability to predators.

Perceptions of Black Producers Toward Their Role in United States Agriculture: A Q Methodology Study

Tania Peebles, Tuskegee University; Courtney P. Brown, Oklahoma State University; Angel Riggs, Oklahoma State University; Josh Campbell, Oklahoma State University

The experiences of Black producers are an underexplored aspect of U.S. agriculture. With fewer than 50,000 Black farmers nationwide including nearly 2,000 in Oklahoma, this group offers unique perspectives about their agricultural experiences. Although research on general producer experiences is plentiful, there is a dearth of literature on the explicit viewpoints of Black producers. This study utilized Q methodology to explore the perspectives of Black producers in Oklahoma. Participants (P-set) sorted 36 statements reflecting opinions about Family Tradition, Policy, Capital, Self-Perception, Government Support, and Industry Organizations. The guiding condition of instruction was: "What are your thoughts about your role as a Black producer in the U.S.?" This study is currently in progress but is approaching its final stages. This research aims to illuminate the diverse viewpoints of Black producers, informing researchers, advocates, and policymakers to strengthen the support of equitable growth and sustainability for Black producers.

Black Agrarianism and Southern SARE

Jeff Jordan, University of Georgia - Griffin; Brennan Washington, Fort Valley State University; Douglas Constance, Sam Houston State University

The USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research Education Program is the premier grants funding mechanism for promoting sustainable agriculture in the United States. The Southern SARE Region is unique in its dual land grant system of representation of the 1890 and 1864 universities and other structural DEI aspects on the administrative council. This presentation provides an overview of Southern SARE grants opportunities for scholars interested in Black Agrarianism, as well as specific examples of grants funded and conferences sponsored.

"We might not have had a lot of money, but we never had an empty belly": The Role of Black Women Farmers in Virginia's Rural Food Sovereignty Movement

Nicole Nunoo, PhD, University of Georgia; Kim Niewolny, PhD, Virginia Tech

Resilience & Representation: The Narratives of Black Women Farmers in Rural North Carolina

Elisabeth Ramsey, North Carolina State University; Dr. Annie Hardison-Moody, North Carolina State University; Dr. Katie Sanders, North Carolina State University; Dr. Katherine McKee, North Carolina State University; Dr. Micheal Schulman, North Carolina State University; Dr. Andy Smolski, Penn State University

As rural communities grapple with systemic food inequities as well as emerging opportunities, Black women farmers in Virginia are emerging as key architects of a new vision for food justice. This research investigates how these women are leveraging collective agency to build self-sufficient food systems that promote food sovereignty and community resilience. Through grassroots organizing and innovative farming practices, they are addressing both local and structural challenges, demonstrating the power of collective action in transforming rural landscapes. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and focus groups, this study illuminates the diverse strategies Black women farmers employ to navigate barriers such as limited land access, funding gaps, and policy neglect. Their stories highlight the urgency for action and underscore the need for greater investment in initiatives that support their leadership and vision. This research calls for more robust policy support and reimagining of rural policies to fully incorporate the voices and experiences of Black women farmers, ensuring that the rural food landscape development is truly inclusive and just.

Satisfaction and Autonomy at End of Life in Rural vs Urban Settings

Elizabeth Muchmore, Sam Houston State University; Jin Choi, Sam Houston State University; TzeLi Hsu, Sam Houston State University

Background: End of life (EOL) health care and access are not equitably distributed in the US and differences in the quality of care within underserved areas can further existing disparities.
Objective: To determine whether three measures of satisfaction and two measures of autonomy vary based on geographic setting of participants in the National Health and Aging Trends Survey (NHATS). Methods: A linear regression analysis of data gathered from a last month of life interview of proxy respondents for decedents in the original NHATS survey.
Results: Initial analysis indicates that rural vs urban setting has a significant impact on general satisfaction with EOL care ($p=0.004$) and the subjective feeling of autonomy ($p=0.035$ and $p=0.04$) during the EOL process. No significant change was seen for satisfaction with symptom management ($p=0.58$) and satisfaction with care received ($p=0.109$).
Conclusion: Disparities in quality of EOL care exist for those living in rural vs urban settings.

