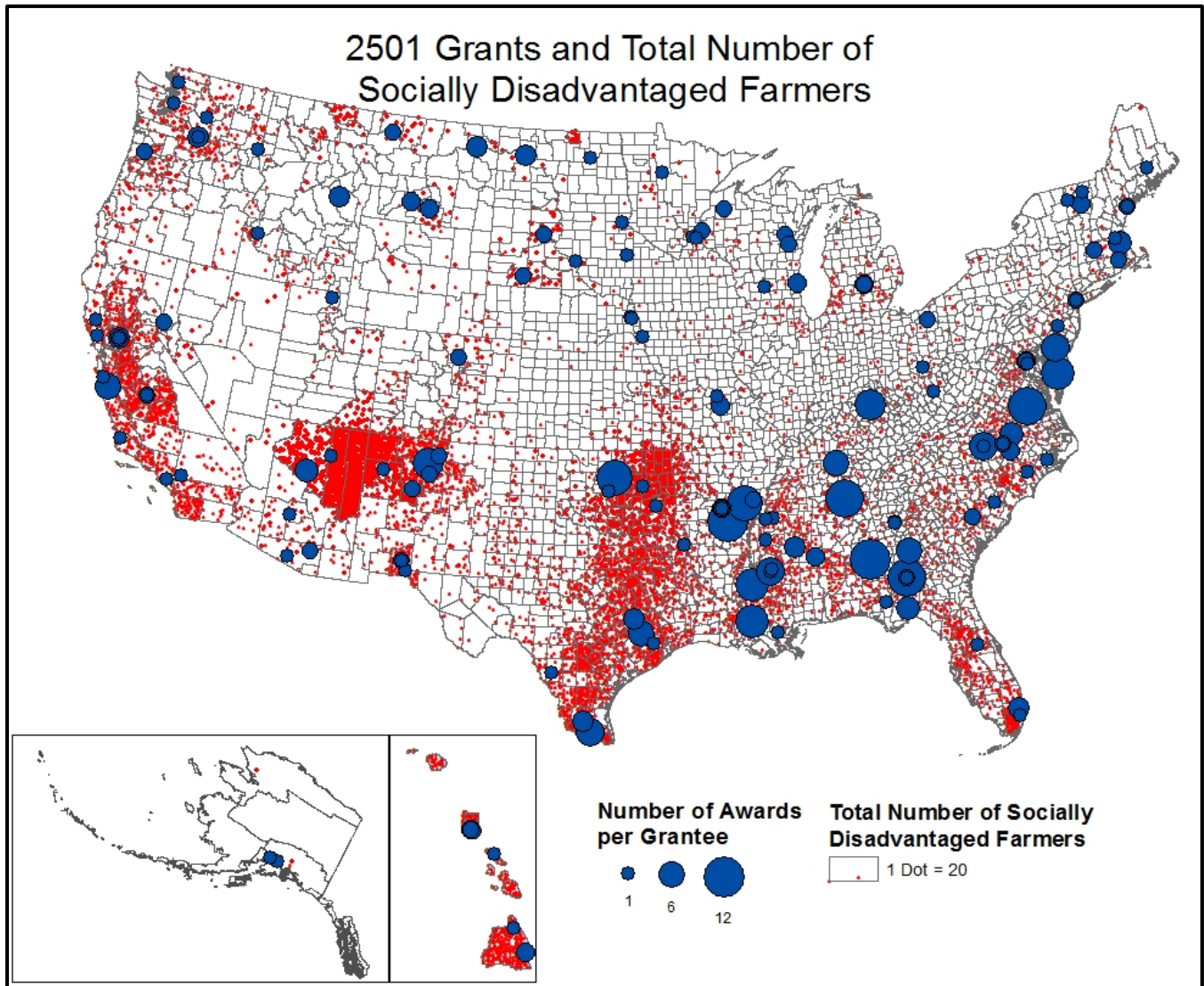


Getting Our Map Together

Locating Successes, Gaps and Opportunities in USDA Support for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers



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May 2015

Introduction

In the parking lot of a gas station in Yazoo City, a town in the Mississippi Delta that has seen better days, Gloria Sturdevant brandishes a mighty weapon in the fight for farm justice: her cell phone. The phone is full of numbers for two sets of people. The first set belongs to black farmers of the Delta region, many of them women, many of them struggling. The second set belongs to officials and staff at numerous state and county USDA agencies. Using this phone, Gloria brings these two groups together in ways that have often been unthinkable in this slice of the American South.

Gloria has a vision of growth and sustainability for her community, built on the agricultural economy. She is a farmer herself and a founding member of a women's sweet potato cooperative. She is also a board member of the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives and a field organizer for the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic and Social Justice. She is uniquely positioned to have the trust of the farmers in the community and a deep understanding of their circumstances—and to connect those farmers with the right people and the right information in order to secure vital assistance from the USDA.

For much of its history, the Department of Agriculture has struggled to deliver the same benefits and services to farmers from minority racial and ethnic groups as it does to white farmers. These growers have come up against linguistic, technical, and cultural barriers, as well as outright prejudice, as they have tried to apply for loans and other federal programs (Civil Rights Action Team 1997). While high-profile civil rights initiatives and class action lawsuits have taken place at the national level, these reforms have failed to trickle down to the county level, where key decisions about who can participate in a program or receive a loan are made (Hargrove 2002, 42). As a result, small- and medium-scale minority farmers have faced the same economic and environmental pressures as their white counterparts, but often without the same lifeline of federal support. A history of disappointment and discrimination has destroyed the trusting relationships that must exist between farmers and USDA field officials in order for these programs to work.

For a farmer or rancher from a marginalized group, knowing someone like Gloria can have a transformative effect on his or her life. Gloria and countless other advocates, organizers, extension agents, and community leaders like her represent a vital conduit of resources, knowledge and trust between disadvantaged farmers and the state. These grassroots networks are working to invigorate struggling and marginalized farming communities for a more just and sustainable future for American agriculture.

This report explores some of the key Farm Bill initiatives that are helping the USDA team up with people like Gloria across the country to build new relationships with minority farmers and ranchers.

Where this Project Comes From

This project was undertaken within an ongoing participatory action research partnership between the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), the Rural Coalition (RC), and American University's School of International Service (AU). NFFC and RC confer with their member groups, who represent thousands of

small and historically underserved American farmers, fishers, ranchers, and farmworkers, to determine the policy objectives and research questions that will be most helpful to producers at the grassroots. Teams of AU Master's students then take on those research questions and, over the course of a semester, work closely with NFFC and RC to conduct the research and deliver the findings.

The purpose of this project is to tell data-driven visual stories about whether Farm Bill grant programs are meeting the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in the United States.

These stories are meant to supplement the existing body of anecdotes and narratives that keenly illustrate the critical need for these programs, the dramatic changes they can make in growers' lives, and the opportunities that still exist to better support the individuals and families who produce our food.

Two USDA grants were selected for this study. The first is the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501 Program). The second is the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), which has a significant portion of its funds set aside for projects that primarily serve socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

This project seeks to answer the following questions:

- Where geographically have 2501 and BFRDP grants been awarded?
- What types of organizations have received the awards?
- Have the grantees been located in the areas with the greatest needs?
- Are there any groups of growers who have not been adequately served by these programs?
- How have these programs and their cohorts of grantees changed over the programs' lifetimes?
- How can the US government use these programs in the future to best support socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers?

To answer these questions, the Rural Coalition and the National Family Farm Coalition requested maps that showed the spatial distribution of grantees within the United State compared to the distributions of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, household poverty, farm types, and complementary USDA programs such as StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity.

I used ArcMap software to create these maps, drawing on quantitative data available from the USDA, (primarily the Census of Agriculture and documentation of the two programs in question), and the United States Census Bureau. Additional qualitative data was collected through a review of the relevant literature and participant observation at events including NFFC's annual gathering in February 2015, the annual "Getting Our Act Together (GOAT) on the Farm Bill" convening in March 2015, both in Washington, DC, and "Fighting to Live: Symposium on Race and Sustainability" in April 2015 at the University of Mississippi School of Law in Oxford, MS. I also conducted formal and informal interviews with famers, advocates, and some of the original leaders who fought to create these programs.

A Note on Terminology

The USDA uses the term "socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers" to refer to the beneficiaries of the 2501 Program and set-asides within other grant programs, including BFRDP. It defines a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher as a one who belongs to "a group whose members have been

subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities” (USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach 2015).

