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BLACK FARMERS AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS WHERE THEY LIVE: SOME POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT Black farmers tend to live in southern counties where nonfarm employment opportunities are limited. These counties have grown slowly, much more slowly than southern metropolitan areas. In counties with concentrations of black farmers, blacks face severe economic and social conditions. They have a higher incidence of poverty, less education, and higher unemployment than other blacks in the South. In addition, blacks in these counties lag far behind whites in socioeconomic status. Economic growth and socioeconomic conditions in counties with black farmers vary considerably by region. Strategies to address the black farm crisis must consider both the characteristics of black farmers, such as their advanced age, and the economic and social conditions of areas where they live.

Introduction

Decreasing numbers of black farmers and the problems the remaining black farmers face have been discussed extensively in the literature. Some people fear that black farmers will all but disappear. Most research on black farmers focuses on the characteristics of black farmers or of their farms; however, black farmers have other problems. Black farmers tend to be concentrated in areas with severe social and economic problems. Proposals to help black farmers should consider both the characteristics of the farmers themselves and local economic and social conditions because strategies that work in one locality may fail in others.

This article builds upon our recent work on the social and economic conditions in the counties where black farmers live (Hoppe et al. 1986). First, it reviews the relevant literature to provide background. Second, it identifies counties containing black farmers and delineates regions from these counties. Third, it examines the characteristics of black farmers and the economic and social conditions in these counties. Finally, it presents policy implications that consider both the characteristics of black farmers and the characteristics of the areas in which they live.[1]

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[1] These implications developed from comments received during presentations at the Congressional Black Caucus Workshop in 1986, the USDA Working Group on Small Farm Resources Development in 1986, and the annual meeting of the Southern Rural Sociological Association in 1987.

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Background

Blacks have a long history in American agriculture. They were originally imported as slaves to work the land, and emancipation did not significantly change their dependence upon the land (Beale 1976). Although the number of blacks in U.S. agriculture has declined dramatically since the early twentieth century, black farmers still maintain a presence in the South.

Many studies document the characteristics of black farmers or the decrease in their numbers or both (Banks 1986; Beale 1976; Christy 1986; Coleman and Hall 1979; Demissie 1986; Lewis 1976; Munoz 1984; United States Commission on Civil Rights 1982). The decrease in number of black farmers has been dramatic -- from a high of about 926,000 in 1920 to slightly over 57,000 by 1978 (Banks 1986). The remaining black farmers are generally older, operate smaller farms, and are less well educated than white farmers. Although black farmers historically were mainly tenants or sharecroppers, less than 16 percent were tenants by 1978.

One important cause of the decline in black farmers was the mechanization of agriculture, particularly cotton (Neal and Jones 1950; Beale 1976), which dramatically reduced the amount of agricultural labor required in the South. By the 1950s tractors, pickers, and herbicides had released thousands of black tenants from their farms.[2] Interestingly, the potential impact of mechanization was recognized at its inception in the 1930s (Johnson et al. 1935, pp. 43-4):

> There is impending a violent revolution in cotton production as a result of the development of the mechanical cotton picker. Cotton has awaited this event with the eagerness that it awaited the development of the gin. When it comes it will automatically release hundreds of thousands of cotton workers particularly in the Southeast, creating a new range of social problems.

The decline in black farmers also was hastened by discrimination and other institutional factors. For example, some have argued that other government agencies have not done all they should to help minority farmers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1982). In addition, many black farmers lost their land through technically legal partition or tax sales (Graber 1978; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1982, pp. 65-9).[3]

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[2] The movement of substantial numbers of blacks from the South began before the mechanization of cotton. During the Great Migration from 1910 through 1930, about 10 percent of the southern black population left the South (Marks 1985). Marks (1985) argues that contrary to common belief, the blacks who moved from the South during this early migration were largely from southern cities rather than from the rural South.

Not all studies of black farmers focus on their decreasing numbers. Some (Brown and Larson 1979; Taylor 1962) have examined the characteristics of black farmers who succeed. According to Brown and Larson (1979), successful black farmers

- prefer farming as an occupation,
- have a strong work orientation,
- have access to land,
- are committed to learning management skills,
- are involved with farm and nonfarm organizations and activities, and
- have strong family support and high educational goals for their children.

