

## **Headline: McIntosh SEED has received a Cooperative Agreement Grant to partner with USDA to Improve Equity in Conservation Programs, Address Climate Change**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$50 million in 118 partnerships to expand access to conservation assistance for climate-smart agriculture and forestry. The Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements, administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will fund two-year projects to expand the delivery of conservation assistance to farmers who are new to farming, low income, socially disadvantaged or military veterans. Projects will support USDA's broader effort to address climate change and equitable access to programs.

The program encourages new partnerships and the development of state and community conservation leadership for historically underserved producers, with projects focusing on one or more of the following key conservation priorities:

- Improving soil health and water quality;
- Providing habitat for at-risk wildlife;
- Improving natural resources and productivity on agricultural lands; and/or
- Building and strengthening local and regional food systems and markets.

Among the partnerships are the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund and McIntosh Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (SEED). The partnership with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, expands the Regional Agro Forestry Center (RAFC) to include climate smart agriculture, participation in conservation easements, heirs property consultations, forest management plans and certifications, and youth employment placement for Alabama, Georgia, Texas, South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Additionally, a Regional Community Forest Justice Initiative (RCFJI) will provide limited-resource forest landowners with conservation education, technical assistance and a climate smart vision for their land

The McIntosh Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (SEED) will help historically underserved producers implement natural resources conservation and climate smart agricultural practices. They will work with producers to strengthen marketing skills, access new markets, and produce and sell cooperatively.

Additionally, SEED will engage historically underserved youth in 24 climate-impacted and economically distressed counties in Georgia through outreach and education, providing access to NRCS technical assistance, certifications and youth internships.