Many of the growers who fall within a “socially disadvantaged” category and their advocates prefer other terms, such as “historically underserved,” or even “*campesino*,” with its connotation of global grassroots solidarity. Many farmers are still seeking a language that simultaneously empowers them and acknowledges their historical disenfranchisement.

In the specific context of USDA grants, this report will use “socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers” (or SDFRs) in order to mirror the USDA’s terminology and reduce confusion. When discussing the broader food and farm justice movement, the report may use other terms, including historically underserved or discriminated against, minority, small and limited-resource farmers, etc. Terms such as farmers, farmers and ranchers, farm operators, growers, and producers will be used interchangeably.

Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers in American Agriculture

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Group	# of Farm Operators 2007	# of Farm Operators 2012	% change
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	82,462	99,734	17%
American Indian and Alaska Native	77,437	71,947	(-8%)
Black or African American	41,024	46,582	12%
Asian	15,998	24,067	34%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	2,063	3,846	46%
White	3,164,285	3,051,472	(-4%)
Total	3,281,534	3,180,074	(-3%)

Source: Census of Agriculture

Farmers from socially disadvantaged groups have been a part of the story of American agriculture since the beginning, and they will continue to have an important role in the future. A notable finding of the 2012 Census of Agriculture was the increasing diversity of American farmers. While the numbers of white farmer operators declined, nearly all other racial and ethnic categories saw an increase.¹ The Census also indicated that minority operators continue to have disproportionately less profitable farms. While 56.6 % of all American farm operators have sales of less than \$10,000, the shares of Hispanics (68.4%), American Indians (78.1%), and blacks (78.9%) in the same category are all substantially above the national average.

¹ While the total number of all Native American farm operators declined, the number of principal operators rose by 8%, from 34,706 to 37,851.

Emergence of the Section 2501 Program and Set-asides for SDFRs

National acknowledgement of the unique challenges facing socially disadvantaged producers began with a few small training and outreach initiatives during the 1980s (Hargrove 2002, 10). At the 2015 GOAT convening, John Zippert of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives traced the origins of the 2501 Program to the negotiations over the 1985 Farm Bill and the 1987 Agriculture Credit Act. He and other minority farmers “felt like spectators in something farmers were supposed to participate in.” Frustrated by exclusion, inspired by the Civil Rights movement, and driven by a critical need, Zippert and other minority farm leaders began an aggressive campaign to change the way the USDA relates to socially disadvantaged producers (Hargrove 11, 2002).

African American farmers and community-based organizations such as the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Land Loss Prevention Project were particularly active in this movement. They were joined by Hispanic farmers and other groups, such as the Rural Coalition and the Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council. Together they drafted the Minority Farmers Rights Act, which called for a registry of minority farmers and their lands; outreach and technical assistance activities to help farmers operate successful farms and participate in USDA programs; increasing the number of minority employees at the USDA; and consistent documentation and reporting of discrimination complaints (Congressional Research Service 1990). The bill was sponsored by Wyche Fowler (D-GA) in the Senate and Mike Espy (D-MS) in the House, but it did not pass (Hargrove 11, 2002).

In 1990, farmer advocates and their allies in Congress succeeded in getting the Minority Farmers Rights Act included in the Food and Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act (the 1990 Farm Bill). In addition to several of the Minority Farmer Rights Act’s other requests, the 1990 Farm Bill authorized \$10 million per year for “Outreach and Assistance Grants for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers.” The provisions fell under Section 2501 of the Act, resulting in the use of “2501” as a shorthand to refer to the program (Hargrove 11-12, 2002).

Eligible applicants to the 2501 Program included 1890 land grant colleges and universities, Indian Tribal Community Colleges (i.e. 1994 Native American Tribal land grant colleges), Native Alaskan Cooperative Colleges, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) of post-secondary education, Indian tribes, and community-based organizations (Hargrove 2002, 12). Eligibility was later opened up to other all institutions of higher education (Catalog of Federal Assistance).

The 2501 Program has been very successful at connecting socially disadvantaged farmers with USDA officials, increasing their participation in federal loan programs, and improving outcomes on their farms (Hargrove 2002, Oxfam 2007, Rural Coalition 2014). However, chronic underfunding and frequent changes in the program’s administrative home within USDA have prevented the program from fulfilling its full potential and have resulted in continued advocacy by both the original leaders and newcomers to the movement for farm justice, equity, and sustainability.

The same coalition has also fought for funds within existing USDA programs to be set aside for socially disadvantaged farmers, as well as small, beginning, and limited resource farmers. As a result, SDFR set-

asides and priorities now exist within several conservation programs, direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans from the Farm Service Agency, and the Beginner Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), among others.

Grant Program Trends and Challenges

Data Sources

Data for the number of grants awarded each year, the total amount of funding, and the names and locations of grantees were compiled from several sources. For the 2501 Program, most of this information for fiscal years 2003-2014 can be found in press releases available on the USDA website. Data on funding totals and names of grantees from 1993-2001 came from a 2002 doctoral dissertation by Tasha Hargrove, which reproduced grantee lists and funding data acquired from the USDA at the time.

There are some gaps in the 2501 data. No grant data for fiscal year 2002 could be located. It is unclear as to whether this is because no grants were awarded, or if the data is simply not readily available to the public. Individual grantee data for fiscal year 2011 is also not available, although aggregate data on the number of awards and total amount of funding awarded was included in an audit report by the USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) examining the FY2010 and 2011 grant awards process (2015). This same OIG report also calls into question whether the 2010 grantee list announced in the press release for that year is complete; OIG says 61 awards were granted in 2010, while the press release lists only 49. Maps and analysis of individual grantees and rely on the press release, while analysis of overall funding levels and aggregate trends uses the higher OIG figures.

To enrich this data, I coded 2501 Program by type of organization. Grantees were first coded as to whether they were a community-based organization (CBO), higher education institution (HEI), or American Indian tribal entity. HEIs received an additional code designating whether they were an 1890, 1994, or 1862 land grant institution, a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), or other higher education institution.

Data on BFRDP grantees from 2009-2014 comes from the usaspending.gov database, which includes grantee names, addresses, and award sizes. 2015 grantee data comes from a fact sheet published by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which administers the grant. BFRDP grantees were not coded by organization type. USDA requires that “BFRDP program recipients must be a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of public or private entities” (USDA NIFA 2015a). Because the partnerships may contain multiple types of organizations, the grantees were not easily categorized by type.

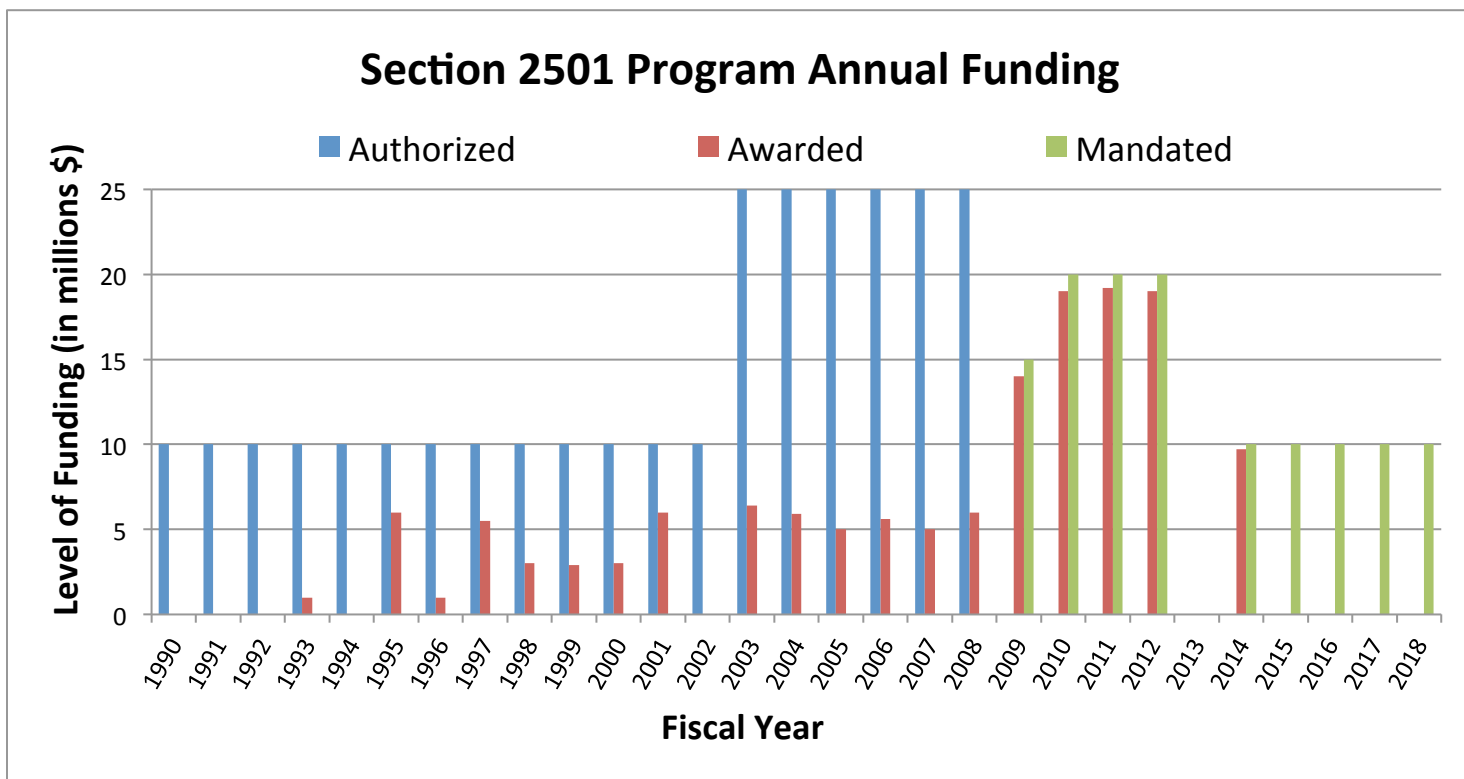
Program quality suffers in a context of funding inconsistency

