

## NRCS CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANT

### Final Report

**Grantee name:** Holmes County Food Hub

**Project Title:** Introducing Innovative Conservation Approaches and Technologies for Socially Disadvantaged in West and Central Mississippi

**Agreement Number:** 69-3A75-14-299

**Project Director:** Glyen Holmes

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**Six Month Period Covered by Report:** Final Report

**Project End Date:** 08-31/2017

#### A. Project Status

##### 1. Summary

Production, conservation and marketing are all critical components of sustainable and profitable agricultural operations. Small-scale farmers have not been the overwhelming beneficiaries of market opportunities and advances in technology that enhance productivity and competitiveness in the farm industry. Small-scale, particularly beginning, limited resource and socially disadvantaged and veteran, farmers are the last to incorporate, or are even aware of, such technological improvements. The goal of the proposed project is to take an innovative and comprehensive approach to developing a long-term solution to ensure proven environmental technology and food security in the small-scale farm industry by linking underserved farmers with USDA NRCS conservation programs and alternative market opportunities. The objective of the proposed project is to introduce innovative conservation technologies, such as Plastic culture and Sub-Surface Irrigation to encourage and assist small-scale, limited resource farm operations. The project's intent is to enhance the sustainability and profitability of small-scale farm operations integrating conservation technology transfer and improved marketing strategies.

##### 2. Project Delays: N/A

##### 3. Reasons why goals and objectives were not met, if relevant:

Project goals and objectives were met.

##### 4. Explanation of cost overruns: There were no cost overruns

##### 5. A description of any administrative changes during the previous six-month period, including no-cost extensions granted to the scope or budget of the project: N/A

6. **Lessons learned that inform future project activities:** The primary lesson learned is that new innovative technology is really needed in rural socially disadvantaged communities. Secondly, in order to make these farming communities sustainable and productive more innovative conservation technologies need to be introduced and cost share by NRCS. And, thirdly, more and more small farmers, particularly African American farmers have all but disappeared in West and Central Mississippi. For future projects in this region, a more intense hands on approach will be needed. Utilizing activities and networking within USDA agencies will have a greater impact within the maximum tree years allotted by NRCS.

### 7. **Project Results:**

The goal of the proposed project was to take an innovative and comprehensive approach to develop a long-term solution, which would ensure proven environmental technology and food security in the small-scale farm industry by linking underserved farmers with USDA/NRCS conservation programs and alternative market opportunities. The project's intent was to enhance the sustainability and profitability of small-scale farm operations integrating conservation technology transfer and improved marketing strategies. The target audience for the project was beginning, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers in Mississippi. The project integrated proven conservation technologies such as plastic culture and subsurface irrigation, as well as farm business and market development.

The project was able to:

- . **Establish one training site to demonstrate how to integrate select conservation production practices and alternative market development for small-scale farm operations**
- . **Provide up to date technical assistance in production and conservation technologies suitable for 65 rural and urban farmers during the three years of the project**
- . **Establish a statewide Farm to School market in Mississippi and the city of Memphis, TN.**
- . **Host 8 conference/ field days demonstrating plastic culture and subsurface irrigation (see photo attachments)**
- . **Conduct 80 one on one training sessions on the training site to instruct participants on the installation of Plastic and Sub – Surface irrigation**

Project staff worked with NRCS's Staff Outreach section to promote the project throughout the State of Mississippi. NRCS also filmed and posted these project activities on their state's web site. The project reach over 20 veteran farmers during the project period.

- **Establish & maintain database of farmers in project area.**

The following list of farmers participated in the project and are EQIP eligible:

1. James Winters
2. Percy Holmes
3. Allen Clayton
4. David Jones
5. Jimmie and Jamila McClinden

6. L.C. Dudley
7. Glyen Holmes
8. Tommy Gladney
9. Larry Boyd
10. Daniel Teague
11. Hakeem Holmes
12. Rayborn Wade
13. Glyen Holmes II

*Glyen Holmes*

8/8/19