Researchers have also examined measures to help small farmers in general (and black farmers in particular) remain on the land.[4] Some strategies emphasize measures to help small or black farmers become more efficient. Some analysts, however, question whether many of the remaining small black-operated forms would ever be able to provide an adequate income. According to Munoz (1984, p. 20):

> Off-farm income may be the best alternative to help some black farmers earn higher income. Operators' and household members' participation in the off-farm work force may be enhanced through training and improving job skills. While off-farm work may not be a panacea for all black farmers, it is one alternative that may help keep blacks on the farm.

We agree that nonfarm work may help keep some blacks on the farm.[5] If facilitating nonfarm work is to be considered as a policy option, knowledge of local economic and social conditions is essential. The availability of nonfarm work may vary geographically, depending on local conditions.

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[3] Black-owned land is often inherited without a will and conveyed to members of an extended family; the whereabouts of some heirs may be unknown. In a partition sale, one owner (or more) requests that the court auction off the land in order to liquidate his or her interest in the property; the family may then lose the land to an unrelated bidder. Tax sales may occur when the heir actually living on the land dies and no one pays the taxes on the land (Graber 1978; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights 1982).

[4] For discussions of strategies to help small or black farmers, see Carlin and Houston (1981), Turner and Patterson (1987), Williams (1985), and Yeboah et al. (1986).

[5] Actually, black farmers are already heavily involved in nonfarm work. More than half of all black farmers were principally employed in nonfarm work in 1982 (Banks 1987).

Data and procedures

County data on the number and location of black farmers presented here are from unpublished special tabulations of the 1978 Census of Agriculture.[6] Income and employment data for counties came from the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the Department of Commerce. Social and economic data on blacks and whites came from the 1970 and 1980 decennial censuses.

Secondary data used in this study do not permit a direct examination of all the social and economic factors that blacks may have experienced in these counties. Nevertheless, the social and economic statistics examined here do reflect the history of farm and nonfarm blacks.

County selection

In this study, we identified 342 nonmetropolitan southern[7] counties with 25 or more black-operated farms in 1978. In 1978, these 342 counties contained 71.8 percent of the southern black farmers for whom county data were available. The severe social and economic conditions in the study counties will become apparent when these counties are compared with other southern counties, both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan. Discrepancies in well-being between blacks and whites among the different types of counties are also pointed out.

The use of only 25 black farmers as the cutoff to select study counties reflects the dramatic decline of blacks in agriculture. We originally intended to limit the study to counties with heavier concentrations of black farmers. But such a limitation would have drastically reduced the number of black farmers covered. For example, restricting the study to counties with 100 or more black farmers and where at least 20 percent of the farmers were black would have reduced the number of study counties to 31 and the percentage of black farmers covered to only 17.7 percent of the total for which county data were available. Restricting the study to counties with heavier concentrations of black farmers would not have accurately identified the local social and economic conditions experienced by most black farmers.

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[6] The special tabulations summarized the data for black farmers in a given county. They did not provide information about individual black farmers.

[7] In this analysis, nonmetropolitan counties are counties that lie outside Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas designated by the Office of Management and Budget as of 1974. The South includes Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The regions

The 342 study counties are spread over a wide area from the South Atlantic coast to eastern Texas and Oklahoma. To study the resulting geographic variation in social and economic conditions, we tried grouping the study counties in different ways, including most common commodity type[8] of black-operated farms, number of black farmers, percentage of farmers who were black, degree of urbanization, and percentage of personal income from farming. Classification by most common commodity type of black farm was most satisfactory.[9] Only this classification resulted in county groups with substantial differences in economic, demographic, and black farm statistics.

Historically, black farmers specialized in cotton, followed by tobacco, and then general farming where no single farm commodity provided at least 50 percent of sales (Banks 1986, 1987). In recent years, however, very few black farmers remained in cotton production. Blacks have done better in retaining their position in tobacco farming because of the small amount of land required, the ability to use family labor, lack of competition from other areas, and the protection afforded by tobacco support programs. Tobacco is especially important to black farmers who have high sales of farm products (Banks 1986, 1987). By 1978, most black farmers in the study counties specialized in beef cattle, other livestock, tobacco, or cash grain.

