



# Data-Supported Policy Recommendations for USDA Food Insecurity-Related Programs



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# Presentation Overview

- History of collaboration with Alcorn Socially Disadvantaged Farmers & Ranchers Policy Research Center (SDFR)
- Farm Bill and USDA GusNIP
- How can this benefit rural grocers?
- Farmer Interview Overview
- Policy Recommendations to better incorporate farmers into GusNIP and Food is Medicine initiatives



# History of collaboration





## Purpose

Examine the demand for nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs by farmers in rural areas across Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, and to examine to what degree, if any, local farmers are currently incorporated into existing USDA Farm Bill funded produce prescription and nutrition incentive initiatives based on the 2018 Farm Bill changes.



## What is “GusNIP”?

### Nutrition Incentive

Brings together stakeholders from various parts of the food and healthcare systems to foster understanding of how they might improve the health and nutrition status of participating households.

Ex. “Double Up Bucks”

### Produce Prescription

Supports projects that demonstrate and evaluate the impact of fresh fruit and vegetable prescriptions to increase procurement and consumption of fruits and vegetables, reduce individual and household



**How can this benefit rural grocers?**



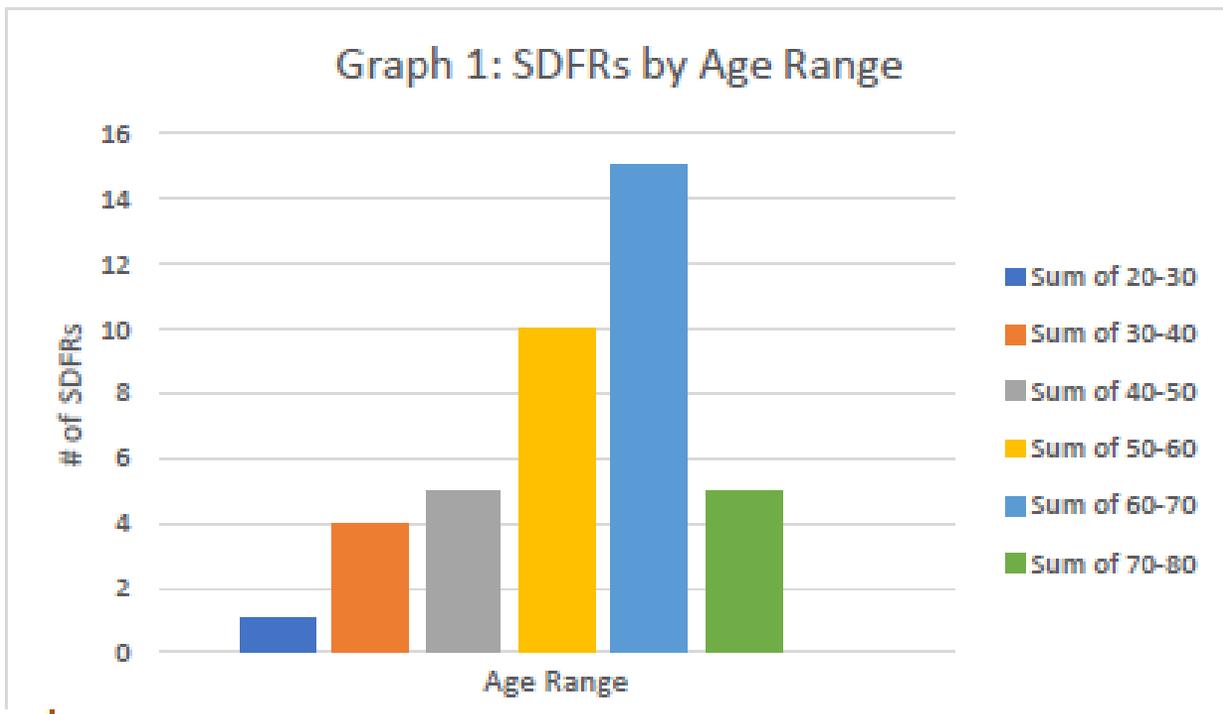
## Methods

- Two part analysis
  - Interviews and Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping to assess the demand for programs among socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
  - Interdisciplinary content analysis to assess language used in the existing USDA Requests for Applications (RFAs) between years 2019-2023 to determine the impact of the 2018 Farm Bill changes as they pertained to produce prescription, nutrition incentives, SNAP funding, and their inclusion of Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs).