Engaging Rural Policy Makers in Community and Economic Development – Strategies for Success

Rachael Carter, Mississippi State University Center for Government and Community Development; Sumner Davis, Mississippi State University Center for Government and Community Development

Policymakers must manage limited resources and navigate legal requirements while addressing the needs and desires of the citizens they represent. This presentation is a case study of policymakers that overcame these challenges to foster positive rural development, combat issues such as brain drain, and work toward sustainable growth.
This presentation outlines a collaborative process that goes beyond simply meeting legal obligations. It highlights how local policymakers, economic development practitioners, and community stakeholders can work together to identify community needs, overcome barriers to economic success, and leverage local assets. By combining community development strategies with effective policy implementation, the case study demonstrates successful outcomes such as: securing funding, improving education, enhancing infrastructure, and revitalizing downtown areas. These efforts also include innovative approaches to workforce training and inmate rehabilitation, contributing to the community's long-term sustainability and success.

Evaluating the Relative Importance of Quality-of-Life Components for Underserved Communities Employing Best-Worst Scaling Method

Terrence Thomas, North Carolina A&T State University; Murat Cankurt, North Carolina A&T State University

This study aims to determine the relationship among components that contribute to quality of life in underserved communities and to establish the relative importance of quality-of-life components. QOL components can vary widely depending on society, time, and location. The study examined six fundamental aspects: Spiritual Well-being, Food Security, Health Care, Social Connections, Economic Opportunity, and Community Assets. Data for this study was collected using a telephone survey. The Best-Worst Scaling method (BWS) was used to prioritize these dimensions based on their impact on QOL The results indicated that Spiritual Well-being (0.23) emerged as the most significant factor in terms of relative weights, followed by Health Care (0.21), Economic Opportunity (0.16) and Food Security (0.07), while Community Assets (0.24) and Social Connections (-0.42) were considered the least influential. These results provide insights

that can benefit policymakers in decision-making about resource allocation with the objective of enhancing QOL.

Transitioning Smallholder Minority Farmers to a Climate-Smart Agriculture: Extension's Strategic Pathway for Community Economic Development

Lila B. Karki, Dipendra Gurung, Sahil Ojha, and Prem Bhandari; University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Smallholder and minority farmers provide affordable, fresh, nutritious food to their local communities, maintain ecosystems, and support sustainable agriculture by reducing greenhouse gas emissions related to food packaging and transportation. However, their capacity to handle risk has been exacerbated by climate change. UMES Extension has ongoing projects focused on urban and climate-smart agriculture in Maryland to enable these farmers to transition from traditional agricultural practices to climate-resilient farming systems, emphasizing a circular bio-economic production model. The preliminary findings reflected their willingness to engage in urban and community food production systems (community gardening, n=56) and urban agriculture (n=73). Additionally, there was a readiness to connect with beginning and potential farmers, including students, and adopt climate-smart practices, such as composting, rainwater harvesting, crop biodiversity conservation, kitchen gardening, alley cropping of perennial crops, and planting understory specialty and ethnic vegetables and medicinal herbs.

How Farms are Adapting to Technology

William Rogers, Andy Ong, Rachel Eldridge, Buddhi Gyawali and Jeremy Sandifer; Kentucky State University

Farms are adapting drone technology through the use of lidar, spray drones, thermal, and multispectral analysis. This benefits farmers in saving time and money by reducing chemicals, the ability to fly over fences and gates, check on livestock, and gives the farmer the ability to have precision in the field. Fewer workers are needed with the use of this technology providing these services.

Challenges in Agriculture: Farmer and Industry Perspectives

Kelli Russell, Auburn University; Mykel Taylor, Auburn University

Auburn University conducted 11 focus groups for the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) in summer 2024 with 115 farmers, ranchers, growers, producers, owners of agribusinesses entities, agricultural processors and manufacturers, and agricultural lenders to explore the participants' perspectives on opportunities for economic development in agriculture in Alabama. Participants discussed challenges and potential opportunities for economic development, sharing examples from other states that could be replicated in Alabama. This presentation focuses the findings from that project on participants' perspectives on challenges facing the industry in Alabama: profitability, farmland loss, lack of investment in transportation infrastructure for agricultural goods, and barriers to entry for new and beginning farmers.

