

SOUTHEAST HISPANIC FARMER OUTREACH PROGRAM

**Achievement and Progress Report
2016-2018**



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The Southeast Hispanic Farmers Outreach Program's (SHFO) major goal is to establish cooperative connections between socially disadvantaged Hispanic farmers and ranchers in the Southeast Region of the United States with USDA, state, county, and municipal programs. The program establishes active networks, maintains an interactive clearinghouse of information and assistance, and designs proactive education channels with Hispanic farmers across the Southeast Region. The outreach activity efforts aim to improve the ability of Hispanic farmers and ranchers to participate equitably in USDA programs and related activities.

Based on current opportunities and lessons learned, the program has the capacity to expand direct outreach efforts to reach all the southeastern states. For the past three years, direct outreach education and services supported farmers in Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Mississippi. After conducting numerous interviews with Hispanic farmers, the program has documented agricultural conservation and production needs, and in several outreach states, helped formalize the networks of Hispanic farmers and operators. The purpose of the network is to provide these farmers with continuous education, help build long-lasting connections with USDA, state, county, and municipal programs, and develop leadership accountability and representation among the region's farmers. Hispanic farmers have demonstrated unanimous support for SHFO's mission and interest in working in collaboration.

The SHFO program is a division of Nolo Consulting, LLC, a minority-owned company with over thirty years of experience in the field of leadership, education, family services, social work, and community development. Nolo Consulting's role and goals give structure and organized direction to assist Hispanic farmers and producers in satisfying their own conservation and agricultural production missions.

Regards,



H. Nolo Martínez
Co-president



MMcElrath
Maya McElrath
Co-president

Program Goals and Objectives

The Southeast Hispanic Farmer Outreach Project's (SHFO) vision is to become the model program to enhance NRCS's outreach efforts to Hispanic farmers across the nation while testing and demonstrating best practice techniques that work successfully in any state of the United States.

The SHFO has assessed and connected socially disadvantaged Hispanic farmers and operators in the southeast multi-state region of the U.S. with USDA-NRCS agricultural programs, as well as several other USDA agencies. The strategic objectives we have undertaken to satisfy our outreach goals included:

1

Complete and update a region-wide comprehensive assessment report profiling Hispanic farmers and operators.

5

Establish an interactive data tool in order to compare and correlate data on Hispanic farmers and operators in each of the counties and states, as well as to guide strategic outreach efforts to improve long-lasting relationships for farmers and NRCS staff.

2

Organize and host state or regional conferences to educate and address the interests and concerns of Hispanic producers and operators.

4

Establish Hispanic Farmers and Operators Advisory Councils and Networks in outreach states.

3

Participate and collaborate in state- or regionally-hosted conferences to present and discuss the results of the comprehensive assessment, outreach efforts and regional survey findings to the USDA, particularly NRCS state leaders, and regional staff.



Lessons Learned

1 The presence of Hispanic farmers in the Southeast Region is significant and growing. Many state and federal government outreach professionals are not aware of the presence, size, needs and location of these farmers. Many do not have the capacity or intentional plans to establish connections with Hispanic producers.

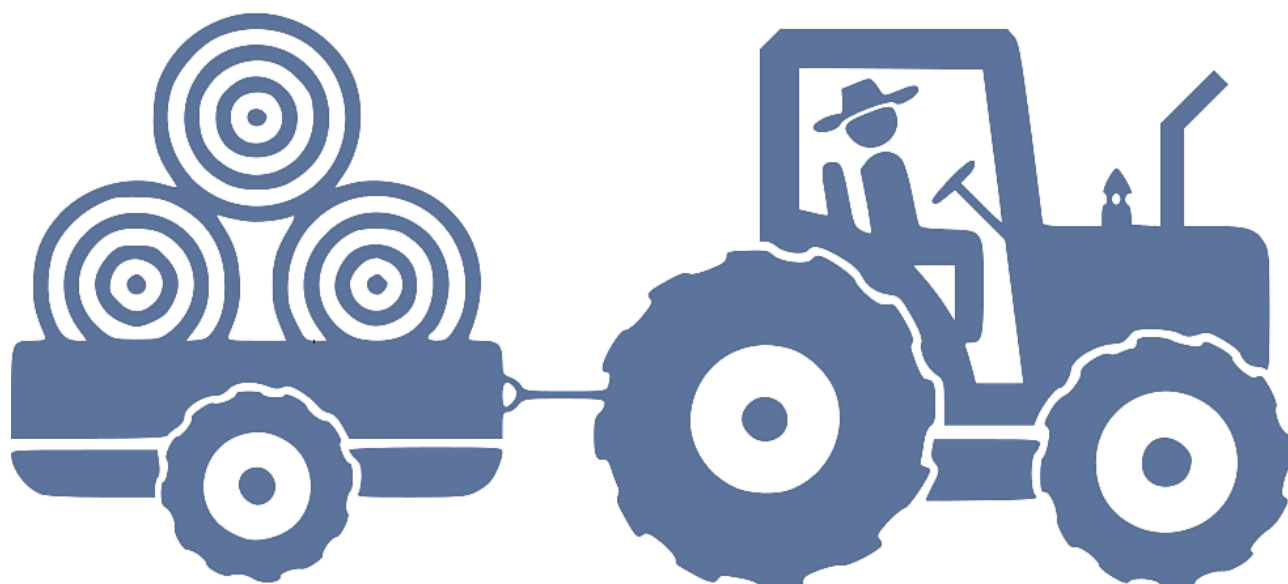
2 Many of the Hispanic farmers we interviewed, educated and recruited did not have knowledge of NRCS, FSA, Extension Services or Rural Development functions, programs or services.

