

NEWS RELEASE

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Southern Ag Exchange Network Awards Subgrants to Address Farm Stress

[Knoxville, TN] – The Southern Ag Exchange Network (SAGe) granted sub-awards and contracts totalling \$2,476,967 to 18 new projects whose aim is alleviating farm and ranch stress in a variety of ways that have the potential to be replicated across the southern United States. Research projects will add to the body of knowledge about best practices in reaching agricultural workers in crisis.

USDA-NIFA funds SAGe through the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) award number 2023-70028-41286. In the absence of a new Farm Bill, the current sub-awards are funded under a “bridge year” award so that the work can continue uninterrupted. These projects add to ongoing work from the current funding cycle, including contracts with Iowa State University/Iowa Concern, Farm Aid, and Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) for a farm stress hotline.

Asset Mapping and GIS

Asset mapping and GIS (geographic information systems) projects will provide important baseline information for research as well as an inventory of available resources. North Carolina State University’s asset mapping project, in partnership with NC Agromed, will assess, develop, and adapt culturally specific mental health resources for farm workers. Operation Spring Plant, a North Carolina-based conservation nonprofit composed of Black and other small farmers, will develop an asset mapping tool and conduct asset mapping workshops in coordination with NCSU researchers. A SAGe-funded GIS coordinator will integrate the different data sources from the following GIS projects together into a database to support a public dashboard:

- University of Florida researchers will use GIS to map chronic disaster area needs
- Auburn University will construct an heirs’ property index using GIS
- GIS data on market pressures, income, and property values will be collected and studied by Furman University researchers

Underserved Farming Populations and Farmer Interviews

Several projects directly address populations of farmers that have been traditionally underserved, and others collect first-hand data through interviews with farmers and agricultural workers.

- Contract community liaison positions have been awarded to the Lumbee Nation (North Carolina) and the Veterans Farm of North Carolina for community-based resource documentation and advocacy, both of which will be supported by North Carolina Agromedicine Institute.
- SAGe will partially fund SC State University 1890 Research & Extension’s Women of Color in Agriculture conference in 2024.



The Southern Ag Exchange Network (SAGe) is the Southern region of the USDA’s Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, one of four regional groups charged with addressing heightened stress among America’s farming and ranching communities. Visit southernagexchange.org for more information.

- The SC Community Health Worker Association (SCCHWA) will conduct farmer listening sessions, with several of these being in Spanish, and will provide training for community health workers to become community-engaged researchers.
- Auburn University will conduct 20 farmer interviews, and a researcher at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign will conduct 30 interviews with Latine farmers in her home state of Texas, both for the purpose of needs assessment and resource and curriculum development. Both projects will use a shared research instrument that will allow for comparison of farmer populations and creation of culturally grounded resources.

Different Approaches to Mental Health Delivery

Broadly different approaches to mental health delivery and training will be applied in a variety of settings, which have potential to be replicated across the region.

- The University of Kentucky will provide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and suicide prevention training for agriculture producers and professionals, and Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) will provide MHFA and QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training for agricultural educators, building on SAgE-funded research.
- Mississippi State University, in partnership with Alcorn State University, will co-host two BARN (Bring Action Right Now!), developed at the University of Kentucky) Farmer Dinner Theater events for farmers and farm families.
- University of Florida is piloting a mental health voucher program to allow farmers and farm families to access mental health services.
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will provide tele-behavioral healthcare and training for agricultural producers on succession planning, or the transfer of property from one generation to the next.
- The University of Georgia is to produce a SAgE-specific multi-film project related to farm culture, farm stress, and demystifying counseling, as well as an edited film version of the virtual AgrileadHER women in agriculture conference.

SAgE Applied Research

For most of the sub-awarded projects and contracts, the deliverables stipulated in the grant include a peer-reviewed research brief, webinar, or presentation to add to SAgE’s body of applied research. SAgE’s Farm Stress Brief Series is a peer-reviewed extension series housed at University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. The briefs and webinars summarize research that is conducted to ensure that the programming is robust, data-driven, and evidence-based before replicating it across the region. For more information, visit the [applied research hub](#) on SAgE’s website.

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