The 1990 Farm Bill authorized \$10 million per year for the 2501 Program. However, it did not specify any mandatory funding for the program, so the funding had to be appropriated each year. Funding did not come through until 1993, when \$1 million was appropriated and distributed to 21 grantees to

begin developing projects for outreach and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers (Hargrove 2002, 114).

In 1994, nearly \$3 million was appropriated, but no grants were awarded. Instead, the 1994 appropriations were held until the following year, when they were combined with the 1995 appropriation (also \$3 million). A total of \$6 million was awarded to 27 organizations for five-year projects (Hargrove 2002, 114).

Figure 1



The five-year period from 1996-2000 was marked by unstable funding. No new grants were awarded. In some years, small amounts of funding were provided to existing projects on an as-needed basis. In other years, low appropriations for 2501 were topped up from other agencies and funds. No more than \$5.5 million was awarded in any year during this period, and the staff and directors of the 27 projects were left wondering each year if any funding would come through at all (Hargrove 2002, 118).

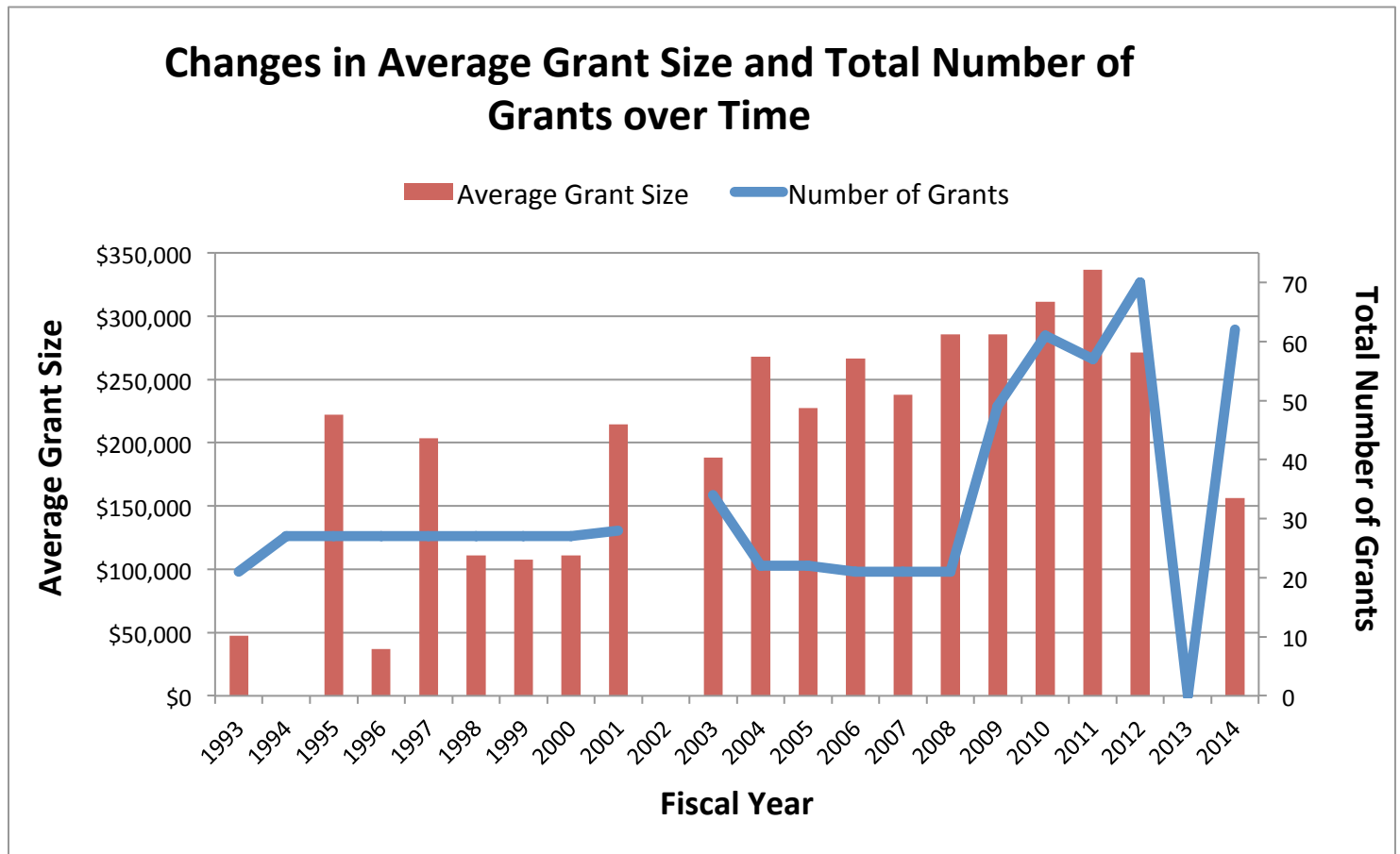
Additionally, when the five-year funding cycle ended on September 30, 2000, the USDA had not yet released the Request for Proposals for the next fiscal year. It was not released until the following April, more than seven months behind schedule (Hargrove 2002, 120).

The context of uncertain funding had damaging effects on at many of the projects. Within the six projects that Hargrove examined, all of them experienced at least one of the following hardships: inability to retain staff members; temporary shut downs; employee layoffs; lost offices; inability to provide services; and negative impacts on their relationships with farmers, their communities, and other USDA agencies. According to one participant in Hargrove’s study, “Our clients really fell through

the cracks in those years.” Other participants noted the particular difficulty of retaining talented staff members when project directors could not guarantee their salaries for even one full year (2002, 121).

These stories illustrate the critical need for adequate and predictable funding for the 2501 projects. While authorizations increased to \$25 million per year in the 2002 Farm Bill, appropriations continued to be an annual battle, with results far short of the authorized maximum. 2501 advocates finally won an important victory in the 2008 Farm Bill, when the program received mandatory funding of \$20 million per year for the first time.

Figure 2



However, these gains were short-lived. Congressional gridlock delayed the passage of the 2012 Farm Bill until 2014, meaning that no funds were available in fiscal year 2013. While the 2014 bill preserved 2501’s mandatory funding status, it slashed the level of funding in half. The size of the average award dropped by 42% from 2012 to 2014. Some longstanding grantees, such as the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, received no funding at all. Grantees that were funded had to take cuts of up to 50% to the budgets they had submitted. More than a decade after the original 2501 projects struggled through years of scarcity and instability, program directors, staff, and (most importantly) farmers still face the same threats to their capacity, their relationships, and their impact as a result of uncertainty at the national level.