A Commodity System Analysis of Cotton Seeds: From GMOs to Organics

Douglas H. Constance, Sam Houston State University; Jin Young Choi, Sam Houston State University; Hunter Brackett, Sam Houston State University; Elizabeth Fenstermacher, Sam Houston State University

Cotton is a major crop with a long history of social and environmental externalities, including significant climate change impacts. As a fiber crop, those impacts can be divided into the production and apparel sectors of the commodity system. Various attempts to reduce those negative externalities have been referred

to as “Better Cotton” – which covers a wide variety of social, economic, and environmental modifications to the conventional cotton system. Organic cotton is an important category in these Better Cotton initiatives. This paper focuses on the cotton seed node in the commodity system, which has been identified as a limiting factor in the adoption of organic cotton.

Supporting Rural Communities: Implementing Solutions and Driving Change through Hispanic Agricultural Education
Marcus Bernard, Noel Novello, Buddhi Gyawali, Laura Rogers; Kentucky State University

The Spanish-to-English program, launched in February 2024, has empowered Hispanic farmers and fostered community engagement in Whitley County. Monthly classes cover agricultural topics such as Predator Control, Soil Health, Beekeeping, Agricultural Finances, and Drone Technology. The program has engaged 380 contacts, including 279 Hispanic participants, and inspired interest in innovative farming solutions like drones. This initiative strengthens rural communities by providing practical resources and promoting inclusion.

The Intersection of Child’s Gender and Place of Residence in Under-Five Nutritional Status in Nigeria
Aramide Kazeem (University of West Georgia), and John M. Musalia (Western Kentucky University) The literature on the gender gap in under five children’s nutritional status in sub-Saharan Africa was restricted to children three and under; these studies were situated in eastern and southern Africa. Generally, the studies find that boys are more likely than girls to experience wasting or stunting (Adekanmbi et al. 2013; Demissie and Worku 2013; Keino et al. 2014; Novignon et al. 2015; Yaya et al 2022). The unavailability of secondary data in prior studies have mainly examined the direct association of gender on anthropometric measures without consideration of its interaction with other explanatory variable, such as urban-rural residence, which also contributes to disadvantage nutritional status in children (Omigbodun et al. 2010; Babatunde et al. 2011; Olack et al. 2011; Demissie and Worku 2013; Novignon et al. 2015). The observed gender differences may be worsened by whether children reside in rural areas compared to urban areas as research shows that children in rural in contrast to urban places have lower nutritional status depending on the country of interest (Keino et al. 2014; Novignon et al. 2015; Novignon et al. 2015; Yaya et al 2022). This research expands the age group beyond children three and under to children under five (Bozzoli et al. 2009; Medhin et al. 2010; Egata et al. 2014). It answers the questions that pertain to the intersectionality of gender and urban-rural residence among children in Nigeria, through analyzing the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (2018 NDHS). The questions undertaken are, does rural residence compared to urban residence increase susceptibility to wasting, measured through weight-for-height z-score, for both boys and girls? If yes, is the effect of rural residence more pronounced for boys than for girls?

A Needs Assessment of Rural Youth Leadership Skills
Madeline Drake, Katie Honeyman, Lauren L. Cline, J. Shane Robinson; Oklahoma State University

Youth need leadership skill development. What is more, the youth who do possess leadership skills often migrate away from their rural hometowns once they graduate leaving the community decimated and starving for human capital. This study’s purpose was to determine the knowledge and skills youth need to become future leaders in their local community. A multi-round Delphi study was conducted with a panel of exerts who live and work in the study’s focus community. The criteria for these experts consisted of them being a recognized leader of the community, being a long-term pillar of the community, and having experience working with youth. Experts submitted 71 statements for which youth should be knowledgeable and 41 skills for which they should be proficient. This presentation will provide an explanation of the

multiround data collection process. Findings and final themes will be presented, and recommendations for practice and future research will be shared.

