



Alcorn®

EXTENSION PROGRAM

Empowering People

34TH ANNUAL SMALL FARMERS CONFERENCE

“Enhancing & Sustaining the Small Farmer through Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology”

SEPTEMBER 22-24, 2025

**Harlow's Casino Resort & Spa
4280 Harlow's Blvd
Greenville, Mississippi 38701**





September 22, 2025

Dear Small Farmers, Landowners, Entrepreneurs, and Conference Guests:

As Mayor of the City of Greenville, it is my honor and pleasure to welcome you to the 34th Annual Small Farmers and Women in Business Conference, hosted by the Alcorn State University Extension Program in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives. We are proud to serve as the host city for this important gathering at Harlow's Casino Resort and Spa Event Center, beginning Monday, September 22, 2025, and concluding Wednesday, September 24, 2025.



For thirty-three years, this conference has uplifted and empowered small farmers, landowners, women in business, and agricultural entrepreneurs across our state and beyond. Each year, hundreds of participants from Mississippi and our neighboring states—Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee—gather to learn, network, and grow. This year's theme, "Enhancing and Sustaining the Small Farmer through Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology," reflects the bold vision and resilience that defines both the farming community and the Mississippi Delta.

The City of Greenville takes pride in being rooted in agriculture. Our fertile Delta soil has fed generations and remains central to who we are as a people. It is only fitting that this year's conference returns to the Delta, where farming is not just an industry, but a way of life.

This year's program promises to be both informative and inspiring, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Alton Thompson, 1890 Executive Director for Research, as well as student scholars, exhibitors, and USDA partners. We are confident that you will gain valuable knowledge, build strong connections, and take home new ideas to strengthen your farms, businesses, and communities.

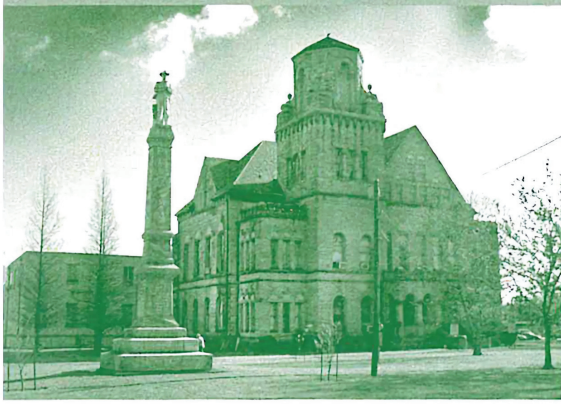
Throughout your stay, I hope you will also experience the warm hospitality that makes Greenville the Heart & Soul of the Mississippi Delta. From our rich culture to our resilient spirit, Greenville is a city proud of its past and committed to a stronger future.

Thank you for joining us for this historic conference. We are honored to host you in Greenville, and I wish you a productive and memorable visit.

Sincerely,

Erick D. Simmons

Mayor City of
Greenville



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WASHINGTON COUNTY

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MARK HOOKER, JR.
COUNTY ENGINEER

Washington County Board of Supervisors
910 Courthouse Lane, Suite A
Greenville, MS 38701

Greetings Conference Participants:

The Washington County Board of Supervisors and the Washington County Team welcome you to Washington County and stand ready to help you enjoy one of the most prominent areas for cultural greatness. Located in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, we feature many historic sites, arts, and attractions that will make your time here in Washington County a memorable experience.

We believe your conference will not only bring together valuable conversations and collaborations, but also provide an opportunity for participants to experience the unique hospitality, culture, and spirit of our community. All that Washington County has become is deeply rooted in the dedication and hard work that is provided by the people in our community, and we couldn't be happier than to welcome you to this very place we call home.

Thank you for bringing your conference to our community and we wish you much success for a memorable and impactful event. If you want to learn more about Washington County and the great things that we offer, please visit our website at www.washingtoncounty.ms.

Sincerely,

Carl McGee,
President, Washington County Board of Supervisors

WASHINGTON COUNTY



Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge



Warfield Point Park
The only view of the Mississippi River
between Memphis, TN and Vicksburg, MS



Leroy Percy State Park
Mississippi's Oldest and Largest State Park



Winterville Mounds
Ceremonial Indian mounds
built around 1000 A.D. They
comprise one of the largest
mound groups in the Missis-
sippi.

The beauty and richness of Washington county continues to astonish all who come. From wildlife areas and prehistoric settlements and artifacts to the great writers of the southern culture, this area of Mississippi truly holds the seeds of our beginnings and inspires the prose of great literature.

The birthplace of American's music is rife with opportunity and creativity.

Washington County is a great place to visit and a great place to live.



©John Keen

Sitting, l-r: Marilyn Hansell, Chancery Clerk; Carl McGee, District 3 Supervisor; Mala Brooks, District 4 Supervisor; Standing, l-r: Douglas Lee Gordon, District 1 Supervisor; Tommy L. Benson III, District 2 Supervisor; Chelesa Carter, County Administrator; Jerry D. Redmond Sr., District 5 Supervisor; and Willie Griffin, Board Attorney.