We identified four major geographic aggregations of counties that differed in commodity specialization by black farmers (Fig. 1). Most of the study counties were sorted into the following regions:

- Atlantic Tobacco (51 counties in parts of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia)
- Delta Crop (34 counties in parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi)
- East South Central (ESC) Beef (62 counties in parts of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi)
- East Texas Beef (55 counties in parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)

The 140 remaining study counties did not fall into neat groups and were left unclassified. Because the unclassified counties had no common black commodity specialization and ranged across the South, they were not analyzed as a separate group. Forty-one percent of the study counties were left unclassified, but these unclassified counties held only 30 percent of the black farmers residing in study counties.

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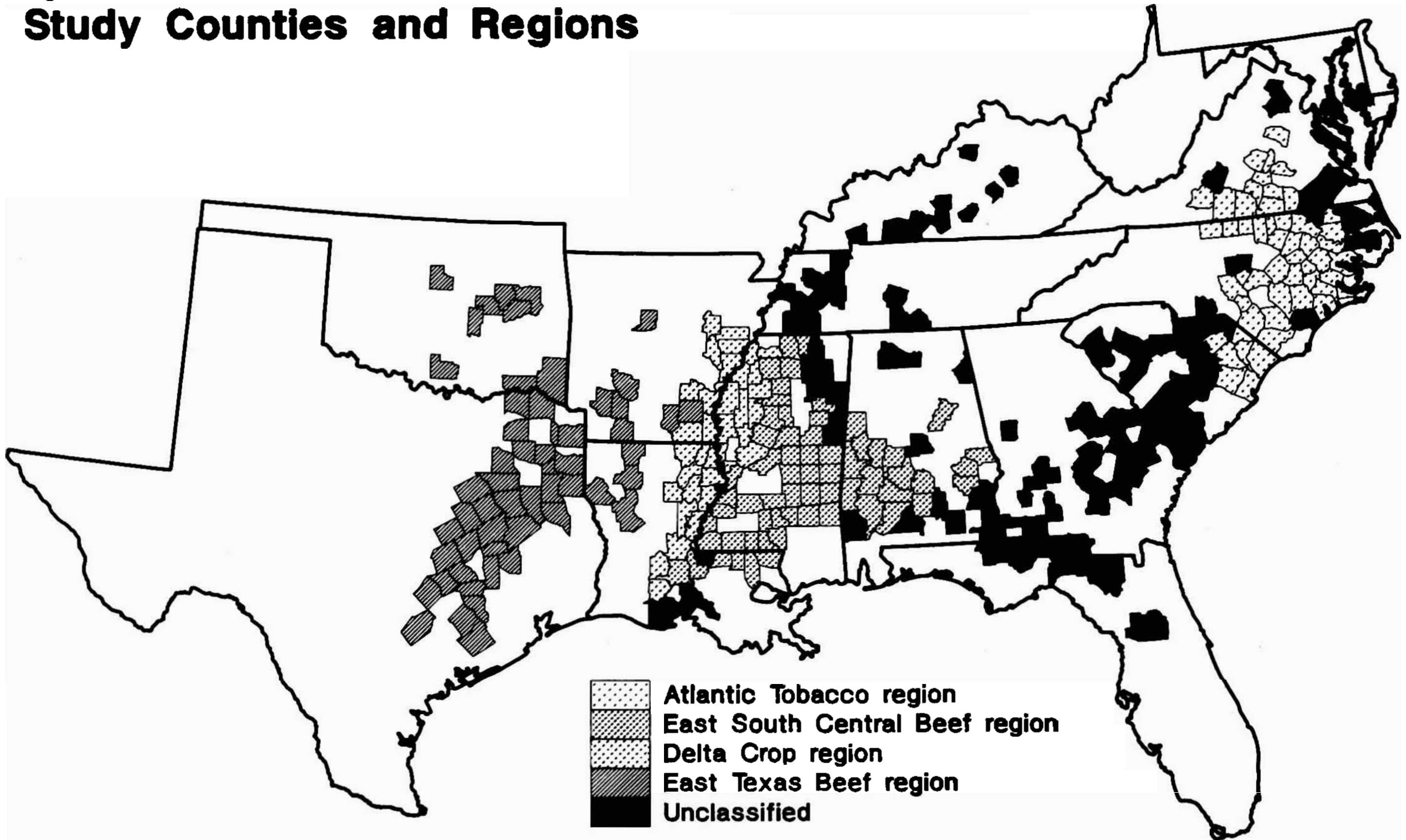
[8] The Census Bureau classifies each farm by commodity type on the basis of the commodity or group of commodities accounting for at least 50 percent of its total sales of farm products.