Applications of the 5-4-3-2-1 Strategy for Critical Thinking in College Settings *Brooklyn Wynveen, Sam Houston State University*

In this presentation, I will share on the 5-4-3-2-1 strategy for encouraging critical thinking among college students. This strategy asks students to respond to reading assignments (or other media) with the following: FIVE things they learned from the assigned reading; FOUR things that they found interesting or that they'd like to learn more about; THREE things that upset them; TWO questions they still have about the material; and ONE action step they could take in response to the material. I will demonstrate the applicability of this strategy within the context of a Social Inequality course, using a Book/Film Club type of assignment. I will discuss potential applications within other fields and disciplines, as well as potential benefits and drawbacks of the strategy. This strategy remains under-studied from an empirical perspective. Adoption of the practice in college settings could provide data for analysis and improvement.

Cultivating Equity in Agriculture: Advancing Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers through Comprehensive Research and Youth Empowerment

Kenisha Thomas, FAMU; Conchita Newman, FAMU; Dreamal Worthen, FAMU

The 2018 Farm Bill tackled significant challenges in the agricultural sector, particularly those affecting marginalized communities, including Black farmers who have faced systemic discrimination, land loss, and economic disparities. The bill provided targeted support through debt relief and improved resource access to promote a more equitable agricultural landscape. A key focus was youth empowerment, with programs aimed at fostering agricultural knowledge and entrepreneurship through workshops and mentorship. These initiatives aimed to inspire the next generation of Black farmers while strengthening community connections. However, implementation faced legal and bureaucratic obstacles, along with stakeholder opposition. To address these issues, collaboration with local organizations, advocacy, and public awareness were essential. This joint research study used a mixed-methods approach—surveys, data analysis, interviews, and focus groups—and partnered with local agricultural entities to gather data on USDA youth programs. Key areas of focus include program demand, impact, access, and demographic analysis, considering rural and urban representation.

Impacts from the 2019 Large Immigration Raids in Central Mississippi: A Community Capitals Framework Approach.

Diego Thompson, Mississippi State University; Silvina Lopez Barrera, Mississippi State University

In 2019, small communities of Central Mississippi were devastated by large immigration raids of chicken processing plants where more than six hundred Latinx workers were detained. Like previous studies on immigration raids have shown, these types of immigration law enforcement operations have significant consequences for communities, especially for immigrant families. Despite scholarly evidence showing negative consequences from immigration raids, little is known about the impacts of large immigration raids in rural contexts, and specifically about the 2019 immigration raids in Mississippi. Using data collected from 26 interviews to Latinx leaders and allies, this study uses the Community Capitals Framework to examine how communities were affected by the raids. Results show the raids had negative consequences in all the community capitals, but specially in human, social, and financial capital. These findings highlight the needs to pay more attention to immigration law enforcement operations and their negative impacts on immigrant families and communities in rural contexts.

Barriers faced by Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers —Policy Center Research Analyst Update
Kara Woods, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center

The Research Analyst from The Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center (The Policy Center) will provide an update on ongoing research projects dealing with crop insurance and risk management programs, and youth in agriculture for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs). Inclusion of all growers as well as protection of those assets has a significant impact on rural life and the survival of farm operations for socially disadvantaged farmers, landowners, families, and communities. Youth in agriculture establish a continuation of rural ideas as well as the protection of the agriculture landscape. Discussion will provide impactful data highlighting the effects and barriers of the three topics as well as current initiatives at the Policy Center. The update will include an overview of the varying research projects methods, data analysis, and recommendations for the upcoming Farm Bill.

Community-Focused Ecological Restoration and Regenerative Agriculture in the Development of PostExtraction Rural Communities
Lauren, Traitz, Kentucky State University; Shmikler, Richard, Kentucky State University

Extractive industries have resulted in economic growth for rural communities but have brought an onslaught of negative environmental and health externalities that represent severe challenges today. In rural Appalachia, the decline of the dominant extractive industry coal has resulted in profound job loss, sustained poverty, and unaddressed environmental and health concerns. This oral presentation examines developing models of community-focused ecological restoration and regenerative agriculture on a reclaimed surface mine in Eastern Kentucky which seek to address environmental and health concerns while generating economic and community development. Presenters will share narratives from the field, observations of initial impacts, and research on the horizon. This discussion will explore how sustainable rural development can be supported by community engagement in ecological restoration on post-extractive landscapes. Topics explored include reforestation efforts, regenerative agriculture, and culturally-attuned ecotourism.