The Political Economy of Competitive Grants for Sustainable Agriculture

While erratic funding is damaging to existing projects and grantees, the wider political economy of competitive grant funding is damaging to the food and farm justice movement as a whole. Faced with funding scarcities from both public and private sources, organizations are pitted against one another in a zero-sum game. When one organization manages to win a slice of the pie, it means less pie for another organization that may be equally worthy—and equally hungry.

The movement for sustainable and socially conscious food and farms is seeking profound shifts in the structure of agriculture at all scales, from the local to the global. It is facing a mind-boggling concentration of power in the hands of transnational agrifood corporations, who are using that power to reshape the rules of the game to maximize their own profitmaking and control (Clapp and Fuchs 2009, Weis 2007, McMichael 2013). In order to counter that power, sustainable agriculture organizations representing many different types of constituents must work in tandem. In some cases this makes for strong like-minded allies, while in others it pushes strange bedfellows to fight together on unlikely issues. To name just a few unlikely pairings, the sustainable agriculture movement has pulled together seasoned Civil Rights leaders with young environmentalists; urban food justice activists with rural family farmers; and cattle ranchers with conservationists (Wozniacka 2012).

Building this movement requires a herculean marshaling of individual organizations, a harmonizing frame for their strategic objectives (if not their missions), and cooperative relationships between partners in the cause. Coalitions, partnerships, and networks are critical tools for building solidarity and trust—all of which are undermined by the competitive grants framework.

The competitive model reflects a rational worldview of grant funding as a marketplace, where competition pushes all entrants to design better projects, reach more beneficiaries, and use their resources more efficiently. However, just and sustainable agriculture for all is a public good rather than a private gain. Pushing organizations to compete may indeed compel them to improve their programs and deliver excellent results within their own local service areas, but it may also hinder them from looking beyond their immediate surroundings and day-to-day operations. It might prevent them from partnering with one another to make change on a strategic, transformative scale.

In the specific context of the 2501 Program, the size of any individual award is capped at \$400,000, which disincentivizes the formation of cooperative projects operated by multiple organizations. Why split the same amount of money with a handful of other groups when you could have it all to yourself, to compensate your dedicated staff and to provide better services to the farmers who are your constituents, neighbors and friends? The BFRDP tries to address this by awarding grants to partnerships and networks. This begins to acknowledge the problem, but it does so by simply pushing it up the scale, from organizations to networks. The competitive spirit and political economy persists.

In many cases, the leaders who advocated for the creation of these grants programs were themselves directors of community-based organizations. They saw the potential for federal funding to flow to CBOs and breathe life into a network of grassroots organizations. The programs would thus serve small farmers in two ways: by providing direct services to them, and by strengthening the capacity of local groups to represent their interests and to organize a movement on their behalf. However, the grants

are only able to serve their dual purpose if organizations and initiatives are able to cooperate rather than compete with one another.

Community-Based Organizations and Higher Education Institutions

Over the years, grant making in the 2501 Program has demonstrated a bias toward higher education. While only 37% of all grantees have been HEIs, they have received 54% of all grants since 2000. HEIs are more likely to receive grants year after year, while CBOs are more likely to be supported for only a year or two. There is no evidence to suggest that the USDA is intentionally discriminating against CBOs; it is possible that HEIs are simply more consistent at submitting proposals every year. However, there are structural factors that may be contributing to this trend.

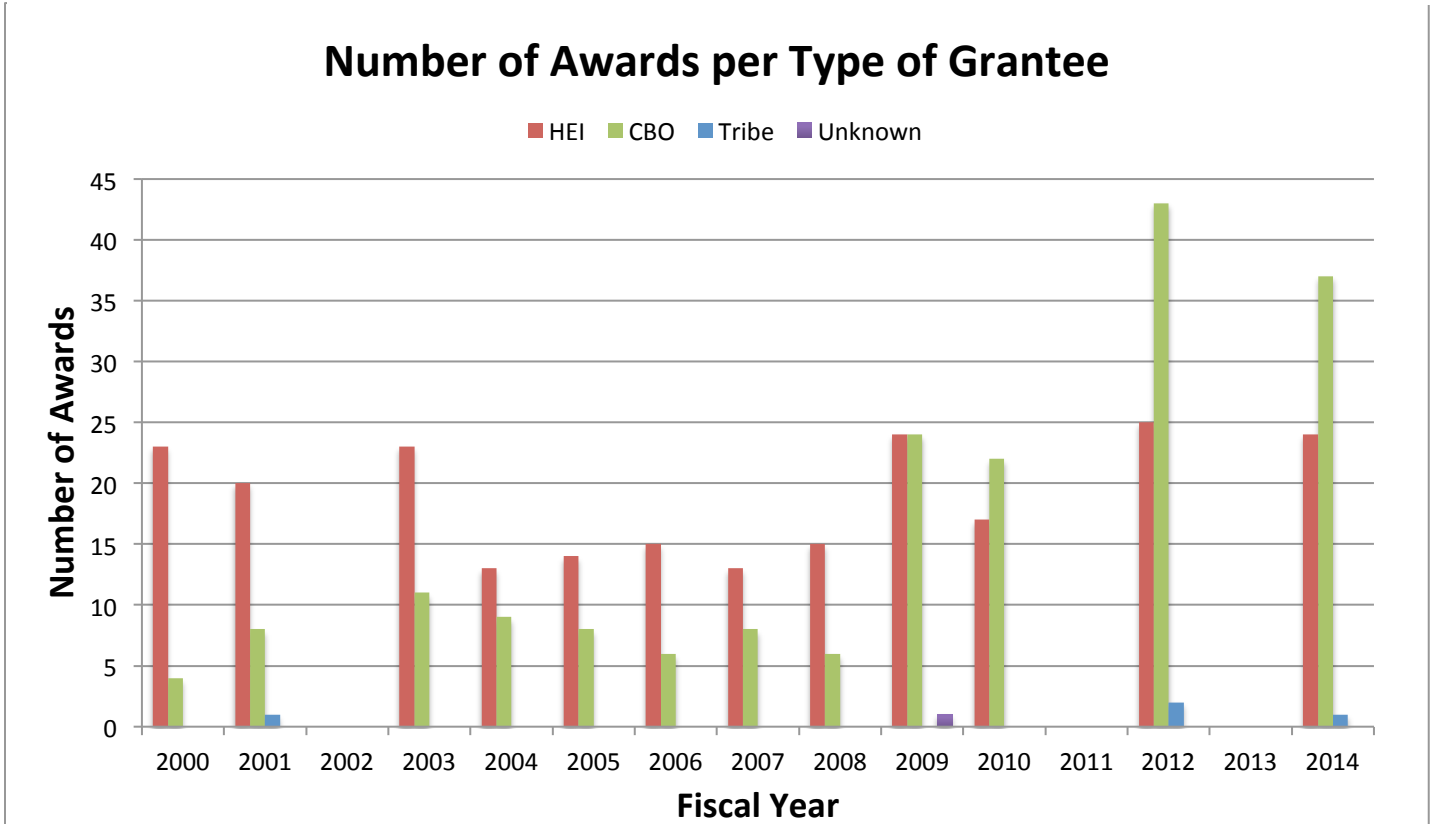
The main factor is limited management and grant writing capacity among CBOs. In many cases, CBOs are operating on a shoestring and must devote their entire budget and staff capacity to carrying out the organization's mission and activities. They may have no staff person dedicated to fundraising or grant writing, with its particular logic and style of persuasive writing. They may also not have the managerial capacity to maintain impeccable documentation of their finances and their impact, which are often necessary for grant applications and for later monitoring and reporting. All of these factors may deter CBOs from applying for grants in the first place, and they may reduce the quality of grant proposals that do get submitted. When CBOs do win grants, it may be difficult for them to comply with burdensome reporting requirements. In some cases, they may decide not to reapply, or the grant making institution may not consider them for future awards.

In many cases, HEIs have greater capacity at every stage of the process, including dedicated fund development staff and routinized procedures for documentation and reporting. It is less daunting for HEIs to apply for a grant in the first place, to comply with the terms and requirements during the life of the grant, and to be ready for the next RFP when it is released.

Another key feature of the 2501 Program is that there is no requirement for grantees to contribute matching funds to the proposed project. Even small matching requirements can be a prohibitive barrier for under-resourced community based organizations, who find themselves in the chicken-and-egg predicament of needing funding in order to get funding. 2501 is the only USDA grant program with this important enabling feature. Indeed, many foundations also have a matching requirement, making 2501 a rarity in the entire funding landscape for socially conscious agriculture.