[9] In our classification scheme, a county did not need to produce a minimum amount of a given commodity. The only criteria was that blacks specialize in the commodity.

Figure 1

Study Counties and Regions



Findings[10]

Characteristics of black-operated farms, 1978

Blacks operated 9.7 percent of the farms in the study counties (Table 1), compared with only 5.4 percent of the farms in the South as a whole (Banks 1986). The black share of farms, however, ranged from 4.9 percent in the East Texas Beef region to 15.6 percent in the ESC Beef region.

Perhaps the most striking characteristics of the surviving black-operated farms were their small size and the advanced age of their operators. Farms operated by blacks were small in both acreage and sales. In the study counties, black-operated farms averaged 99 acres, compared with 258 acres for all farms. Less than 5 percent of black-operated farms sold more than $40,000 of agricultural products in 1978, and only 10 percent exceeded $20,000. Almost half of black-operated farms in the study counties sold less than $2,500 of farm products, compared with only one-quarter of all farms. Within each of the four regions, blacks operated relatively small farms, whether measured by area or sales. The largest size differences between black-operated and all farms occurred in the Delta crop region, reflecting the historic influence of the plantation system which characterized the area.

Proportionately fewer blacks were young (under 35 years old) and more were elderly (at least 65 years old) than farmers in general. The percentage of elderly black farmers was particularly high in the East Texas Beef (41.2 percent) and ESC Beef (38.4 percent) regions.

The age distribution of black farmers has serious implications for the future of blacks in agriculture (Banks 1987, p. 7):

> Because of this skewed age structure, we can safely assume that there will be further declines in the number of black farmers, unless conditions arise, or are created, to induce young blacks to enter farming to replace these older farmers as they die or retire. To my knowledge, no major programs exist, nor have any policy changes been proposed, that would facilitate such replacement.

Economic and social characteristics

The study counties differed economically and socially from other southern counties. Conditions in the study counties are first compared with conditions in other areas of the South. Regional variations among the study counties are then examined.

Study counties versus other counties: Although the 342 study counties contained few black farmers, they had large black populations. About 32.3 percent of all residents of the study counties were black in 1980, compared with 9.7

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[10] For more detailed data, see Hoppe et al. (1986).

Table 1: Selected Characteristics of Black Farmers and Black-Operated Farms in Study Counties by Region, 1978

	Study Regions				
	All study counties	Atlantic Tobacco	Delta Crop	ESC Beef	East Texas Beef
	Number				
Counties[1]	342	51	34	62	55
Black-operated farms	25,263	7,121	2,047	5,696	2,758
	Percent				
Black-operated farms as a share of all farms	9.7	13.2	11.2	15.6	4.9
	Acres				
Average farm size					
All farms	258	156	514	273	296
Black-operated farms	99	69	111	103	133
	Percent				
Farms with annual sales of					
$40,000 or more					
All farms	19.2	25.0	36.7	15.3	10.2
Black-operated farms	4.2	6.0	4.5	1.2	1.7
$20,000 or more					
All farms	29.4	40.2	47.7	21.4	17.1
Black-operated farms	10.2	16.4	12.2	3.0	3.4
Less than $2,500					
All farms	25.7	16.8	17.5	38.6	31.2
Black-operated farms	46.1	28.2	32.3	68.5	61.2
Farmers who are					
Under 35 years					
All farmers	13.8	15.3	18.2	11.8	10.7
Black farmers	7.6	7.3	10.6	6.0	5.0
At least 65					
All farmers	19.0	15.8	14.1	22.0	22.7
Black farmers	31.4	25.3	30.1	38.4	41.2

[1] Number of counties in the regions does not sum to the total because unclassified counties are not treated separately as a region.