Douglas Lee Gordon
Vice President



Tommy L. Benson III
District 2



Carl McGee
President



Mala U. Brooks
District 4



Jerry D. Redmond Sr.
District 5

P.O. Box 158, Greenville, MS 38702, 662-378-8355, Fax: 662-335-9393



Alcorn
State University

September 22, 2025



Dear Farmers and Friends:

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Alcorn State University, I would like to welcome you to the 34th Annual Small Farmers Conference in Greenville, Mississippi.

Farmers have been a rich part of Alcorn's history since our early days of being founded as the nation's first land grant historically Black university.

This year's theme, "Enhancing & Sustaining the Small Farmer Through Entrepreneurship, Innovation,

& Technology," reflects our commitment to ensuring small farmers have the resources they need to thrive in today's changing landscape.

This conference highlights the innovation and resilience of Mississippi's small farmers while providing educational resources to help improve their overall farm enterprises. It also showcases the key role that farmers play in feeding our communities and sustaining our state's economy. Agriculture remains our state's number one industry.

I would like to thank the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences and its team for their hard work on today's conference. I would also like to thank our partners that helped us fund this year's conference. Everyone in attendance for this year's conference, thank you for your continued support of Alcorn State University.

Always Alcorn,

Tracy M. Cook
21st President



Alcorn.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND APPLIED SCIENCES

Office of the Dean
College of Agriculture & Applied Sciences
1000 ASU Drive #690
Lorman, MS 39096-7500

September 22, 2025



Dear Friends, Partners, and Honored Guests,

On behalf of the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences at Alcorn State University, it is my great honor to welcome you to the 34th Annual Small Farmers Conference.

This gathering has a rich history that began more than three decades ago as an idea to showcase research, highlight the strength of our agricultural community, and provide a professional setting where farmers, educators, and partners could learn, connect, and grow together. From its humble beginnings on the campus of ASU—with field day demonstrations and paraprofessional-led sessions—to its first official conference in 1992, this event has continued to evolve and expand. Over the years, it has traveled across the state, ensuring that farmers have the opportunity to share in the knowledge, resources, and recognition it offers.

At its core, this conference is about empowering farmers. It is about educating and celebrating those who are the backbone of our communities and stewards of our land. Each year, we salute outstanding farmers through our nomination and recognition process, while also bringing forward emerging technologies, innovative farming techniques, and vital conversations that strengthen both our farms and our families.

This year's conference continues that tradition. It is not only an opportunity to learn—it is also a chance to celebrate one another, to network, and to strengthen the bonds that make agriculture in Mississippi both resilient and thriving. Together with our valued partners, we are proud to host this event and to continue the legacy of service, education, and advancement that is represented.

Thank you for being here, for sharing in this important journey, and for all that you do to keep agriculture strong. May this year's conference inspire you, connect you with new opportunities, and remind you that you are a vital part of Mississippi's agricultural future.

With gratitude and warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dexter B. Wakefield I, Ph.D.".

Dexter B. Wakefield I, Ph.D.
Dean and Director of Land-Grant Programs
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences
Alcorn State University



Alcorn.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND APPLIED SCIENCES

Office of Extension Program
College of Agriculture & Applied Sciences
1000 ASU Drive #479
Lorman, MS 39096-7500

September 22, 2025



Dear Farmers, Friends, and Partner Organizations,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 34th Annual Small Farmers Conference here in Greenville, Mississippi. Having served Alcorn State University for over 35 years, I have witnessed firsthand how this conference has become a vital space for small farmers, partner organizations, and educators to come together in pursuit of knowledge, innovation, and community.

Over the years, the conference has grown not only in size but also in impact. What makes it special is not the venue or the program, but the people—the farm families who show up year after year with a hunger to learn, and the partners who bring resources and expertise to support them. Together, we create something powerful: a space where wisdom is shared and exchanged, innovation is embraced, and community is built.

This year's theme, "Enhancing & Sustaining the Small Farmer Through Entrepreneurship, Innovation, & Technology," speaks directly to the challenges and opportunities before us. Agriculture is changing, but the heart of it—the farmer—remains constant. My prayer is that you leave this conference encouraged, empowered, and equipped with tools that will make a difference in your work and in your communities.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for trusting Alcorn State University to walk with you on this journey. For more than three decades, this conference has stood as a testament to the strength of small farmers, and I am proud to have been a part of that story with you.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Franklin Chukwuma".

Franklin Chukwuma, Ph.D.

Associate Director for Extension
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences
Alcorn State University



MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF COOPERATIVES
A State Association of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

**233 E. Hamilton Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39202**

**Office: (601) 944-0592 • Fax: (601) 944-0617
MAC39202@gmail.com**

**MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 22786
Jackson, MS 39225-2786**

September 22, 2025

Dear Small Farmers Conference Attendee,

On behalf of the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, it is our great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all at the annual Small Farmers Conference!