Because of this, 2501 is uniquely important for CBOs in a way that it is not for HEIs. While HEIs operate within their own funding constraints, they do have greater capacity to raise revenues through other means, such as tuition and fees. Their greater capacity means that they can submit more and better proposals, and they do not have to be as discriminating as about where they apply. They are less reliant on any one source of funding. For small CBOs, however, 2501 may be the only program they can turn to.

Figure 3



Since the 2008 Farm Bill, there is evidence of a recalibration in the balance between CBO and HEI grantees. The proportion of grants going to HEIs is beginning to invert. In 2008, 71% of grants went to HEIs; by 2012, that number dropped to 35%. This trend coincides exactly with a substantial increase in mandatory funding for the 2501 Program.

True transformational change for these farmers will only come as a result of tectonic shifts in the structure of the global agricultural economy. The barriers to this kind of change are steep and will take decades to overcome. In the meantime, however, generous resourcing of *all* actors in the sustainable agriculture movement can have an immediate and potentially catalytic impact.

A bigger pot of funding will reduce some of the competitive pressures among the leaders of this movement and lead to better outcomes for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. It will help facilitate greater cooperation, harmonization, trust-building and solidarity across all types of organizations. Increased funding from the USDA could be the catalyst for transformational change in American agriculture and the lives of producers who have suffered discrimination, marginalization and exclusion for centuries.

Mapping Outreach and Assistance to SDFRs

In this section we turn to spatial analysis of trends within the 2501 and BFRDP grant programs. Using grant data from the agencies that house these programs, as well as county-level data from the 2007 and 2012 Censuses of Agriculture and the US Census Bureau, I created maps showing the distribution of project grants in relation to selected demographic and economic indicators. A complete set of these maps is included as Appendix A. Five of the most compelling maps are discussed in more detail below.

The maps show only the 50 states, although some grants have also been made to groups in Puerto Rico and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Limitations of Geographic Data – Headquarters vs. Service Areas

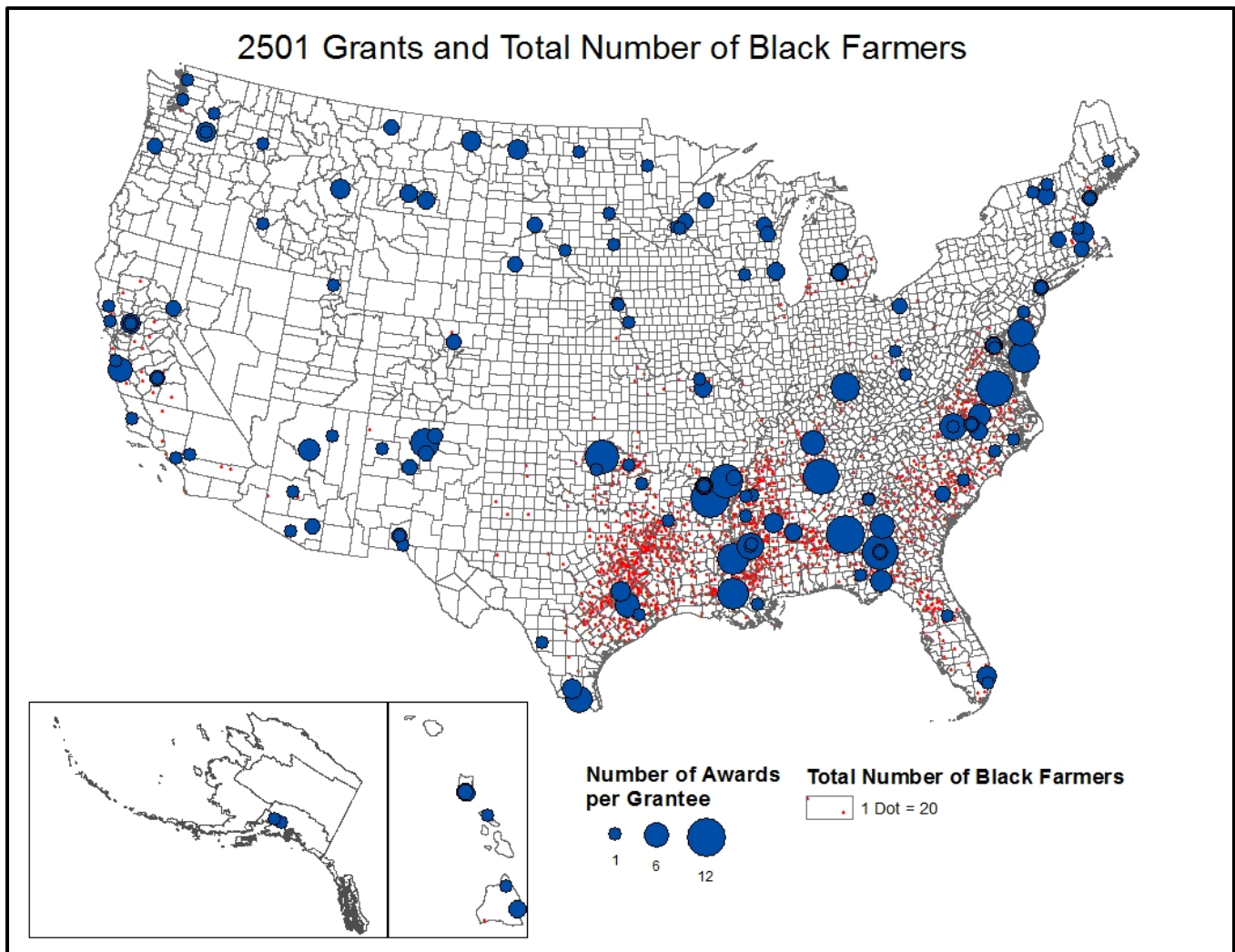
Locations of each grantee institution were either taken from the press releases, database entry, or found using a web search for the organization's name. In all cases, the location is the headquarters of the organization, unless an alternate project location was explicitly included in the press releases.

An important limitation of the following maps is that they only show where a grantee's headquarters is located. In some cases, particularly for small CBOs, this location is likely in or near the project's service area and therefore gives an accurate sense of where the activities are taking place. For larger CBOs and HEIs, however, the actual activities may be taking place in more distant locations from the headquarters, or in numerous counties beyond the one in which the headquarters is located. A good example of this is the International Rescue Committee, which received funding for its New Roots program in 2014. The organization's headquarters is in New York City, but the New Roots program operates in 22 cities (International Rescue Committee 2015). Only the New York location is shown on the maps.

Mapping the grantees' service areas would give a better sense of which beneficiary groups are actually connected to services, but it was not feasible to collect such detailed data on each grantee at this time. Therefore the locations of grantees on these maps should be considered illustrative rather than definitive. In reality, the coverage of the programs is likely to be greater than suggested here, as most grantees serve farmers in multiple counties or even several states.

Map 1: 2501 grants tend to cluster in the regions with the greatest number of black or African American Farmers

