

## Abstract Proposal:

**Title:** Critical Barriers and Access to USDA Disaster Relief Programs for Socially Disadvantaged Producers During the 2011 Disaster Declaration for 74 Oklahoma Counties.

**Authors:** Bryn Bird, MPH and Willard Tillman

**Organization:** Rural Coalition and The Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project

**Contact Information:** 1029 Vermont Ave NW Suite 601, Washington, DC 20005.

Phone: 740-404-1475, Email: Bryn@ruralco.org

Rural Coalition is a diverse alliance of community-based organizations, including the Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, representing African American, Asian-American, American Indian, Latino, Euro-American, woman and other small-scale independent farmers and ranchers, The coalition has achieved measurable progress by facilitating the exchange of knowledge among our diverse groups to develop a multi-functional toolbox on financial record-keeping and disaster preparation, to serve this wide group of producers. For more than a decade, RC has conducted research on the accessibility of crop insurance and other disaster coverage by socially disadvantaged producers finding that only a small fraction of socially disadvantaged producers (less than 10%) use, or have ever used (less than 20%) crop insurance. We also discovered less than 30% have filled out a Schedule F Tax Form in the last year to be eligible for federal disaster assistance. While barriers include the lack of insurance products for their diverse specialty crop largely vegetable, fruit and livestock production, findings also indicate a lack of access to trusted financial and crop insurance services

In 2011 producers in Oklahoma were faced with one of the worst recorded droughts in recent history. Rural Coalition and its allies assessed and identified various methods and models for information dissemination to assure producer access to critical risk and disaster program information and deadlines. This includes the assessment on how to utilize new and emerging technologies, including a Cell Phone Action Network. While important our members agreed these resources are not a substitute for access to financial and crop insurance services, including trusted tax preparers and crop insurance agents who can help producers navigate complex forms and programs and make the best decisions to protect their operations. The Coalition has begun to identify community leaders and assisting them in becoming trained crop insurance agents for their community.