



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Georgia Organics and SAAFON Receive USDA Funding to Expand Economic Opportunity for Historically Underserved Farmers

ATLANTA, Ga.- The United States Department of Agriculture's Office of Advocacy and Outreach announced an award of \$199,988 to Georgia Organics in partnership with the Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON) to uplift historically underserved and veteran farmers in South Georgia through organic peanut production.

This grant aims to motivate farmers to enter the organic peanut market by

- Funding educational workshops across South Georgia on topics that will include organic weed control and disease management techniques, other effective organic peanut production practices, collective marketing strategies, and USDA programming and resources;
- Implementing a 5-acre organic peanut demonstration plot;
- Providing individual consulting to interested farmers;
- Developing and publishing a series of organic peanut production resources including a website and videos.

This project especially seeks to attract socially disadvantaged and historically underserved farmers, as well as military veterans, and new and beginning farmers. A portion of the grant will be used to underwrite 30 full for such farmers to the annual [Georgia Organics Conference](#), which will be in Augusta, Ga. on Feb. 16-17, 2018.

Along with outreach to historically underserved growers in South Georgia, project partners will also work to engage buyers, researchers and industry stakeholders to build the organic peanut market in Georgia.

"Although South Georgia is a powerhouse of agriculture, farming has not created equitable financial gain and employment opportunities in South Georgia, and the African American community is especially disadvantaged," says Georgia Organics' Director of Farmer Services Michael Wall. "Among the target project area, the average poverty rate is over 30 percent, more than 10 percentage points greater than the state average, and African Americans comprise more than half of all SNAP participants."

Georgia Organics and SAAFON recognize organic peanuts as an untapped economic opportunity for African American farmers in South Georgia. With an estimated 1.7 million tons of peanuts, Georgia's record crop amounted to 54 percent of total U.S. production. Organic peanuts in particular often sell for more than three times conventional peanuts, although the vast majority are produced in Texas where production pressures are fewer.

The demand for organic foods—which, according to new [survey results](#) out of the National Agriculture Statistics Service, has continued to show growth through 2016—only reinforces the potential economic gain for historically underserved farmers in Georgia.

Tamara Jones, SAAFON's Executive Director, notes that "many of our Black and indigenous members are using environmentally sustainable and ancestral farming practices that at times surpasses organic standards.



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They are eager to learn how they can apply their knowledge to help grow this much needed market in Georgia.”

“This is a great day for agriculture in Georgia,” says Donn Cooper of Cooper Agricultural Services, a consultant on the project. “I believe this project has incredible potential to create transformative opportunities for socially disadvantaged, Veteran, and beginning farmers in the state. The peanut industry in Georgia is the envy of other farm sectors across the world, and it’s only natural that Georgia peanuts would be an innovative gateway for farmers of all stripes to serve the burgeoning organic market.”

About Partner Organizations

The [USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach](#) enhances access to USDA programming for historically underserved and veteran communities and improving agricultural opportunities for farm workers.

[Georgia Organics](#) is a statewide nonprofit organization with the mission of connecting organic food from Georgia farms to Georgia families.

[Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network \(SAAFON\)](#) is a regional nonprofit organization with the mission of ensuring economic viability and success of Black and indigenous farmers by increasing their organic and sustainable farm practices.

[Cooper Agricultural Services](#) works with university researchers, nonprofits, and sustainable producers to access external funding, enter new markets, and implement efficiencies that will increase opportunity and prosperity in the farming economy.

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