3 For Hispanic farming communities in SHFO outreach areas in the Southeast, dependence and commitment to USDA services is minimal.

4 USDA's application requirements are not culturally appropriate, and many farmers are not following requirements. Hispanic farmers claim that it is very hard to break through the application process and systems established. Many do not get involved in USDA programs.

5 The representation of Hispanics in county or local leadership councils is limited or nonexistent.

6 The USDA bilingual talent pool is limited and difficult to find in many of the outreach counties in the Southeast Region.



Timeline of Key SHFO Events

2016

- OCT** • Hosted two Agriculture Information Sessions in Homestead & Loxahatchee, Florida.
- DEC** • Hosted delegates from USDA Washington Leadership in Puerto Rico.
• Presented SHFO program overview to the Agricultural Sciences faculty and students from Puerto Rico University of Mayaguez.

2017

- APR** • Hosted the Hispanic Farmer Farm Tour in West Palm Beach, Florida.
• Hosted the Hispanic Farmer Showcase in Palm Beach, Florida.
- JUN** • P&P Nursery Farm Demonstration in Miami-Dade, Florida.
• Hosted the Hispanic Farmer Farm Tour in Miami, Florida.
- JUL** • Hosted the Hispanic Farmer Farm Tour in Hillsborough, Florida.
- OCT** • Hosted FSA Farm/Tract number registration event in Palm Beach, Florida.
• Hosted the Hispanic Farmer Tour in Plant City, Florida.
- NOV** • Presented at the Lower Mississippi Delta NRCS meeting to increase collaboration and define partnership with the SHFO.
• Hosted FSA Farm/Tract number registration event in Palm Beach, Florida.
• Presented SHFO program overview to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana.
• Registering famers in Florida.
- DEC** • Held the Council of Young Hispanic Producers meeting.

2018

- APR** • The SHFO program organized and hosted the first of a series of agricultural forums, in Florida.
- MAY** • Hosted the first Hispanic Farmers meeting in Baton Rouge to formalize the Louisiana Hispanic Farmer Advisory Council.
- JUN** • Hosted a Hispanic Farmer Roundtable in Louisiana.
- JUL** • Organized the second Farmers' Forum in South Florida.

Accomplishments



Trained **4** bilingual outreach specialists

Created a **customized interactive tool** to manage data that make farmer assessments easier, respond to their needs and improve outreach outcomes



FileMaker



Generated a **network** of over **300** farmers

Organized over **15** educational events and presentations for farmers in Spanish and English



Attended or participated in over **25** USDA affiliated or community led events

Built a **network of collaborations and relationships** with over **800** community leaders, government officials, academics, Hispanic business owners, university affiliates, USDA leaders and experts

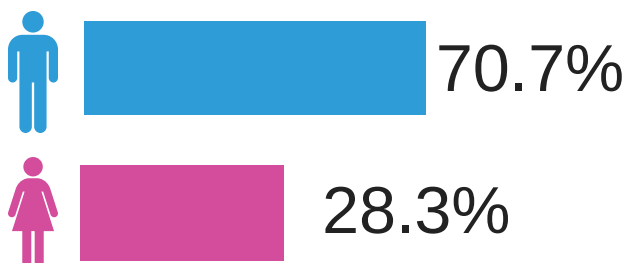


Organized an **internship initiative** for **15** bilingual students from Puerto Rico, placing them in different NRCS offices within the southeast of the U.S., with the goal of cultivating the future leadership of the agency