Perspectives of Female Producers in Oklahoma Agriculture
Mariela Kundak, Oklahoma State University; Linnea Harvey, Oklahoma State University

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 56% of all U.S. farms have at least one female decisionmaker. As the number of women involved in decision-making processes on agricultural operations increases, it is important to understand their perspectives on resources, barriers, and opportunities for women in agriculture. This study aims to explore the perspectives of women involved in decision-making roles within Oklahoma's agricultural sector. Interviews for this project were conducted with female Oklahoma residents over 18 who are involved in decision-making on an agricultural operation. Challenges affecting operational decisions included weather and lack of information when seeking out resources. Women producers felt their female support systems, families, and mentors helped them feel supported. This research aims to inform future resource development and identify solutions to challenges and barriers, ultimately supporting the success of women in agriculture as their involvement in the sector continues to grow.

Backyard grower-consumer perceptions of rabbit meat consumption in rural Mississippi
Millie Murphree, PhD, Alabama Cooperative Extension System: Kirk Swortzel, PhD, Mississippi State University

Every country in the world is affected by some form of malnutrition. Rabbit meat production and consumption is a possible solution to this problem, but the consumption of rabbit meat falls behind other protein sources. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the perceptions of backyard rabbit meat growers in Mississippi and to identify parallels of both relative advantages and potential barriers using Rogers' Theory of Planned Change and asking, "Why raise backyard meat rabbits?" Understanding backyard grower-consumers' perceptions of rabbit meat consumption could improve the support and adoption of backyard rabbit programs, leading to the generalization of consuming this healthy protein source worldwide. Taking the relative advantages from this study could provide a basis for a marketing campaign worldwide that would motivate others to not only consume rabbits but to raise them in their backyards or communities, creating easy access to a nutritious and sustainable protein source.

How growers' value affects decisions in choosing strawberry varieties in the USA: A High-Order Construct PLS-SEM Approach.
Gabriel Kwesi Yeboah, University of Urbino and San Francisco Bay University; Carlo Bo; Jayesh Samtani, Virginia Tech; Giovanni Marin, University of Urbino, Carlo Bo

The US is the world's second-leading producer of strawberries. Several varieties of strawberries exist and growers have the possibility of choosing a variety(ies) from which they obtain the most value. Growers' decisions of some cultivars are influenced by perceived value. Therefore, this study is the first to treat the concept of domain-specific innovativeness (DSI) as a high-order construct and combine it with consumer perceived value (PV) to analyze which of these selected PVs: functional, social, conditional, and aesthetic values directly affect and/or mediates growers' decision to choose a variety to grow (DCVG). The approach used was the disjoint-two stage approach of the partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM). The data analysis of 216 growers. The model has good predictive and explanatory powers. The outcomes enhance our understanding of how diverse PVs influence the decision-making behavior of strawberry growers in the US concerning the selection of cultivars.

De/Restructuring Co-operatives for Re-Democratization
Thomas Gray, Program on Co-operatives, RD, USDA

Many rural communities in the US have undergone massive de-democratizations of their socio-economies; now various populated with big-box stores, franchise chain developments, and acquisitions and subsidiarizations by regional, national and transnational corporations. Agricultural cooperatives remain one of the few economic forms in the agricultural and rural sectors that continue to bring some democratic voice to rural economies (Mooney 2004) However there has been a historic weakening of democratic aspects of agricultural cooperatives given decades of intense competition with investment firms (IOFs). These pressures have created various dilemmas within co-operatives themselves, causing many to drift from their more democratic beginnings. This paper will explore how 1) larger pressures of socioeconomic growth and expansion have dimmed some coops' democratic promise and 2) how alternative co-operative forms, e.g. a cooperative commonwealth and multi-stakeholder co-ops represent possible development models that can be more inclusive, resilient, and better designed to accommodate various democratic and socioeconomic and ecological needs.