Whether this is your first time joining us or you are a long-time cooperative member of our association, we are delighted to have you at Harlow's Casino Resort. Your presence and participation are what make this event a vital forum for sharing knowledge, building relationships, and strengthening the backbone of our local and regional food systems.

This year's theme, "Enhancing & Sustaining The Small Farmer Through Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology," is especially timely as small-scale agriculture faces new challenges and opportunities. Over the next 2 days, you will have the chance to engage in informative sessions, hands-on workshops, and meaningful discussions covering topics such as leafy greens production, and exploring forestry through innovation and technology, sustainable farming practices, new market access, and financial planning. We are honored to feature a lineup of knowledgeable speakers and fellow farmers who will share their unique insights and successful strategies.

More than just a series of presentations, this conference is a chance to connect with one another. Take advantage of the networking lunches, breaks, and informal gatherings to share your own stories, struggles, and triumphs. The strength of our small farming community lies in our ability to support one another.

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to Alcorn State University, our generous sponsors, partners, and the staff whose hard work made this event possible. Your support is invaluable to the success of this conference and to our shared mission.

Thank you for all that you do to feed our communities and care for the land. We are confident that your time here will be both enriching and inspiring.

Welcome, and let's get started!

Cooperatively yours,

Ben F. Burkett
State Coordinator

Monday, September 22, 2025

7:00 a.m. Vendors and Exhibitors
Foyer

8:00 a.m. Conference Registration Opens
Harlow's Event Center Lobby

10:00 a.m. Pre-Conference Session
Ballroom

Presiding: Purvie Green, *Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coordinator*
Mississippi Department of Agriculture

Informational session on Federal and State agricultural program assistance
for landowners, small farmers, and new and beginning farmers.

Welcome and Conference Overview Manola Erby
Assistant Director for Extension
Alcorn State University Extension Program

Greetings and Opening Remarks Dr. Dexter Wakefield I
Dean and Director of Land Grant Programs
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, Alcorn State University

Agricultural Leaders: USDA and Mississippi Agencies Panel Representatives:

Farm Service Agency Christopher McDonald
State Executive Director

Natural Resource Conservation Service Kurt Readus
State Conservationist

Rural Development LaCari Mosely
Program Director

Risk Management Agency Roddric Bell
Director

Agricultural Research Service Archie Tucker
Southeast Director

Farmer Veteran Coalition Mr. James Burch
Army Veteran, Farmer, and Landowner

11:45 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. **Update on the National Policy Research Center**
Speaker: Eloise Speight, Executive Director, *The National Policy Research*
Center, Alcorn State University

The National Policy Research Center, authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill, was
created to be a voice for select farmers and ranchers while ensuring that data-
driven information is available for Congress and other key stakeholders.

The mission of the Policy Center is to conduct research, analyze policy, and

make recommendations seeking to achieve economic integration of USDA programs and policies. The Policy Center performs these tasks through four (4) pillars: Stakeholder Engagement, Active Research, Policy Development, and Strategic Outreach.

Research Displays *Alcorn State University Agriculture Students*
Foyer

12:30 p.m. *Grab & Go Box Lunch*

1:30-3:30 p.m. *1st Plenary Session*
Ballroom

Presiding: John Coleman, *Farm Manager & Business Management Training Officer, Extension Research & Technology Transfer Center, Mound Bayou, MS, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Welcome *Kameka Cole-Gray*
USDA Liaison at Alcorn State University

Invocation *Reverend Melvin Motten Sr.*
Star of Bethlehem M. B. Church, Greenville, MS

Official Conference Greetings:

State 4-H Youth Ambassadors

Supervisor Carl McGee
President of the Washington County Board of Supervisors
District 3

Honorable Errick D. Simmons
Mayor
City of Greenville, MS

Ben F. Burkett, *State Coordinator*
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives—Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, Jackson, MS

Dr. Tracy M. Cook
21st President
Alcorn State University

Virtual Video Presentation *Honorable Bennie Thompson*
2nd Congressional District- Mississippi

Introduction of Keynote Speaker *Dr. Dexter Wakefield,I*

Keynote Speaker *Dr. Alton Thompson, Executive Director*
Association of 1890 Research Directors
Greensboro, North Carolina

Special Presentations:

The Spirit of Courage Award Honorable Senator Derrick T. Simmons
Minority Senate Leader,
District 12- Bolivar, Coahoma, and Washington Counties

Honoree Honorable Retired Senator David L. Jordan
District 24- LeFlore, Panola, and Tallahatchie Counties

Community Impact Award Honorable Senator Sarita Simmons
District 13- Bolivar, Sunflower, and Tallahatchie Counties

Honoree Honorable Willie Simmons
Central District Transportation Commissioner, Jackson, MS

Recognition of Military Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Tremell Sherman
Cooperative Field Specialist, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

3:15 p.m. **Fitness Stretch & Break**

3:30 p.m. Breakout Sessions
Meeting Rooms

Breakout Session 1-Levee/Magnolia Room

Presentation Title: Leafy Greens Production and Postharvest Handling

Facilitator: Mrs. Latonya Glass, *Administrative Assistant, Alcorn State University Small Farm Incubator Center, Preston, MS*

Speaker: Dr. James O. Garner, Jr., *Farm Manager, Alcorn State University, Small Farm Incubator Center, Preston, MS, and Ben Burkett, State Coordinator, MAC*

The presentation will address production practices, crop maintenance, and post-harvest handling of leafy vegetables. It will also discuss common insect pests and diseases affecting vegetable crops.