Map 1



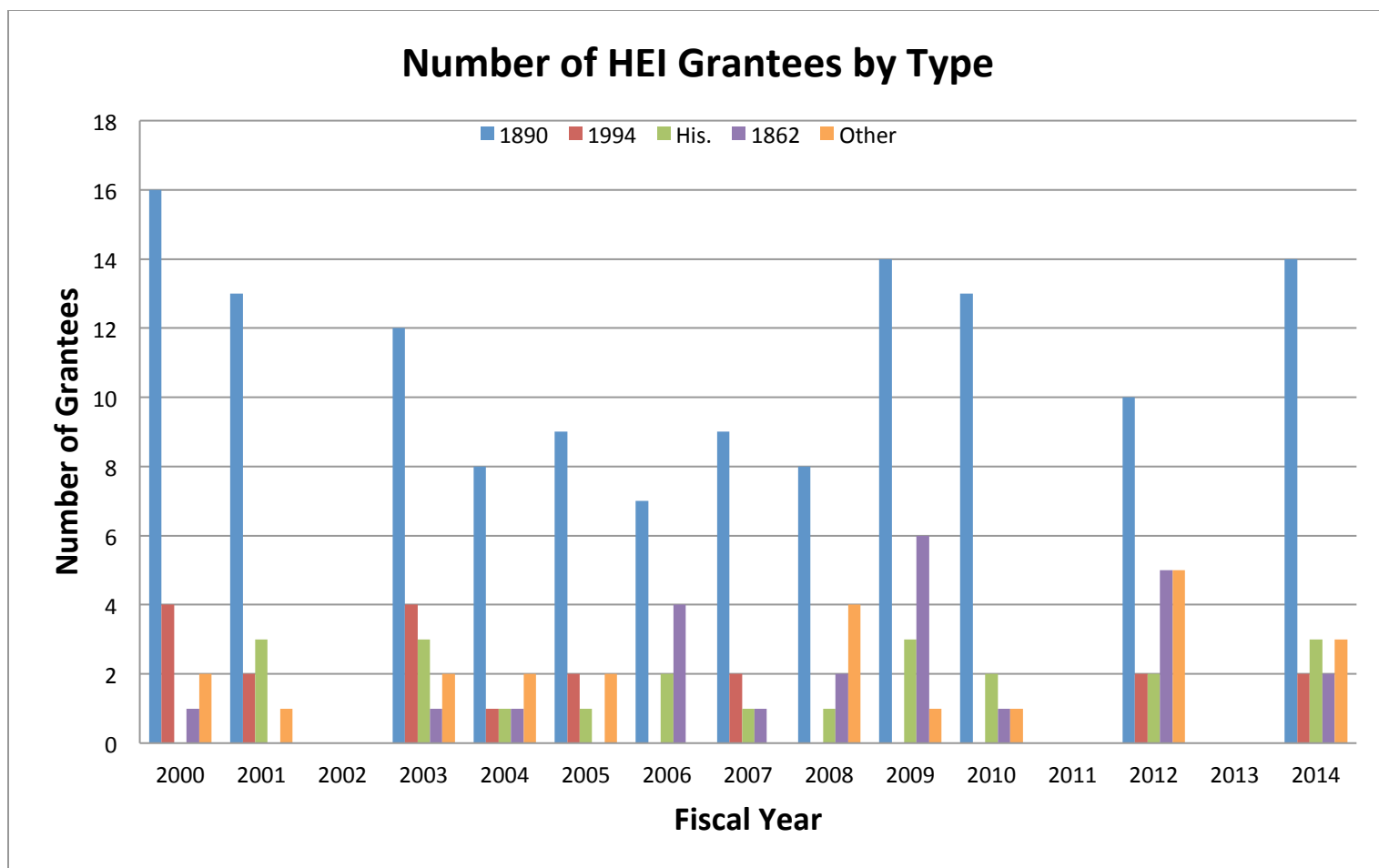
The large blue dots on Map 1 show the locations of all 2501 Program grantees from 2000-2014 for which data is available. The size of the dot corresponds to the number of times the grantee has received a 2501 grant in this 15 year period.

The small red dots show the locations of all farm operators who identified themselves as black or African American on the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Each dot represents 20 farmers.

From this map, it is apparent that 2501 grants have tended to cluster in the regions with the greatest number of African American farmers. This demonstrates good targeting of the 2501 projects, since black farmers are a key group of beneficiaries. This targeting of black farmers reflects the particular severity of the farm crisis among black growers. It is also likely a legacy of the program's early advocates, many of whom were active leaders in the Civil Rights movement.

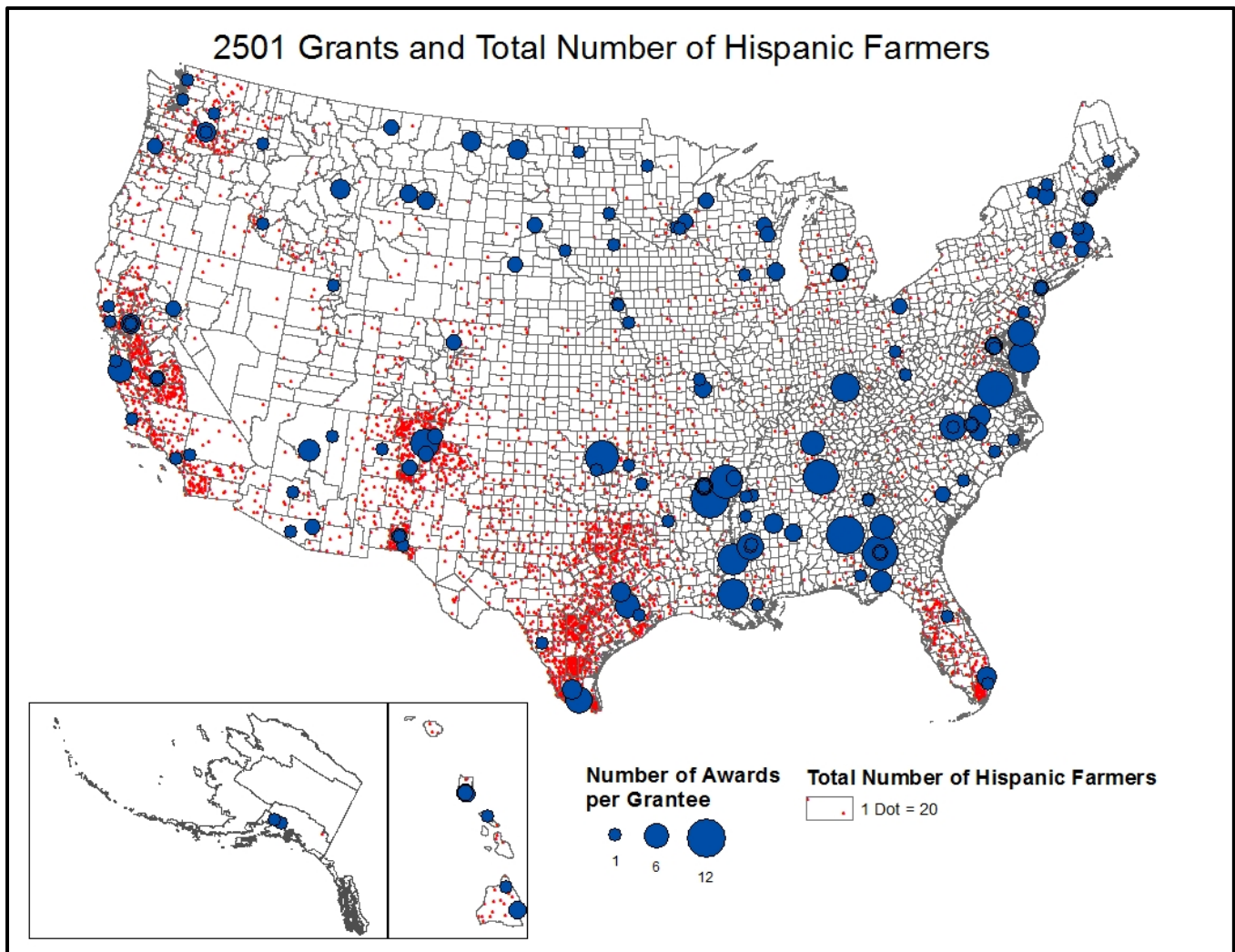
While many CBOs serve African American farmers, the clustering of 2501 Programs in the South is largely a function of the persistent dominance of Tuskegee University and the 1890 land grant universities among grantees. Eighteen out of 19 of these intuitions have received a 2501 grant. Five of them have received it 10 or more times. It is not surprising that these institutions have received so many grants; at the time that the 2501 Program was first created in 1990, all of them had existed for 100 years or more. Together they constituted a powerful existing source of outreach and extension services specifically for black farmers.