Table 2: Selected Social and Economic Characteristics by Type of Southern County

	Nonmetro counties				
	Study	Other	Total	Metro counties	Total
	Number				
Counties	342	783	1,125	300	1,425
	Percent				
Blacks, 1980[1]	32.3	9.7	18.0	19.0	18.6
	Dollars				
Growth in per capita personal income, 1970-80	4,014	4,389	4.255	5,740	5,203
	Percent				
Growth rates, 1970-80:					
Population	13.7	20.4	17.9	21.3	20.0
Jobs	19.2	24.7	22.6	35.1	30.8
Per capita income	157.7	156.8	157.5	151.0	153.4
Poverty rate, 1979[2]					
Black	41.4	34.6	39.1	28.9	32.5
White	12.9	14.9	14.3	9.1	11.0
Graduated from high school, 1980[3]					
Black	32.3	36.2	33.6	51.0	45.0
White	55.5	52.8	53.6	69.3	63.5
Unemployment rate, 1980[4]					
Black	11.7	10.6	11.3	9.6	10.1
White	4.8	6.1	5.7	4.2	4.7
Labor force participation rate[5]					
Black	52.1	55.5	53.2	61.4	58.4
White	58.5	56.1	56.8	62.8	60.6

[1] Share of population.
[2] Share of noninstitutionalized population.
[3] Share of population at least 25 years old.
[4] Share of labor force.
[5] Share of population at least 16 years old, working or seeking work.

percent in other southern nonmetro counties and 19.0 percent in the metro South (Table 2). About two-thirds of southern nonmetro blacks lived in the study counties.

Numbers of jobs in the study counties tended to grow more slowly, than in the southern metro areas. This means it would be difficult for many limited-resource black farm families to supplement farm income with earnings from nonfarm jobs. population also grew more slowly in the study counties than in other nonmetro areas or metro areas of the South. Although per capita income grew at about the same rate in all county groups, the dollar increase in per capita income was smallest in the study counties.

Most blacks faced severe economic and social conditions in the study counties. They had a higher incidence of poverty, less education, and higher unemployment than other blacks in the South. For example, 41.4 percent of all blacks in the study counties were poor in 1979, compared with 34.6 percent in other southern nonmetro counties and 28.9 percent in southern metro counties. The black poverty rate exceeded 50 percent in 56 study counties, peaking at 67.2 percent in Tunica County, Mississippi.

Blacks also lagged behind whites in the study counties in economic well-being, as measured by poverty, unemployment, and labor force participation. Differences between blacks and whites in economic well-being were far larger in the study counties than elsewhere in the South. For example, the poverty rate for blacks exceeded the rate for whites by almost 29 percentage points in the study counties, compared with a difference of about 20 percentage points in other nonmetro and metro counties in the South.

Geographic variation: Economic growth and economic conditions varied considerably among the study regions (Table 3). Conditions were worst for blacks in the Delta Crop region, where about 56.3 percent of blacks lived in poverty. In addition, blacks in the Delta had the highest unemployment rate, the lowest high school graduation rate, and the lowest labor force participation rate for blacks. This region also had the highest percentage of blacks in its population.

The Delta Crop region lost population from 1970 to 1980 when much of nonmetro America gained population. Employment grew only 4.4 percent in the Delta between 1970 and 1980, compared with 19.2 percent for all the study counties. In percentage terms, per capita income grew at about the same rate in the Delta Crop region as for all study counties; however, the region's per capita income growth was low when measured in dollars.

In contrast, conditions were much better in the fastest growing region, the East Texas Beef region. The number of jobs grew by 29.9 percent between 1970 and 1980, or nearly seven times as fast as in the Delta Crop region. Population grew by 20.4 percent in the East Texas Beef region during the same period, compared with the loss in the Delta Crop region. Per capita income grew by 184 percent between 1970 and 1980, or 25 percentage points more than in the Delta Crop region. Although the black poverty rate was high in the East Texas Beef region, it was 16 percentage points

Table 3: Selected Social and Economic Characteristics, Statistics, by Region.

	All study counties	Study regions: Atlantic Tobacco	Delta Crop	ESC Beef	East Texas Beef
	Number				
Counties[1]	342	51	34	62	55
	Percent				
Blacks, 1980[2]	32.3	34.1	44.7	41.4	19.8
	Dollars				
Growth in per capita personal income, 1970-1980	4,014	3,879	3,533	3,770	4,771
	Percent				
Growth rates, 1970-80:					
Population	13.7	14.1	-1.2	9.9	20.4
Jobs	19.2	17.7	4.4	13.2	29.9
Per capita income	157.7	143.6	159.0	164.8	184.0
Poverty rate, 1979[3]					
Black	41.4	36.3	56.3	46.1	39.9
White	12.9	11.7	15.9	14.1	12.9
Graduated from high school, 1980[4]					
Black	32.3	34.8	25.3	31.0	36.8
White	55.5	54.5	54.0	60.2	55.9
Unemployment rate, 1980[5]					
Black	11.7	11.3	15.1	13.4	8.9
White	4.8	4.6	5.0	4.9	3.8
Labor force participation rate[6]					
Black	52.1	56.2	43.8	48.6	48.0
White	58.5	62.1	54.4	55.7	55.2