Youth LEADERS: Using Photovoice to Inform a Community Development Project
Lauren L. Cline, Emma Long, Jodie Spivey, Joan York, J. Shane Robinson, Oklahoma State University

Middle school students in a small, rural town suffering from all five stressors identified through U.S. Typology Code Data, participated in an inaugural class designed to teach them about youth leadership and how to become active citizens in their hometown. A photovoice study was conducted to determine what students liked best and least about their community. Findings revealed students liked their local sports programs, as evidenced by numerous pictures of the football stadium, basketball gymnasium, and baseball fields. City streets and roads were what students liked least about their hometown, as evidenced by numerous pictures of potted streets. Through the class, students learned how to advocate for change by working together to submit a plan to the city council for how they might improve the driving surfaces in their town. This presentation will provide data from the photovoice study and describe the process of how students become advocates for change.

Florida PROSPERs: Lessons Learned on Capacity-Building in Rural Florida Communities
Dale Pracht, University of Florida; Sarah Hensley, University of Florida; Abbey Tharpe; UF/IFAS Extension Taylor County; Beth Moore, UF/IFAS Extension Madison County; Beth Kerr, UF/IFAS Extension Hamilton County; Shawn Jackson, UF/IFAS Extension Lafayette County; Katherine Sims, University of Florida; Larry Forthun, University of Florida

The Extension Opioid Crisis Response Workgroup (EOCRW) recognizes the need for evidence-based prevention, calling for a strategic approach to addressing the opioid epidemic facing rural communities (EOCRW, 2018; Brennan et al., 2018; Spoth et al., 2021). To address this urgent need, a multi-tiered team in Florida coordinates capacity-building efforts to: 1) build local community-based teams led by county Extension faculty; 2) implement two evidence-based programs; and 3) create a sustainability plan that promotes continued county programming efforts beyond the life of the grant funding. Through funding from the USDA NIFA, teams are established in four rural, impoverished Florida counties, dedicated to promoting positive youth development and strong families. Lessons Learned includes: intentional collaborations with local stakeholders resulting in enhanced sustainability and new financial support; the PROSPER process encourages accountability and leads to high ROI. These and others will be shared, allowing participants to apply capacity-building techniques in their own rural communities.

A Grounded Approach to Community Information Needs in Rural Oklahoma
Rosemary Avance, School of Media & Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University
Andrew Abernathy, School of Media & Strategic Communications, Oklahoma State University
Molly Moody, Rural Renewal Initiative Rural Scholar, Oklahoma State University

Reliable information is central to democracy, supporting civic engagement, and economic health. Yet many Oklahomans live in news deserts with limited or no reliable reporting, a trend in rural areas nationwide (Abernathy, 2018). After conducting the first observational study of Oklahoma's information ecosystem including statewide polling and listening sessions in seven counties, we identified gaps in rural information ecosystems (Avance & Shortle, 2023). Most Oklahomans report social media — where misleading stories spread as much as accurate stories (Grinberg, 2019, Vosoughi, 2018) — as their primary news source. This paper focuses on our second phase of research. We spent summer 2024 conducting community-engaged research in rural southwest Oklahoma, including 18 interviews and two focus groups with high school students, elected officials, law enforcement, business owners, and residents. We present findings, identifying community priorities for information needed for economic and social well-being. We posit citizen journalism as one counter strategy to strengthen news deserts.

Connecting Communities: Exploring Media Consumption and Social Interactions in Rural Oklahoma

Laney Reasner, Oklahoma State University; Linnea Harvey, Oklahoma State University; Audrey E. H. King, Oklahoma State University

As rural populations in the U.S. grow, ensuring access to news and information is crucial. Many rural residents face news deserts, with local media focusing on nearby cities rather than rural communities. This lack of local coverage erodes trust in media and diminishes local engagement and journalists' knowledge of their communities. While existing research addresses broadband availability, social media usage and the decline of local newspapers, there is a gap in understanding rural communication preferences. This survey research collected 412 responses to explore rural communication dynamics. Findings reveal digital devices, online search engines, and Facebook are used for gathering news and educational content. Within rural communities, local residents use word-of-mouth, in-person interactions, and digital devices to learn about local news and events. Interpersonal communications between rural residents are centered around in-person encounters, text messages, and Facebook. These findings can inform practical strategies for reaching and engaging rural audiences effectively.

Panels

Relocation Rural: As the majority of the nation's net positive population migration shifts to rural areas, a new rural narrative is needed.