Figure 4



Maps 2 and 3: Opportunities exist to extend more 2501 Projects to Hispanic famers and Native American farmers

Map 2

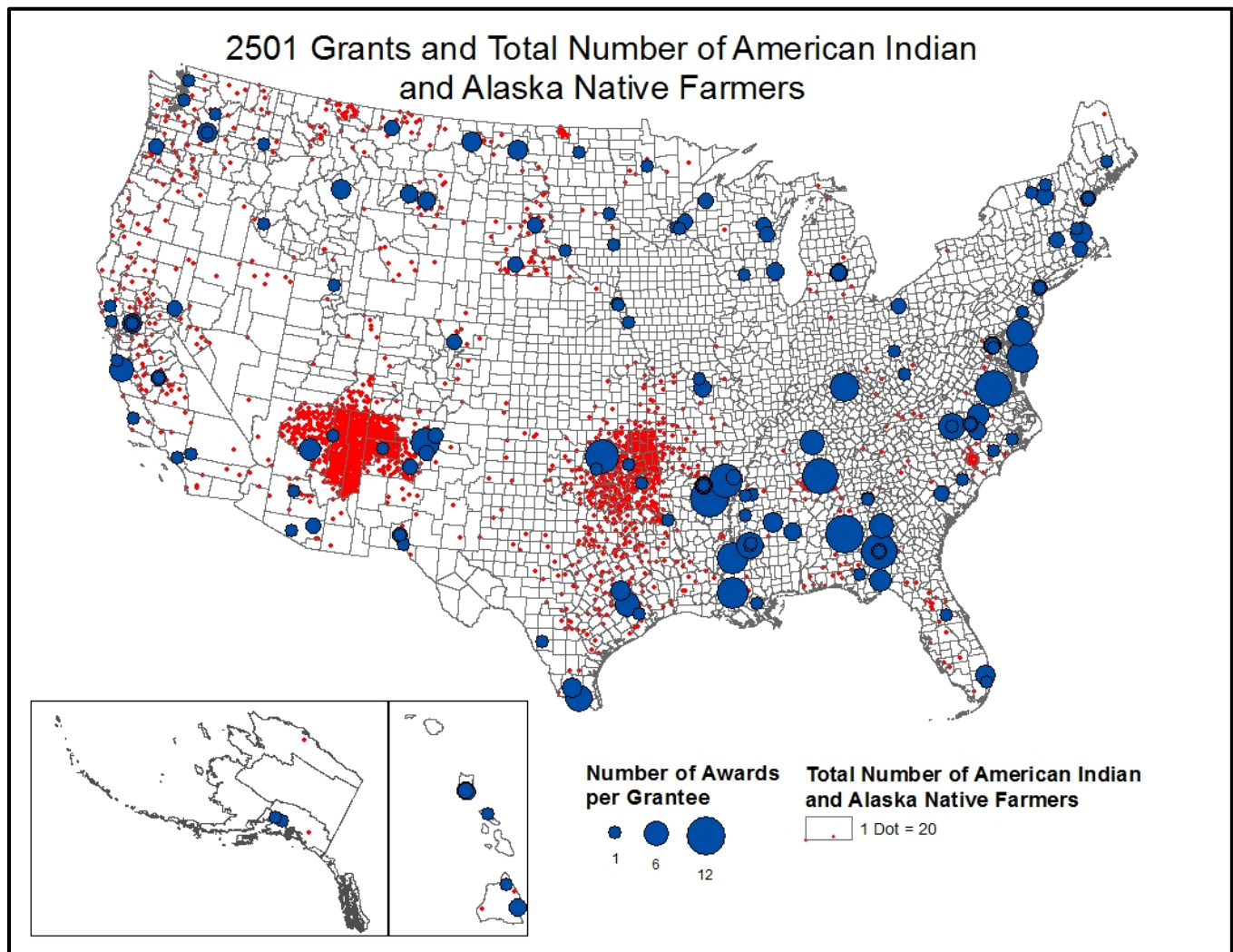


After non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics and Native Americans make up the second and third largest ethnic and racial groups of American farmers (Census of Agriculture 2012).

Despite this, 2501 grants have not clustered in the regions where these populations are most concentrated, as they have for black farmers. This is not to suggest that the level of support for black farmers should be decreased in order to better serve other groups. Instead, service to other groups should be increased, while maintaining the same level of service to black farmers.

One challenge for meeting the needs of Hispanic and Native American farmers is that these growers are more broadly diffused across the entire United State. While black farmers are represented in about 52% of all counties and county equivalents, that number is 65% for Native Americans and 84% for Hispanics (Census of Agriculture 2012). This wide spatial distribution makes it more difficult to reach all farmers with well-tailored projects.

Map 3



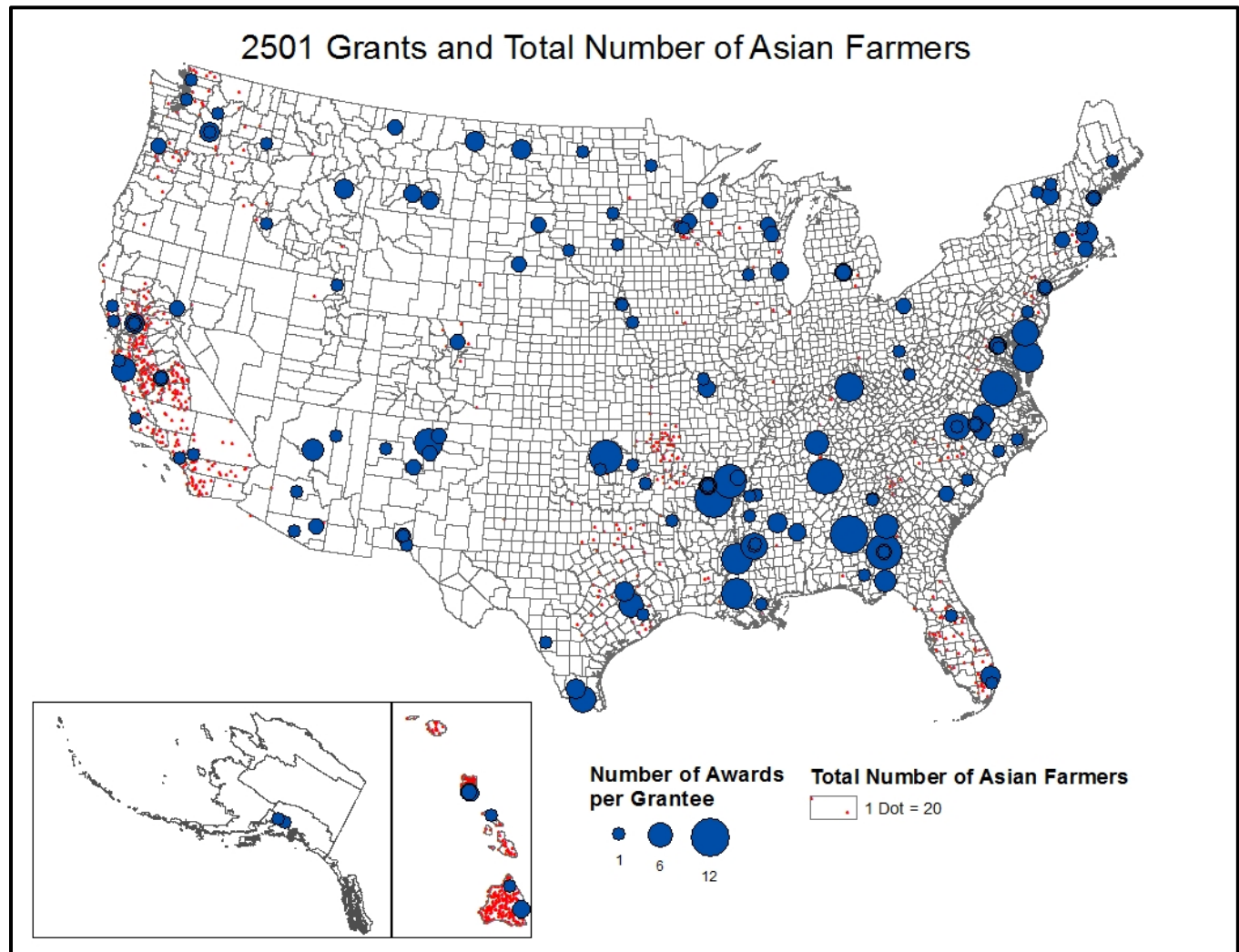
Areas where there are critical concentrations of Hispanic farmers, including California, Texas, Florida, and New Mexico, have all received 2501 projects. However, they do not have the same established and consistent support as black farmers in the South. Although New Mexico State University and the University of Texas – Pan American have been consistently supported, funding of Hispanic-serving Institutions has lagged far behind the 1890 universities. The same is true of Native American institutions, such as tribal entities and 1994 tribal land grant colleges.

Moreover, Hispanic populations overlap with other eligible categories of beneficiaries, particularly Asians in California and Native Americans in Texas and the Southwest. This indicates that even when a project is located in an area with a large population of Hispanic farmers, their local 2501 project may be tailored for other beneficiaries. For example, the National Hmong American Farmers project is located in Fresno County, which has high populations of both Hispanic and Asian farmers. The organization's mission focused primarily on Asian farmers, indicating that Hispanic farmers are less likely to benefit from this project.

This same is true for other groups as well; for instance, Oklahoma is home to large populations of Native American farmers. However, its most consistently funded 2501 project is at Langston University, a 1890 land grant university. While the project serves both black and Native American farmers (USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach 2014), Langston is a historically black institution. No grantee with a comparable, “historically Native American” character, such as a tribe or CBO, has received the same level of support in Oklahoma.

