

Testimony of

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Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning on behalf of the Association of Extension Administrators. I would like to share with you, the importance of the work of Cooperative Extension to our communities, states and country as we celebrate 100 years of Extending Knowledge and Changing Lives.

First, I would like to thank you for your support of Cooperative Extension. The capacity and competitive funding that you provide for Cooperative Extension is crucial to providing the infrastructure and ability to generate the knowledge and programs needed to respond to critical and emerging issues impacting society.

Background

The land-grant system was created by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The 1862 Morrill Act created a land-grant university in each state and the 1890 Morrill Act extended the land-grant status to the historical-black public universities in the southern and border states, where due to segregation, African Americans were barred from attending the 1862 institutions.

Cooperative Extension is a part of the tripartite mission of the land-grant university, which is Teaching, Research and Extension. The Smith-Lever Act was passed in 1914 and gave rise to the Cooperative Extension System in this country, which is a unique partnership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities. There are three types of institutions that have the responsibility for implementing Extension programs. They are 1862 land-grant universities, 1890 land-grant universities and the 1994 tribal colleges.

However, when the Smith-Lever Act was passed in 1914, it created Extension at the 1862 land-grant universities. The Act did not provide funding for the 1890 land-grant universities, at that time. In 1972, Congress appropriated the first funding to support Extension at the 1890 land-grant universities. Now, the development and implementation of Extension programs is the mission of the 1862s, 1890s and 1994 tribal colleges.

Program Overview

Today, I will focus my comments primarily on the involvement of the 1890 land-grant universities and Tuskegee University in the delivery of Cooperative Extension programs.

Cooperative Extension provides useful and practical research based programs and information that address critical issues and problems that are impacting agriculture, families, youth, businesses and communities. When people are confronted with a major problem or issue, they want a trusted resource for unbiased information.

In general, all Cooperative Extension programs are designed to help people to develop the knowledge and skills they need to solve the problems they are facing, but the 1890 land-grant universities have a special mission and mandate. Many of the people the 1890 land grant universities work with have limited personal or family assets, limited opportunities or they come from communities that have limited resources. However, none of this matters, because the task is to meet people where they are

and move them to the next level. Moreover, the programs are designed to transform behavior and improve the quality of life.

In the early days of Extension, the pioneers used the Jessup Wagon or the Movable School, which was a horse drawn wagon and later a panel truck to deliver programs. Today, a variety of technologies are being used to deliver programs. Many of the universities have mobile units, which are school buses, in some instances, that have been transformed into classrooms that are equipped with satellites, computers, projectors and flat screens to deliver programs to underserved communities in both rural and urban areas. The units are used to deliver a variety of programs using technology that may not be available in some of the remote rural areas. For example, the units are used to teach families and individuals basic computer usage, business development skills, financial planning, farm planning, entrepreneurship development and food safety.

The 1890 Cooperative Extension programs are comprised of a broad range of science based educational efforts, which have been proven to:

1. Strengthen the food and agricultural industry, particularly small and limited resource farmers, by developing agricultural production systems that are efficient, sustainable and highly competitive in the global economy.
2. Enhance the health of families through diet and nutrition and food safety education and their economic well-being through practical financial education.
3. Enhance youth skills in science, technology, math, citizenship and leadership.
4. Foster strong, stable communities through leadership development efforts and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Small-Scale Agriculture

Cooperative Extension has developed transformation programs that have improved the economic viability of small scale agriculture and reduced the decline of small minority-owned farms. Programs emphasizing agricultural diversification, marketing strategies and risk management have been of paramount importance to this client group. Many of the small farmers have diversified their operations to include vegetable production, fruits, specialty crops and animals to increase their cash flow.

For example, the development of a Natural Hog Growers Association increased its membership hog-sale income by over \$200,000 in North Carolina and they have entered into contracts with the Whole Food Market. The development of the Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program has saved producers over \$16,250, annually, in Florida in veterinarian and production costs.