Breakout Session 2-River/Cotton Room

Presentation Title: Sustainable Agriculture-Best Management Practices through Livestock and Trees

Facilitator: Joe Barnes, *Outreach Specialist, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*

Speakers: Jeremy Dixon, *Outreach Specialist*, and Corey Bacon, *Outreach Forester, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*, and Ricky Johnson, *Animal and Livestock Specialist, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

This presentation explores a sustainable land use approach that combines livestock, trees, and crops to improve productivity, biodiversity, and resilience

in herd management. By working with nature rather than against it, we aim to provide the best management practices for your farm enterprise.

Breakout Session 3-Events Ballroom

Presentation Title: Stress Management and Record Keeping

Facilitator: Dr. Kimberly Smith-Russ, *Family and Consumer Science Specialist, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Speakers: LaTina Williams and Tracy Harness, *Area Family and Consumer Science Educator, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Explore proactive strategies to mitigate farm stress, foster resilience, and enhance the well-being of farm families. Discover how effective record-keeping can enhance financial and operational management, ultimately easing stress and supporting long-term farm sustainability.

Breakout Session 4- Agricultural Demonstrations (Outdoor Tent)

Presentation Title: “Soaring Toward Sustainability: How Drones Are Transforming Small Farms”

Facilitator: Sheba Moses, *Extension Associate, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Speaker: Margeria Smith, *Alcorn State Extension Associate, Southern SARE Program Assistant, and Licensed Drone Pilot, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Location: Washington County Convention Center Arena, Greenville, MS

This presentation introduces small farmers to the decisive role of drone technology in modern agriculture. Drones, once seen as high-tech tools for large operations, are now affordable, accessible, and practical for small-scale farms. Attendees will learn how drones can be used for crop monitoring, soil health assessments, precision spraying, and livestock observation, all while promoting sustainable practices that reduce inputs and protect the environment.

Presentation Title: Exploring Forestry through Innovation and Technology

Facilitator: Corey Bacon, *Wildlife Management and Outreach Specialist, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*

Speakers: Freddie Davis, *Director and Forester*; Darren Beachem, *State Coordinator and Forester, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*

We will examine how landowners in the South support entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology through forestry practices. Small forest landowners can engage in various entrepreneurial activities beyond traditional timber harvesting, such as sustainable forestry techniques, harvesting, site preparation, prescribed burning, and tree farm certification.

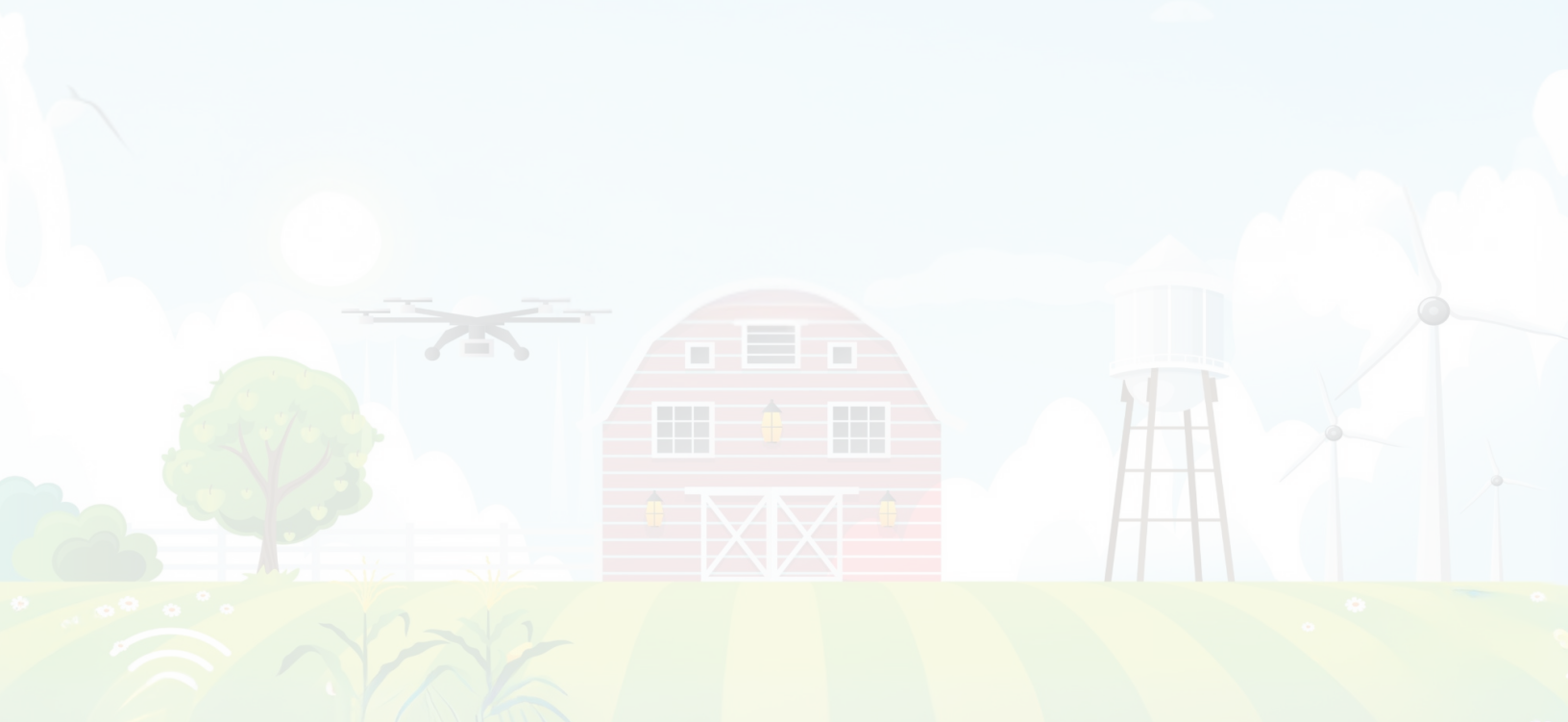
Sustainable forestry methods can help maintain the health of forest ecosystems while also providing economic benefits. Effective management of forest resources involves essential steps such as harvesting and site preparation. When conducted properly, prescribed burning can reduce the risk of wildfires and promote the growth of certain plant species. If you would like to learn more about a specific area or obtain more detailed information on these practices, please contact the staff at the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives.

