



# Historically Underserved Individuals & Groups

The 2008 Farm Bill addresses the unique circumstances and concerns of historically underserved individuals and groups. These groups include socially disadvantaged, beginning, and limited-resource farmers and ranchers. Financial and technical assistance and improved access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services, including those of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), are available for voluntary program participants.

Many 2008 Farm Bill programs provide up to 90 percent of costs for socially disadvantaged, limited-resource, and beginning farmers or ranchers associated with planning and implementing conservation measures. Up to 30 percent of such payments may be made in advance for purchasing materials or contracting.

Up to 5 percent of available Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds may be used to assist beginning farmers or ranchers and 5 percent to assist socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. Five percent of available Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) acres may be set aside to assist beginning farmers or ranchers and 5 percent to assist socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers. Unused funds and acres may be “repoled” for these groups and made available to all applicants.

A Beginning Farmer or Rancher is defined as an individual or entity who has operated a farm or ranch for less than 10 consecutive years. All members of an entity must fit this description for the farm or ranch to qualify for USDA aid under this program. Furthermore, the individuals must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.

A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group, defined as one whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of the group, without regard to their individual qualities. These groups include:

- American Indians or Alaska Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics

At least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals for an entity to qualify. Gender alone is not a covered group under NRCS programs in the 2008 Farm Bill.

A Limited-Resource Farmer, Rancher, or Forest Owner has:

- Direct or indirect gross farm sales of not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 years;
- A total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four; or
- Less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years.

An entity or joint operation can be a limited-resource farmer, rancher, or forest owner if all individual members independently qualify.

To learn if you qualify, use the Limited Resource Farmer Self-Determination Tool at [www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov](http://www.lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov).

For more information, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).



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