In Alabama, farmers participating in a comprehensive program in record keeping, financial management, production management and farm planning have become more efficient producers. It was reported that 13 farmers acquired USDA farm ownership loans in the amount of \$2.6 million and 10 acquired operating loans for nearly \$1.0 million. Without this training, the farmers would not have qualified for the loans. Programs of this nature enabled the limited-resource farmers in Kentucky to increase their net farm income by \$4,500.00.

Nutrition and Health

Obesity is a serious health concern for both children and adults. Nutrition education programs, such as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), are being implemented to help families understand the importance of consuming more fruits and vegetables, making healthy food choices and engaging in physical activity. Programs have focused on helping individuals and families to understand that poor dietary choices and unhealthy life styles can lead to chronic diseases. This contributes to an increase in health costs for the family and others, if they cannot afford the care. Participants in the various programs have indicated that they are consuming more fruits and vegetables and preparing more healthy meals. The 1890 land grant universities are making a difference, but there is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

4-H and Youth Development

Recent youth development research indicates a need to provide opportunities for young people to increase their leadership skills. Creating opportunities to engage young people in leadership roles is a priority of 1890 Extension. Moreover, through the development of the Teen Leadership Connection Curriculum in Texas, after school programs were established in partnership with selected public schools. Extension's work with 4-H volunteers has developed 4-H programs addressing the problem of low self-esteem, high dropout rates and juvenile delinquency. After School and summer 4-H enrichment programs have enhanced youth skills in science, engineering, technology, leadership and citizenship. In South Carolina, the Tech-Bridge Program is a 5 week summer technology/academic enhancement program for rising 6th and 7th graders. The participants are taught how to build a computer from the frame to a Computer Processing Unit (CPU). In addition, the students are required to load all of the academic software and are trained in CYBER-SAFETY and proper internet decorum. As a result of their participation, youth reported success in setting goals, appreciating cultural differences, a better understanding of leadership, positive change in behavior, improved academic performance and an interest in STEM disciplines as a career.

Economic Development

Independently owned and operated business enterprises are a vital part of the local economy. Helping entrepreneurs to develop, launch and sustain their businesses is a primary goal of the economic development activities of Cooperative Extension at the 1890 land-grant universities. Programs have focused on developing business plans, enhancing business management skills, marketing and managing

risk. The development of a **Virtual Entrepreneurship Center** (VEC) uses social media platforms to merge traditional methodologies with online resources to deliver a comprehensive entrepreneurship program in partnership with each of the state's land-grant institutions in Alabama. The Virtual Center located at Alabama A&M University, uses integrated conferences, entrepreneurship training and social media to expand delivery, widen customer bases and improve business interactions for the millions of online contacts reached since September 2012.

Future Direction for Extension

As Cooperative Extension continues, in the future, the focus will be to address emerging and critical issues that are impacting families, youth, communities and agriculture producers. With the projected growth in the population, there will be many issues and challenges that must be addressed in both rural and urban areas. Cooperative Extension with the research base at the land-grant universities is in a unique position to respond to the challenges and issues. Some of the issues to be addressed would include maintaining a safe and abundance food supply, protecting the environment to ensure water quality and quantity, helping to maintain a healthy society to reduce health care costs, providing opportunities for youth to become leaders and productive citizens, increasing the number of youth interested in the science, engineering, technology, and mathematics fields, helping to increase the sustainability and profitability of family farms and increasing energy independence. To remain effective, we must continue to develop and implement research based programs and use the latest technology in our delivery system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I would also like for you to know that many states with multiple land-grant universities have a very productive history of working together in the development programs and activities. Effective fiscal year 2015, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) has mandated that all states will submit a Joint Land-Grant State Plan of Work. This requirement ensures that the universities will provide stakeholders with the most cost effective and efficient Research, Teaching and Extension programs, services and activities. In addition, the Joint State Plan of Work will enhance program planning, implementation and evaluation, as well as eliminate the possibility of duplication.

The future of the Land-Grant System in the country looks great and we look forward to your continued guidance, oversight and support during the next century of discovery, teaching and engagement! **We clearly understand what we do is not about us, but about the people we serve!**

God bless you, the members of the subcommittee and God Bless America!