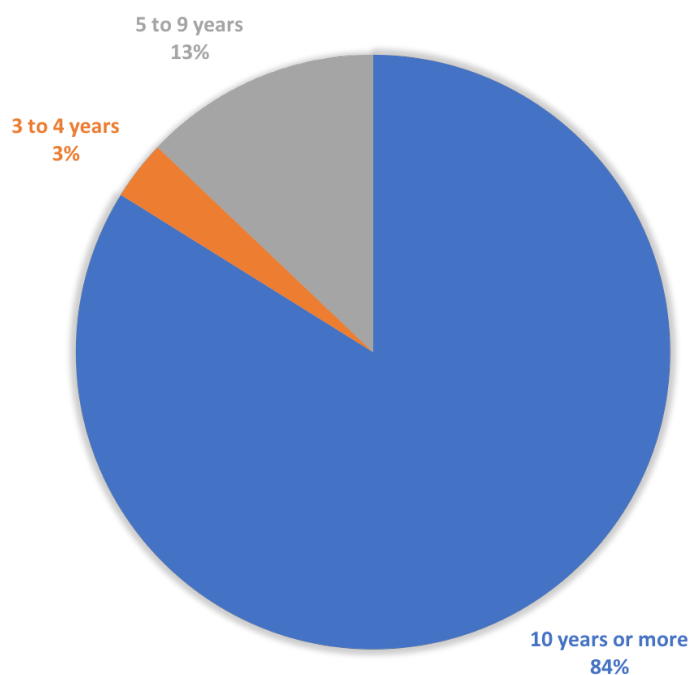
SHFO Farmer Network Statistics

The SHFO outreach team drove over **30,380 miles** in two years to identify and serve local Hispanic farmers, visiting over **73 counties**.

Gender



Years in Farming



SHFO Outreach States



Louisiana
Mississippi
North Carolina
Florida

SHFO Farmer Network Statistics

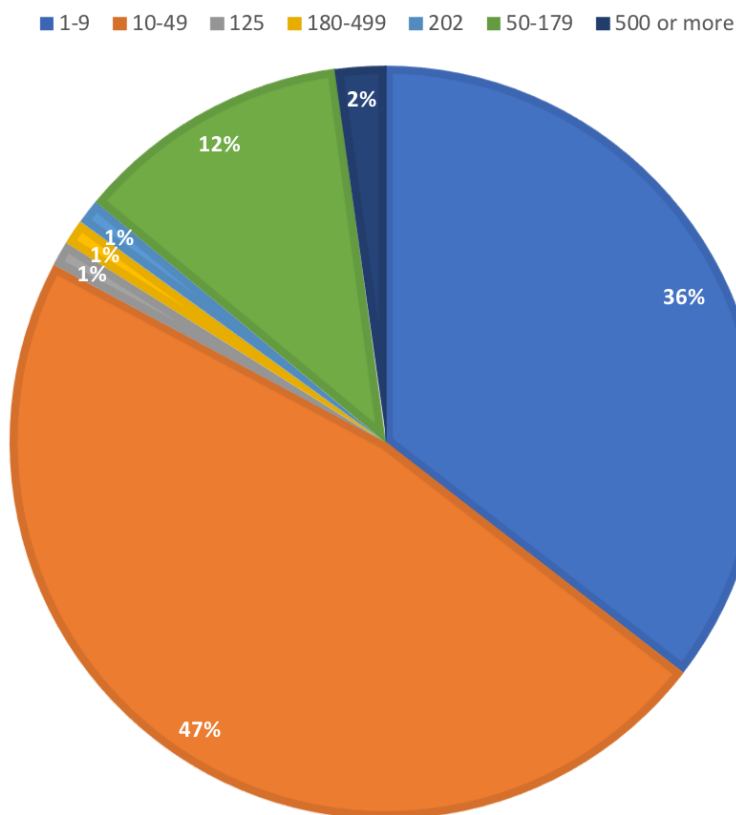
Selection of SHFO agricultural products:

- Beef cattle
- Bell peppers
- Chickens
- Corn
- Cows
- Crawfish
- Cucumbers
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Goats
- Green beans
- Horses
- Okra
- Ornamental plants
- Peppers
- Pork
- Radishes
- Rice
- Sheep
- Soybeans
- Strawberries
- Sugar cane
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon



There were 260 + agricultural products reported by Hispanic farmers to the outreach specialists.

Size of Farms (acres)



The SHFO is the only program in the nation that is focused on maintaining a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of the number and capacity of Hispanic farmers in the Southeast.

Reported Farmers Needs

Since our first year of outreach, we have learned that farmers have a wide range of needs that include capital, land, education, and labor support needs. The list below highlights the major areas of need reported by farmers:

- Access to markets
- Administration
- Assistance with non-insurable crops
- Education
- Equipment
- High tunnels, greenhouses, coolers, packing houses
- Infrastructure
- Knowledge on income generating crops for small farms
- Labor
- Legal labor issues
- Managerial capacity
- Marketing
- New water pump and drip systems
- Support with writing grants
- Technical assistance
- Technological assistance
- Time

In the states of Louisiana and Mississippi, the SHFO Outreach Specialist found that during many of the assessments the factor that is both a strength and a weakness, is the age of the farmer.