4:45 p.m. Reconvene, Ballroom

5:00 p.m. Announcements and Overview of Day Two Activities

6:30 P.M. Networking Reception Outdoor Tent

DINNER ON YOUR OWN



Tuesday, September 23, 2025

6:30 a.m. Sunrise Grab & Go Breakfast
Grand Ballroom
8:30 a.m. Depart the Hotel for Learning Sites
8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Agricultural Outdoor Learning Sites

Site 1: Sustainable Horticultural Best Management Practices and Field Site Tours

Speakers: John Coleman, Farm Manager, Dr. Emran Ali, Horticulture Specialist, Dr. Frank Mrema, Assistant Professor, Dr. Idowu Atoloye, Assistant Professor, Carolyn Banks, Food Safety Specialist, and Azali Muhammad, Drone Director

Facilitators: Kelvin King, *Area Agricultural Extension Educator, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Location: Extension Research & Technology Transfer Center, Mound Bayou, MS

Participants will learn effective crop and soil management strategies to maximize production and yield. They will also become familiar with the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, which use various tools and strategies to identify and manage pests. Presentations will include the utilization of agricultural waste to improve soil health and livestock feed efficiency, sugarcane syrup processing, and shiitake mushroom inoculation. Additionally, a live aerial drone demonstration will showcase the benefits of adopting new technology for small farmers.

Site 2: Herd Health Management, Forage Production, and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Conservation Practices

Speakers: Jeremy Dixon, Outreach Specialist, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Corey Bacon, Outreach Forester, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Ricky Johnson, Animal and Livestock Specialist, Alcorn State University Extension Program; and Dr. Derris Burnett, Associate Professor & Head, Tuskegee University

Facilitators: Joe Barnes, Outreach Specialist, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

Location: Washington County Convention Center Arena, Greenville, MS

Participants will gain valuable insights into livestock production and animal management. The program will feature hands-on demonstrations on cattle handling, administering vaccinations and deworming, trimming goat hooves, and offering health tips. It will also cover best management practices, improving herd genetics, exploring alternative production methods, and enhancing winter pasture forage. Ultimately, the program aims to equip farmers with the knowledge and tools necessary for efficient and safe farm management, thereby increasing productivity.

Eco-Resilience from Farm to Fork: Developing a Robust Mobile Meat Processing Network for the value-added Small Ruminant industry in the Southeast

Dr. Burnett has developed a mobile fabrication demonstration system aimed at educating small and resource-limited farmers on how to enhance the value and profitability of their meat animal operations through retained ownership and direct marketing. These initiatives led to his appointment as the Director of the Tuskegee University Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA) and as an end-user consultant for the construction of a new red meat processing facility on Tuskegee's historic campus. This combination of brick-and-mortar and mobile processing infrastructure, along with the team's scholarly expertise and practical experience, has positioned Tuskegee as a leading institution for Meat Science research, training, and outreach. Dr. Burnett will discuss innovative approaches to optimize the final steps in the production cycle, which include mobile processing, value-added processing, and marketing of meat products.