# Farmer Interviewees

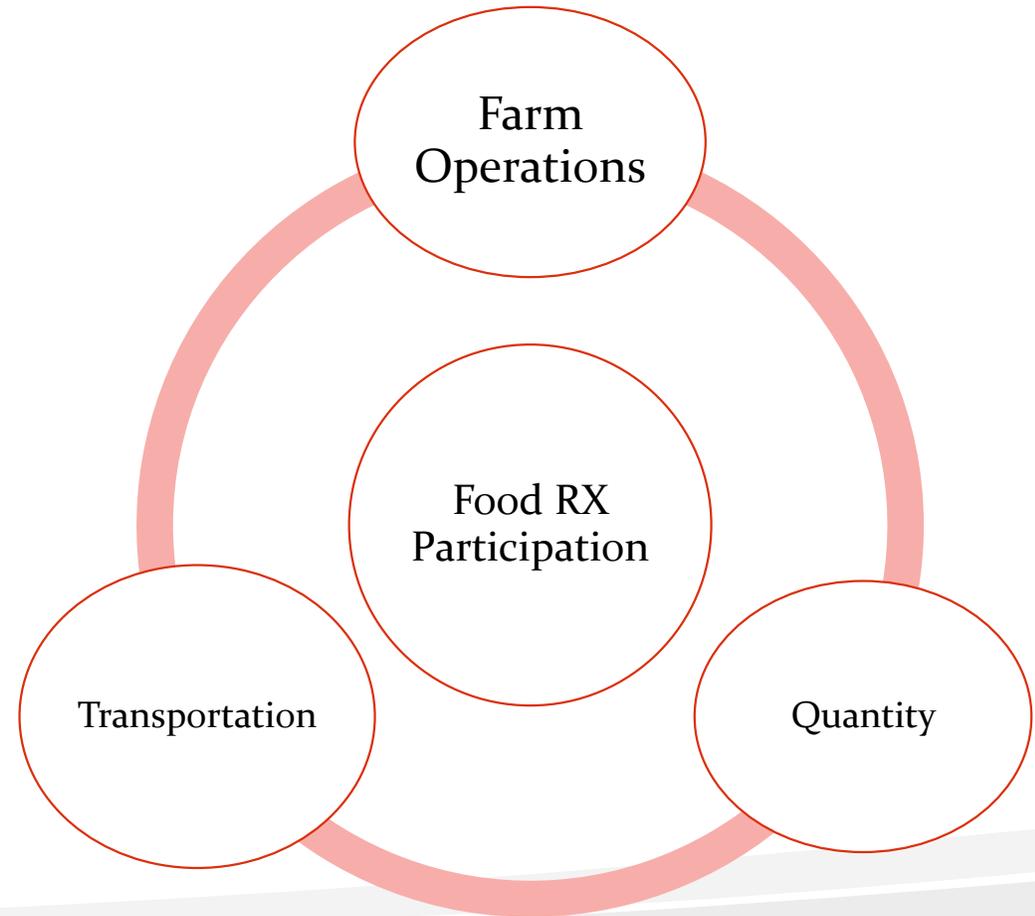
RACE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
BLACK	21	6	27
HISPANIC	0	1	1
ASIAN	1	1	2
WHITE	2	8	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>40</b>

Table 1: SDFRs by Race and Gender



# What are barriers for farmers to participate in food rx?

- Farm Operations: What is needed to maintain operations and produce
- Quantity: Amount of produce farmers have or can expect to provide to the program
- Transportation: Distance farmers must travel to deliver their produce to the program



# How do current USDA GusNIP programs value farmer participation?

Funding Year	Language used
2019	“Involves a diversity of types of firms (e.g. convenience stores, supermarkets, farmers markets, etc.)”
2020	“Involves a diversity of types of firms (e.g. convenience stores, supermarkets, farmers markets, etc.)”
2021	“Involves a diversity of types of firms (e.g. convenience stores, supermarkets, farmers markets, etc.)”
2022	Absent
2023	Absent

## Language Representation

An analysis of USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) grant applications found terms related to local farming and SDFRs were used at a low rate, suggesting grantees do not identify with these labels, consider them a priority or feel they would be valued.





# How can USDA better incorporate local farms/farmers into GusNIP?

*To increase program participation of farmers and ranchers, especially SDFRs:*

1. Incentivize participation for local farmers in food prescription and nutrition incentive programs by rewording grant evaluation criteria to include incorporating local farmers as a priority.
2. Build awareness of produce prescription and nutrition incentive programs with SDFRs through additional outreach.
3. Provide farmers with more contract based opportunities, rather than additional loan/grant programs. Allow for farmers to be built in as a contractual partners for GusNIP funding by broadening the types of entities that can apply for GusNIP funding.
4. Increase SNAP purchases by creating hybrid SNAP/produce prescription programs.
5. Address technical assistance limitations for SDFRs such as by providing additional opportunities for production advice, marketing, and environmental mitigation.

## Program Familiarity

Of the SDFRs interviewed, 95% had never heard of a produce prescription program.