In the state of Florida, Hispanic farmers and ranchers are showing increased interest in renewable and efficient forms of energy to lower operation costs and conserve the environment.

Success Stories...



Hillsborough County, Florida. Hilda Castillo is a strawberry farmer and is influential with other Hispanic farmers in her community. She has hosted one of our educational events in the area, with more than 10 farmers attending. She has a productive relationship with both the FSA & NRCS, which includes receipt of a microloan and participation in NAP and EQIP.



Palm Beach County, Florida. Ana and Alberto Vides are poultry and ornamental producers. Our team was able to connect them with Carlyon Hunter, a technician with the FSA office in their area, and assist them in getting their farm/tract number with the Royal Palm FSA office.



Palm Beach County, Florida. Marty and Liza Holman are sustainable produce farmers that hosted one of our educational events in the area with more than 15 producers attending. They now have a well-established relationship with the FSA and NRCS, receiving NAP assistance and EQIP, using a high tunnel for year-round tomato production. They are pictured with SHFO Outreach Specialist, Ricardo Álvarez, as well as Royal Palm Beach NRCS staff.



Palm Beach County, Florida. Ana Trejo is a local nursery owner. Here, she is pictured with FSA Program Technician Carolyn Hunter, after registering her farm tract number with the Royal Palm FSA office. Also pictured with them is her friend and area producer, Ana Vides.

Success Stories Continued...



Independence, Louisiana. The Méndez Farm is an operation almost entirely run by women. They grow produce year-round for local markets, grocery stores, and restaurants. Their main crop, however, is strawberries. Diana Méndez was excited to hear about NRCS's high-tunnel initiative because it will allow her strawberries to ripen before the onset of the rainy season. SHFO Outreach Specialist, Adrian Parrott, is pictured here with Diana Méndez' granddaughters, the future of the Méndez Farm.



Ville Platte, Louisiana. Rolando Sánchez is an award-winning farmer in the heart of Louisiana's historic rice country. He operates a 1000-acre rice and crawfish farm. He was only producing on 500 acres when our outreach team met him, and he wished that there was something he could do to keep his fallow acres healthy. Outreach specialist, Adrian Parrott, recommended he get in touch with the NRCS about their cover crop conservation practice.



Guilford County, North Carolina. In the summer of 2018, intern Pedro Ayala supported SHFO's efforts in the central part of the state. His outreach work helped the SHFO program understand the needs of Hispanic farmers in North Carolina to better connect them to NRCS and other USDA programs and services.



Fayette County, Mississippi. SHFO interns participated in erosion control training conducted by conservationists from Mississippi NRCS.

List of Program Referrals Made by SHFO

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

- Farm & Tract Registration
- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP)
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)
- Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program (WHIP)
- Direct Microloan
- Farm Ownership Loan
- FSAfarm+
- Acreage Reporting
- GovDelivery
- Price Loss Coverage Program (PLC)
- Dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP)

Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)

- EQIP
- Irrigation
- High Tunnel
- Prescribed Grazing
- Nutrient Management Plan

Rural Development (RD)

- Value Added Grant
- Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)
- Family Housing Program

Cooperative Extension, University of Florida

- Tree Pruning Workshop
- Pesticide Application Training
- Commercial Fruit Specialist services
- Commercial Vegetable Specialist services
- Agricultural Economic Development services
- Livestock Specialist services

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services / Soil & Water Conservation District

- Farm Renewable and Efficiency Demonstration (FRED) Program
- Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Irrigation and Water Assessments

Louisiana Small Business Development Center

- Consulting services on matters of business and loans, run through local universities.

Southern Agricultural University, Louisiana

- Offers a training program for food safety to undeserved farming communities.

Outreach Team



Francisco Martínez-Oronoz

Senior Program Director/Outreach Specialist
North Carolina
919-889-9426
fjmartinezoronoz@gmail.com



Ricardo Álvarez

Outreach Specialist
Florida
786-449-1180
ralvarez.lotopagi@gmail.com



Adrian Parrot

Outreach Specialist
Louisiana/Mississippi
828-333-0476
japarrott3123@gmail.com

Webpage



www.latinofarmersusa.com

Provides general information in English and Spanish about Hispanic/Latino farmers, resources to support farmers and up-to-date data that helps the public and government agencies understand the importance of Hispanic/Latino farmers to the United States.



Designed by:
Patricia Morales
Program Manager