[1] Number of counties in the regions does not sum to the total because unclassified counties are not treated separately as a region.
[2] Share of population.
[3] Share of noninstitutionalized population.
[4] Share of population at least 25 years old.
[5] Share of labor force.
[6] Share of population at least 16 years old, either working or seeking work.

lower than in the Delta. The black unemployment rate was also 6 percentage points lower in the East Texas Beef region than in the Delta Crop region.

Whites were better off than blacks in all study regions in 1980; however, racial differences in poverty, unemployment, and educational attainment were greater in the Delta Crop and ESC Beef regions than elsewhere. The racial difference in the labor force participation rate was largest in the Delta; the difference for the ESC Beef region was closer to the differences in the two other regions.

Discussion and recommendations

Some of the problems faced by black farmers can be summarized from the information presented here. Black farmers have smaller farms and are more likely to be advanced in age than farmers in general. Black farmers also are concentrated in areas with severe social and economic problems. They tend to live in slowly growing areas where opportunities to supplement farm income with earnings from nonfarm employment are limited. Economic growth, however, varies substantially by region, ranging from rapid in the East Texas Beef region to slow in the Delta Crop region.

Blacks in the study counties have a higher incidence of poverty, less education, less participation in the labor market, and a higher unemployment rate than blacks in other southern counties. Disparities between blacks and whites are greater in the study counties than elsewhere in the South, especially in the Delta Crop and ESC Beef regions.

What policies do these data imply for black farmers? The major policy conclusion is this: Measures to address the decrease in numbers of black farmers must consider both the characteristics of black farmers and the social and economic conditions of the areas in which they live. Perhaps the most ominous characteristic of blacks in agriculture is the advanced age of many black farmers. According to Banks (1987, p. 18), "Strategies developed to improve the plight of small farmers generally, and black farmers in particular, should take into account the difference between the needs of younger and older farmers." Thus, black farmers can be divided into three age groups as a framework for discussion of public policy options:

- The elderly (at least 65 years old) or those approaching retirement age
- Those who are younger and actively engaged in farming
- Young people considering farming as a career

Local area characteristics have particularly important implications for people in the last two groups because they are young enough to benefit from opportunities in the local nonfarm economy.

Older farmers

Older black farmers with low incomes are not likely to participate in, or benefit from, traditional farm programs, rural development programs, educational programs, or job

creation programs. This is true regardless of the characteristics of the areas where they live.

If older blacks can continue to farm on a small scale, however, their farms can provide them with in-kind income in the form of shelter and food as well as some cash. Although in-kind income is difficult to capture in statistics, it can be important.

In addition, income transfer programs directed specifically toward the elderly (Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicare) are critically important. Changes in these transfer programs will have a far greater effect on older black farmers than changes in any other kinds of programs.

For example, the asset limits of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program currently do not count income-producing property used to produce either in-kind or cash income. Thus, low-income elderly farmers can continue to receive cash and in-kind income from their farms without giving up eligibility for SSI. Tightening of the asset limitation on SSI might force some elderly farmers off their farms. In some areas, this might also affect local business where elderly farmers trade.

Active farmers

Younger and more active black farmers could benefit from programs to help them increase both farm and nonfarm income. These would include expanded traditional farm management programs of the Extension Service, credit programs of the Farmers Home Administration, soil management programs of the Soil Conservation Service, and educational programs for black farmers run by land-grant institutions.

They would also include a whole host of other programs to help black farmers and members of their families prepare for and find better paying jobs in the nonfarm sector of their communities. Because many people living on small farms depend on nonfarm jobs for most of their income, increased off-farm work opportunities for black farmers may do more to enable blacks to continue farming than any expansion of traditional farm programs. Rapid growth in some areas, such as the East Texas Beef region during the 1970s, may create enough new jobs without any public intervention. In slower growing areas, however, rural development programs designed to increase nonfarm job opportunities could play a major role in helping black farmers find supplemental work. More education and job training in areas where black farmers live could help both farm and nonfarm people find jobs. Nevertheless, despite the potential importance of rural development, educational, and job-training programs, the Nation's traditional commodity programs are still important to tobacco farmers and black farmers who operate larger farms.