Site 3: Women In Business and Entrepreneur Showcase Site

Speaker: Nicole A. Bell, Owner, *The Food Safety Lady, LLC*

Location: Washington County Convention Center, Greenville, MS

Theme: *Women Visionaries: Rewriting Rules, Breaking Barriers and Building Legacies"*

Women in Business provides resources and support for small businesses and their owners. It is specifically designed to help you grow and become more visible and have access to the support you need to take your business to the next level of success. This session will provide exclusive speaker presentations and showcase opportunities for women in business.

6:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. **Farmer's Award Banquet**
Harlow's Casino and Resort, Ballroom



Wednesday, September 24, 2025- 2nd Plenary Session

7:00 a.m. Breakfast Buffet
Grand Ballroom

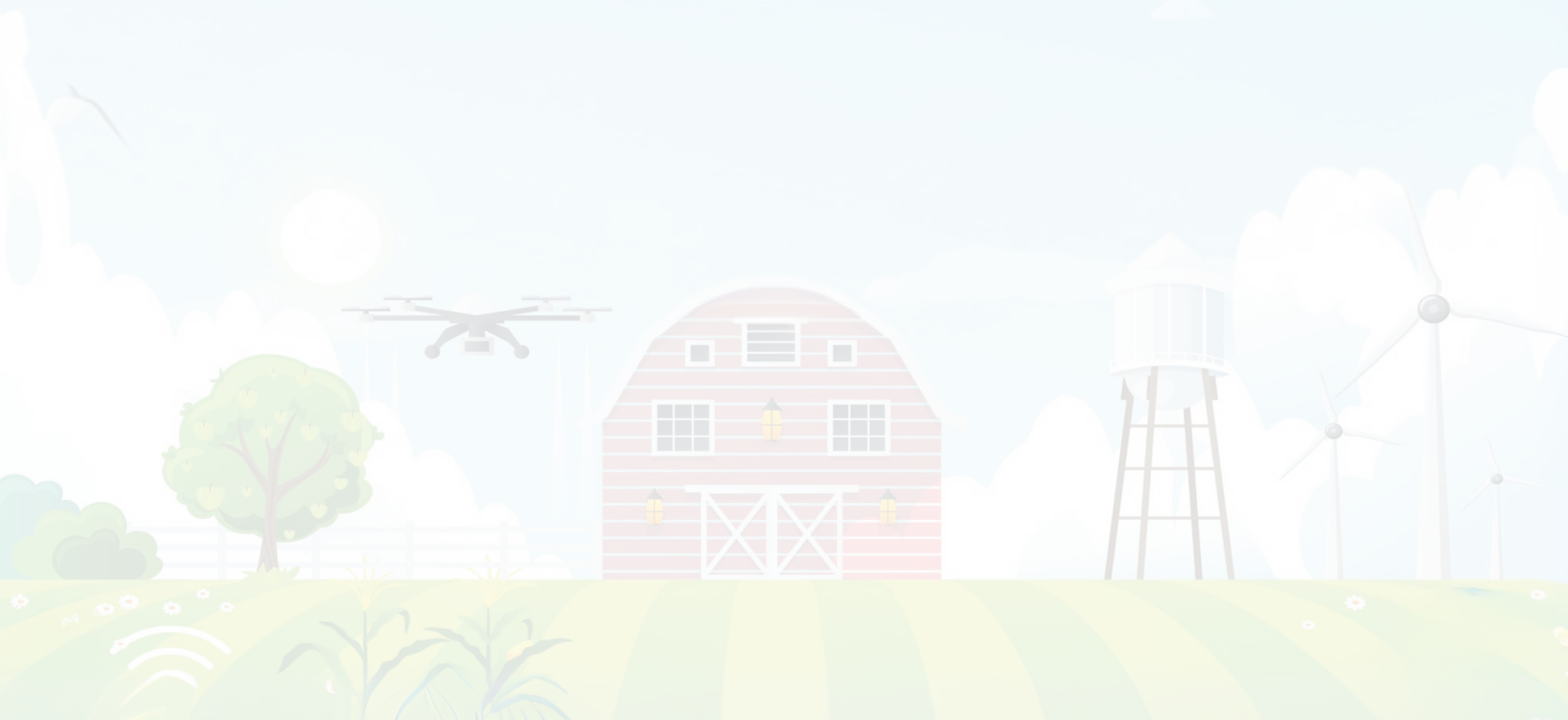
8:30 a.m.-11:45 a.m. Agriculture and Small Farm Families Session
Grand Ballroom

Presiding: Kelvin King, *Area Agricultural Extension Educator, Alcorn State University Extension Program*

Welcome Tremell Sherman, *Agriculture Outreach Specialist Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*

8:35 a.m.- 9:20 a.m. **Learning the Agribusiness Way**
Speaker: *Darrell Tennie, The Tennie Group, LLC, Raleigh, NC*

The Tennie Agriculture Group specializes in tax and accounting services tailored for farmers, ranchers, and agribusiness men and women. With a deep understanding of the unique financial challenges within the agricultural industry, they provide strategic solutions to help producers achieve sustainability, scalability, and long-term profitability. This session will cover essential topics, including tax compliance for agribusiness operations, navigating Schedule F, selecting the right entity structure for your farm, and improving financial literacy for farmers, ranchers, and veterans. Whether you are just starting or looking to optimize your agribusiness finances, this presentation will provide valuable insights to help you make informed financial decisions.