Presenters and Facilitators: *Elaine B. Crutchfield, Communities Unlimited; Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited; Derek Shore, Communities Unlimited*

When considering historic disinvestment and lack of access to capital that rural communities experience and the concentration of persistent poverty some may doubt Relocation Rural includes the South. Analysis of data for seven states (AL, AR, LA, MS, OK, TN & TX) found net positive migration from 2010-2019 and/or 2020-2021 in rural counties of varying demographics, including: persistent poverty; race/ethnicity; degree of rurality; age; and total population. In one state, 100% of persistent poverty counties experienced net positive migration. To ground-truth this data we began exploring communities, searching for determinants of growth. Relocation Rural is reality and now is the time for new narratives about the opportunities in rural communities. The panel includes four individuals. Two Communities Unlimited staff sharing Relocation Rural data and related experience in community-driven development. Two panelists are rural community leaders, ground-truthing the Relocation Rural data trend from the perspective of their hometowns.

Rural Lawyers on the Frontline: A Discussion with the Heirs' Property Practitioner Network (HPPN)

Presenters and Facilitators: *Francine Miller, Vermont Law School; Mavis Gragg, HeirShares ; Ryan Thomson, Auburn University*

This panel brings together a combination of legal practitioners and experts from the Heirs’ Property Practitioner Network (HPPN) organized around legal discrimination and involuntary land loss in rural areas across the country. This legal wing of the more significant scholarly movement has created an incredible impact in a relatively short time. Building on a survey that maps the growing legal network and geospatial distribution of legal service providers (and their allies), this panel explores the successes and ongoing barriers of the movement to protect heirs’ property owners from involuntary land loss. Francine Miller is a senior staff attorney and faculty member at the Center for Agriculture and Food

Systems at Vermont Law School. Mavis Gragg is the CEO of HeirShares and both are the leading forces behind the Network. Ryan Thomson of Auburn University will chair the panel.

Heirs Property Research Ethics: Dialogue to Inform Problem-Solving for Researchers and Educators
Presenters and Facilitators: *Ryan Thomson, Auburn University; Kara Woods, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center/Alcorn State University; Portia Johnson, Auburn University; Roseanne Scammahorn, Southern Rural Development Center/Mississippi State University; Sarah Stein, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta; John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center/Mississippi State University*

There are numerous ethical concerns in need of attention when working with vulnerable families and communities navigating heirs' property issues. This session will begin with a presentation of findings from focus groups conducted with researchers, Extension professionals, nonprofit leaders, attorneys, and landowners on these issues. This will be followed with facilitated dialogue among attendees to inform problem solving. Presented with practical ethical questions, participants will discuss issues from their personal and professional perspectives, coupled with consideration of insights from the presentation, with the goal of advancing ethical practice when working with families, communities, and their data

SERA-47 Multi-State Project on Local and Regional Food Systems
Presenters and Facilitators: *Russ Garner, Communities Unlimited; John J. Green, Southern Rural Development Center and Mississippi State University; Kenrett Jefferson-Moore, North Carolina A&T State University; Kaylee Smith, Virginia Tech*

Southern Extension and Research Activity (SERA) facilitates cooperative Extension and research activities within the Southern region, engages researchers and Extension professionals across the Land-Grant University System, and is open to other colleges/universities, non-profit organizations, and regions. Historically, the group has consisted of integrated multi-disciplinary, multi-state research and Extension professionals who have holistically addressed high-priority issues related to local and regional food systems in the South. SERA-47's annual activities include monthly leadership meetings, quarterly panel discussions (Coffee and Tea Hours), a virtual member meeting, and an in-person panel and participant engagement session at the annual SRSA meetings. This session will showcase other activities happening across the region. There will also be opportunities to engage in participant dialogue on local and regional food system research, education, and extension.