Slow employment growth and continued population loss in some areas, such as the Delta, suggest that black farmers cannot always rely on off-farm employment to supplement

their farm income. Making black-operated farms viable in such areas should have a high priority. Success in the Delta hinges on providing black farm operators with access to enough resources and technical assistance to enable them to effectively manage full-time farms.

The future for blacks in agriculture does not appear bright in slow-growing areas like the Delta. Younger, better educated black farmers with employment options may conclude that their economic future is brighter with nonfarm jobs in faster growing areas. Unless local economic conditions improve, both on and off farm, retaining blacks in general and black farmers in particular in slow-growing areas will be difficult. The large and obvious differences in economic well-being between blacks and whites also may encourage blacks to leave areas like the Delta Crop or ESC Beef regions.

The most helpful policy for younger farmers who decide to leave farming may be to encourage economic growth to provide jobs in depressed rural areas. More educational and job training opportunities in these areas could also help black farmers make the transition to nonfarm work. Some educational efforts could be directed toward preparing black farmers for self-employment rather than wage and salary jobs. Black farmers already have management skills learned in operating their farms. These skills could be augmented by programs in entrepreneurial training and business management through the 1890 land-grant colleges, vocational schools, community colleges, and the Extension Service. Self-employment in industries related to agriculture would be logical, given black farmers' background. Training for self-employment may be particularly important in areas where job growth has been slow.

The young

Young blacks considering careers in agriculture need to assess their prospects for success, to compare opportunities in agriculture with opportunities in the nonfarm sector, and to judge whether they could profitably combine farm and nonfarm activities. Educational and counseling programs to help them sort out and implement their best alternatives could be of great value. Some young blacks may decide their best career opportunities lie in industries allied with production agriculture. Young blacks who want to go into farming or start businesses related to agriculture may need help in finding capital.

Because opportunities in the farm and nonfarm sector vary geographically -- for example, combining farm and nonfarm work is more feasible in growing than in stagnant areas -- young blacks' decisions will vary from place to place.

A final note

Finally, a potential controversy may arise from the

policy implications discussed here. The research presented suggests that some blacks could increase their economic well-being by combining farm and nonfarm work or by leaving farming altogether. Although these conclusions may seem obvious, solutions that involve nonfarm employment for black (or white) farmers are not universally accepted.

Willard W. Cochrane (1986, p. 275) aptly summarized this lack of acceptance in a recent article on the relationship between farm policy and rural poverty:

> The goal of most farm leaders has been to turn each low-production farm into a prosperous adequate-sized production unit -- this in spite of the fact that the U. S. farm economy has been in a surplus situation most of the time since 1952. The development of programs to 1) train low-production farmers for nonfarm jobs and 2) then create nonfarm jobs has been avoided like the plague by farm leaders and farm spokesmen.

Some commonly held agrarian beliefs partially explain why non-farm solutions are not viewed favorably. Many people believe that farming is a special way of life and that farmers have higher moral character than other people (Tweeten 1971, pp. 7-9). Also, they are convinced that farmers make good citizens and a large share of the population should be farmers. These beliefs can run counter to policies that involve nonfarm work for farmers, black or white, because such policies might result in farmers eventually leaving the farm.

Another concern that makes nonfarm solutions unacceptable to many people is the fear that black farmers may disappear. Some people will not accept policies that could encourage blacks to leave their farms and give up their land, for land is more than just an asset (Three Associated Black Institutions, p. 15):

> The black community is becoming a community without a land base, for the urban black is far more likely to be an apartment dweller, a tenant, than to be a home owner. Nor does the possession of intangible wealth provide one with the same sense of participation in the national patrimony as does ownership of real estate, a consideration which may be of some significance for a group which already has numerous reasons to feel itself to be a less-than-full participant in the American scheme.

Nevertheless, refusal to consider nonfarm employment limits the chances of effectively dealing with the problems that black farmers face. Selecting an effective mix of policies is difficult enough without restricting the strategies under consideration.

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