9:30 a.m.- 10:15 a.m. Keeping it in the Family: Legal
Strategies to Address the Challenges of Heirs' Property

*Speaker: Attorney Andrea Barnes, Director of the Heirs' Property Campaign,
Mississippi Center for Justice, Jackson, Mississippi*

Heirs' property encompasses an array of challenges, including the ability of one to obtain a clear title. For many, the complexities of heirs' property issues may seem daunting. Because of this, it is important to understand the umbrella of issues, evaluate best practices, and understand the law to ensure a successful outcome.

10:20 a.m.- 10:55 a.m. From Farms to Families:
Building Stronger Communities Through Agriculture

*Speaker: Donald Green, Sr., Executive Director, Mississippi Delta Council for
Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc.*

This session highlights the vital role of farmers and community leaders in creating stronger, more self-reliant communities. Discover how local agriculture can drive economic growth, improve food access, and empower the next generation.

Recognition of Special Guests/Announcements

Closing Remarks

*Darnella Winston, Small Farmers Conference Co-Chair
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*

*Gerald W. Jones, Small Farmers Conference, Co-Chair
Alcorn State University Extension Program*

*Ben F. Burkett, State Coordinator
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives*

*Dr. Franklin Chukwuma, Associate Director for Extension
Alcorn State University Extension*

Grab & Go Lunch



Keynote Speaker
Dr. Alton Thompson

Executive Director, Association of 1890 Research Directors



Alton Thompson, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD). In his role, Dr. Thompson provides leadership and coordination in representing the Association as it develops regional, multistate, and national research priorities, while also implementing a regional response for the 1890 region. He promotes, articulates, and advocates for the priorities of the 1890 regional research agenda within the national framework established by the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), other federal agencies, and the Association of Public and Land-Grant

Universities (APLU). He also serves in an executive capacity on several committees and working groups that focus on legislative issues, federal and private funding for 1890 regional/multistate research, and the long-term direction of both traditional and emerging initiatives at 1890 universities.

Before joining ARD in August 2016, Dr. Thompson held several prestigious positions. He served for seven years as Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at Delaware State University. Additionally, he spent eight years as a tenured professor, Dean, and Executive Director for Agricultural Programs in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University, followed by two years as Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Dr. Thompson earned his bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central University and both his master's degree and doctorate from Ohio State University.

His academic specialty lies in the intersection of statistics, research methods, demography, and rural sociology. Dr. Thompson has published 25 articles in peer-reviewed journals, contributed seven chapters to books, and authored a book titled "Quality of Life among Rural Residents in North Carolina: Community and Life Satisfaction." His research interests include agromedicine, rural poverty and development, labor economics, and the structure of agriculture. Through his efforts in securing grants, he has successfully obtained over \$15 million in extramural research funding.

The Spirit of Courage Award
Honorable Retired Senator David L. Jordan
District 12 – Bolivar, Coahoma, and Washington Counties



In his biography, *From the Cotton Fields to State Senator*, David Jordan detailed his beginnings and thirst for knowledge. Born during the Great Depression in the Mississippi Delta, the son of a sharecropper, Jordan recalled walking four miles to school.

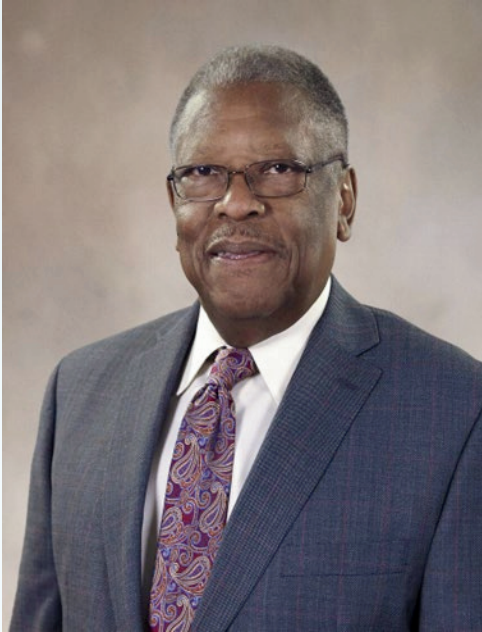
One year, he did not start until December, while the city kids started months earlier. “When the teacher asked where I had been, I told her picking cotton. The city kids laughed”, he recalled, noting country kids didn't start until the cotton was picked. He worked hard to pursue an education, including washing dishes on the night shift at the Holiday Inn.

Jordan attended Mississippi Valley State University all the while helping to raise four children with his wife. He eventually headed to graduate school at the University of Wyoming and taught chemistry for three decades in a Mississippi public school. Jordan said students do better when expectations are clearly outlined.