Poster Session

Health and Fresh Produce: Analyzing Household Factors Affecting Dietary Choices
Binula Illukpitiya, Lipscomb University; R.H.S. Wishvajith, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View A&M

This study examines the impact of household dynamics on fresh produce consumption and its implications for health promotion. Understanding the socio-economic factors that influence dietary choices is crucial for developing effective public health strategies. This research focuses on the consumption behavior of fresh produce among households in Tennessee, utilizing data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drawing on insights from the behavioral model, the explanatory variables were identified, including education level,

income, ethnicity, gender, physical activity involvement, and health status. Weekly consumption of the number of fresh produce servings served as the response variable. A Poisson regression model was employed for analysis. Findings indicate that households in the lowest income bracket consume significantly less fresh produce, while individuals engaged in regular physical activity and those reporting good health status demonstrate substantially higher consumption. Additionally, younger households tend to consume more servings of fresh produce. These insights underscore the importance of targeting specific household characteristics in health promotion initiatives aimed at improving dietary habits and increasing fresh produce intake.

A Novel Approach to Improving Health Outcomes in Rural Oklahoma: Unique Variables and SurveyBased Findings Exploring Attitudes and Knowledge Regarding Diabetes, Nutrition, and Exercise in Sequoyah County

Emily Nunan, College of Veterinary Medicine, Oklahoma State University; Diana Garcia, Oklahoma State University; Madeline Drake, Kansas State University; Joshua T. Butcher, College of Veterinary Medicine, Oklahoma State University

Diabetes disproportionality affects Oklahomans, with 14% of adults being diagnosed and another 37% with pre-diabetes. Rural communities often experience the greatest barriers to treatment and education, in combination with half of Oklahoma's counties classified as food deserts. As such, Oklahoma has the fourth highest death rate from diabetes nationally. This study's purpose is to define classical and non-classical variables that contribute to this increased disease state in Sequoyah County, Oklahoma, which is estimated to be between 15%-19% over the past decade. These variables will be tracked across time to identify community capital that must be preserved or is particularly vulnerable to increasing diabetes prevalence in rural communities. Additionally, this study includes a survey about health-related topics to better understand the knowledge base of Sequoyah County. Altogether, this work hopes to enable the creation of distinctive programs that can meet the needs of a rural community and improve their health outcomes.

Rural Communities, the Rural Workforce, and Forest Products Businesses in Alabama

Kelli Russell, Auburn University; Garrett Antonio Martinez, Auburn University; Amelia Pugh, Auburn University; Mykel Taylor, Auburn University

The forest products industry makes a major contribution to the economy in rural Alabama, employing nearly 124,000 people in the industry. This poster explores newly collected semi-structured interview and participant observation data with Alabama forest products business owners, exploring their perspectives on challenges for rural communities and the needs of rural workers. This research draws on community resiliency scholarship to explore the interconnections of sustainability and resiliency.

What's Up Mangum: Studying Rural Youth News Consumption for Citizen Journalism

Rosemary Avance, Oklahoma State University; Molly Moody; Oklahoma State University

In rural areas like Greer County, Oklahoma, youth engagement with local news relies heavily on social media and word-of-mouth. These forms of communication can result in underrepresentation of youth perspectives and the spread of misinformation. Understanding how young people access local news is critical for strengthening rural information systems. This study investigates the main news sources, consumption habits, and key local issues relevant to youth in Greer County. Through interviews and focus groups, qualitative data were collected on their news habits, trust in sources, and representation in local media. Findings reveal that while social media, particularly Facebook, is a key source for local news,

concerns about misinformation and gaps in coverage persist. These insights will inform the creation of a citizen journalism curriculum aimed at empowering rural youth to contribute to local news, fostering inclusivity, and increasing civic engagement.

Assessing Flood Insurance Participation Rates in the Southern United States
Omowunmi Odeyomi, Godfrey Ejimakorm North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University

Climate change has increased the incidence of flooding in many communities in the United States. Homeowners could reduce losses from flooding by purchasing flood insurance. The characteristics of homeowners may militate against the purchase of flood insurance. The lack of flood insurance may increase the vulnerability of such homeowners when losses occur. One way to reduce the vulnerability of such homeowners is to increase their participation rates in the crop insurance program. A good understanding of the socioeconomic characteristics of homeowners who do not have insurance is a necessary tool that could be used to develop education and outreach programs and increase participation in the program. We will compare the insurance participation rates in selected counties of the southern region of the United States based on their socio-economic characteristics. Our findings will provide information that could be used to design programs to improve participation rates in the flood insurance program.

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