Map 4: The greater concentration of Asian farmers makes it easier to target these populations

Map 4

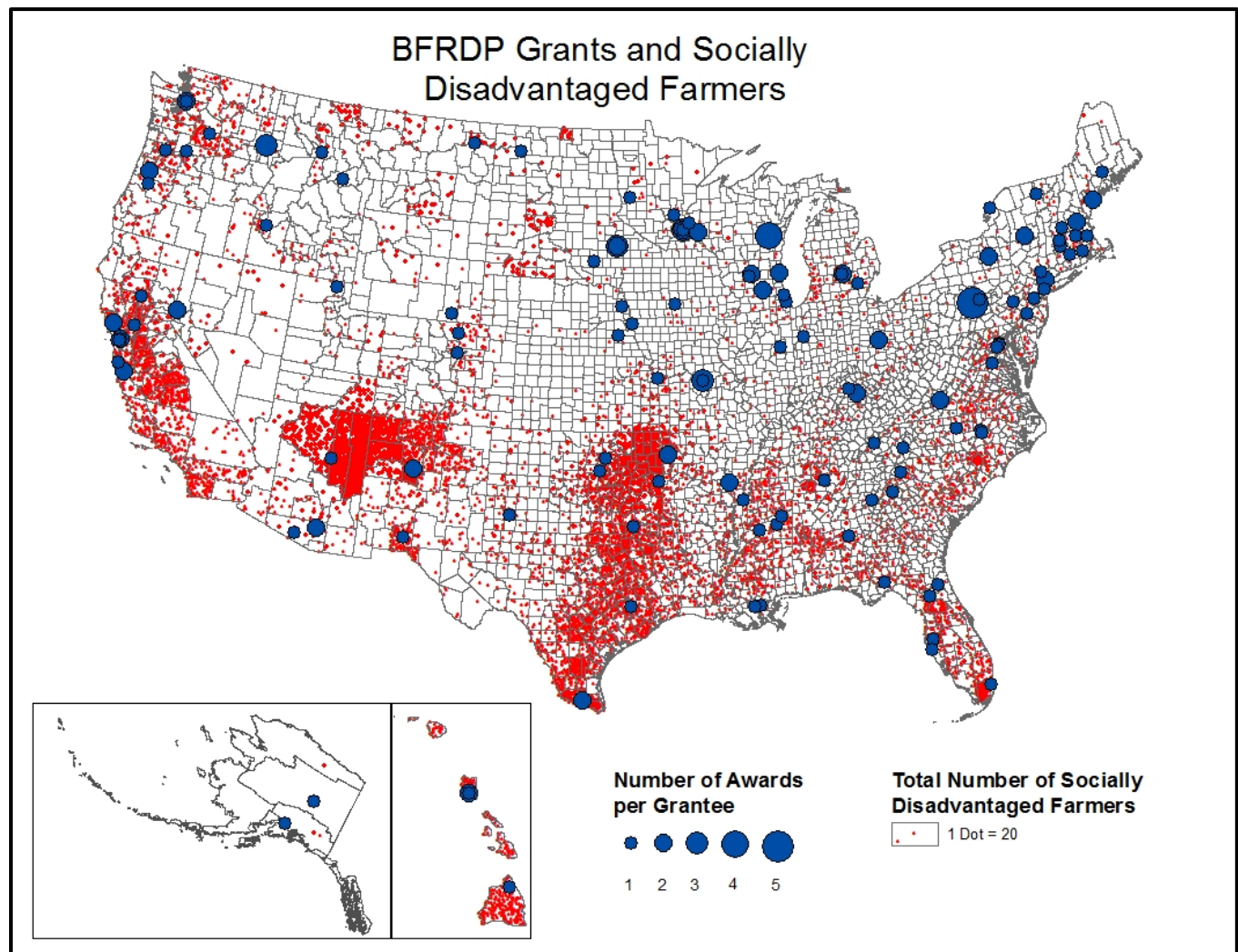


Asian farmers are a smaller group relative to Hispanic, Native American, and African American farmers. They are also less dispersed than other groups, residing in only 45% of counties. The map indicates strong concentrations of Asian farmers in Hawaii and California. These areas have both received a respectable number of grants. In fact, of the 100 counties with the greatest number of Asian farmers, 25 host the headquarters of a 2501 grantee. This is the largest proportion of all eligible farmer groups.

As previously discussed, not all of these projects may serve Asian beneficiaries. Areas of high Asian concentration overlap with other groups, such as Hispanics in California and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Hawaii.

Map 5: Set-asides within the BFRDP are not a substitute for dedicated support to SDFRs

Map 5



The Beginner Farmer and Rancher Development Program is an important source of support for socially disadvantaged farmers. At its creation, 25% of the program's funding was specifically designated to be set aside for SD famers, limited resource famers, and farmworkers aspiring to become farmers. The 2014 Farm Bill reduced this set-aside to only 5%, but a strong commitment to SDFRs has remained. Despite the reduction of the set-aside, half of the projects funded in FY2015 are focused on socially disadvantaged farmers (USDA Office of Communications 2015).

However, the map shows that a large set-aside is not a substitute for dedicated support to socially disadvantaged producers. Many BFRDP grantees are clustered in the Northeast and the Midwest, both of which have smaller populations of SDFRs than the South, Southwest, and West Coast. As a program

to assist socially disadvantaged farmers in the aggregate, the map does not suggest that BFRDP is doing much to drive support to the areas with the greatest need. This is not surprising, given the program's primary focus on beginner farmers (87% of beginning principal operators are white (Ahearn 2011)) and secondary objectives for veterans, limited-resource farmers, and farmworkers.

At the local level, the story looks different. Some of those northern grantees, such as World Farmers in Massachusetts, do serve socially disadvantaged farmers. They are critical for the ethnic and racial minorities in these areas, who may have small communities and limited access to services tailored to their language, culture, or needs. Once again, the goal is not to reallocate resources from one group to another. Rather, it is to grow to a level of funding that empowers more projects to serve all beneficiaries.

Other Findings: Two thirds of 2501 grantees are located in metropolitan counties

While they do not make for a particularly easy-to-read map, the data indicate that nearly two thirds of 2501 Program grants are awarded to organizations located in urban areas. Of the 123 counties in which a grantee has been located, 80 of them—or 65%—are categorized as metropolitan counties (USDA Economic Research Service 2013).

This data is not entirely surprising, since organizational headquarters and many HEIs tend to be located in urban areas. In many cases, the service areas for 2501 projects are located away from the organization's headquarters, or in adjacent counties that may extend outside the metro area. While the data on each individual grantee's service area are not easily available, I was able to measure the number of counties that have a grantee headquarters located within 100 miles. Taking into account this rough approximation of a "service area," over 2,300 counties, the majority of them rural, have some proximity to a 2501 project.

However, another explanation for the high proportion of grantees in metro areas may be the rise of urban farming. Some 2501 Projects are specifically tailored to socially disadvantaged urban farmers, such as the International Rescue Committee's "New Roots" project (International Rescue Committee 2015). A possible avenue for future research is to investigate this trend in American agriculture and to see whether it is reflected in the types of projects that have received 2501 support in recent years.

Conclusion

Ample, consistent funding for the 2501 Program is necessary if the USDA is serious about overcoming historic discrimination, building relationships with socially disadvantaged farmers, and supporting the communities that are in most need of its resources and services. Restoring mandatory funding up to—and preferably beyond—the level of \$20 million per year is critical to maintain services to black farmers and expand the Program's reach to greater numbers of Hispanic and Native American farmers. Within the context of greater funding overall, increased targeting of grants to tribal entities, 1994 tribal colleges, and Hispanic-serving Institutions may help to fill these gaps. A continued focus on funding community-based organizations will also help to reduce competitive pressures between these groups and build the movement for sustainable and just agriculture.

Members of the movement—farmers and ranchers, advocates, students, educators, chefs, and conscious shoppers and eaters—should continue to monitor federal grant making to socially disadvantaged producers. The agricultural landscape will continue to be reshaped by the powerful forces of globalization, corporate consolidation, and climate change, as well as the growing strength of the food and farm justice movement. Amidst these transformations, grassroots leaderships and advocacy will continue to be necessary to assure that national priorities and resources reflect the lives and the needs of farmers at the local level.

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