He became the first black man to serve on the Greenwood City Council in 1985, a position he held for 36 years. David Jordan ran for the Senate in 1993 and has held the chair there for 32 years. Jordan’s dedication to public service was highlighted during a speech by his son, a doctor in Tennessee. He said his father served 30 years in the classroom, 30 on the Greenwood City Council, and 33 in the Mississippi Senate. His son said his father never had to approach the podium with a scandal or inappropriate behavior.

Jordan said he is writing a new book, this one titled *Potholes of Life*, with the hope of helping the next generation of youth make smart life choices. “I’ve been knocked around, I’ve been kicked around, Jordan said. “But I still love people.”

Community Impact Award
Honorable Willie Simmons
Central District Transportation Commissioner



Willie Simmons served as a Mississippi State Senator for over 26 years, including 8 years as Chairman of the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee.

Under his leadership, more than \$5 billion was allocated to the construction and improvement of federal and state roads, county and municipal streets, and bridges.

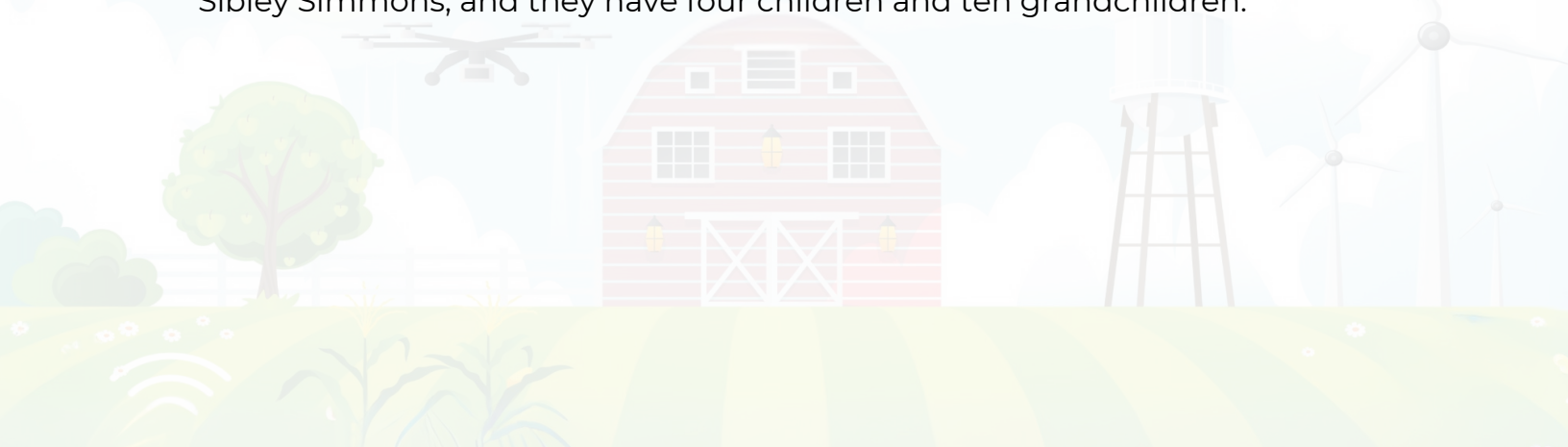
Additionally, millions of dollars were invested in public transit, ports, railroads, airports, and other infrastructure support systems.

He played a key role in important projects, including the repair of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge in Jackson, the upgrade and repair of Highway 8 in Cleveland, and the Highway 82 Bypass in Leland, among many others.

He also held the positions of Chairman of the Corrections Committee and Vice Chairman of the Public Health and Welfare Committee.

Before his time in the Mississippi State Senate, Simmons served as the Deputy Commissioner of Corrections. He is also a combat veteran of the Vietnam War.

Simmons graduated from Alcorn State University and earned both an M.S. Degree and an Ed.S. Degree from Delta State University. He is married to Rose Sibley Simmons, and they have four children and ten grandchildren.



The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
2nd Congressional District, Mississippi
Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security



Congressman Bennie G. Thompson is an elected member of the United States House of Representatives, representing Mississippi's 2nd Congressional District. He took office on April 20, 1993.

A proud native of Bolton, Mississippi, Congressman Thompson views it as an honor to serve his constituents and advocate for civil rights, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and property rights.

Currently serving his 16th term, he is the longest-serving African American elected official in Mississippi and the only Democrat in the state's congressional delegation.

His journey in public service began with his involvement in the civil rights movement. In 1965, he joined civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer in her campaign for Congress, which sparked his passion for activism as he witnessed systemic oppression in Mississippi.

During his college years at Tougaloo College, he worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He served as a field organizer for Hamer's Congressional campaign, where he hosted voter registration drives for African Americans.

Congressman Thompson has been married to his college sweetheart, London Johnson of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, for 54 years. Together, they have one daughter, one granddaughter, and one grandson.

He is a lifelong member of the Asbury United Methodist Church in Bolton, Mississippi. Congressman Thompson earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Tougaloo College, where he was inducted into the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. (Gamma Rho, 1967). He also holds a Master of Science degree in Educational Administration from Jackson State University.

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