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**LOCAL SUPPORT KEY TO USDA SUCCESS**  
**Community Organization Recognized for 2007 Census of Agriculture Partnership**

Athens, Georgia – Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census of Agriculture is a complete count of the nation’s farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census creates a unique challenge for USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), as the agency is tasked with reaching out to all farmers and ranchers, including many individuals with whom NASS does not regularly contact.

To overcome this challenge, NASS partnered with a local community-based organization to reach previously under-represented producers. “We formed a strong partnership with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund,” said Doug Kleweno, director of the NASS Georgia Field Office. “This organization was a critical partner in the Census process since they understood the needs and cultural nuances of those they serve and already have respected relationships with many African American farmers in the community.”

Working with NASS, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives held Census Days, assisting local farmers and ranches with completing their forms.

To recognize the organization for their continued partnership, NASS recently presented Ralph Paige, Executive Director, with an award at a national appreciation ceremony and workshop held in Kansas City, Missouri.

“We are pleased with NASS’s special efforts to break new ground in working with community-based organizations in our area,” said Paige. “Recognizing the important contribution every farmer and rancher makes to U.S. agriculture is vital to ensuring that the Census reveals a complete and accurate picture of agriculture in Georgia and throughout the nation.”

When compared to the previous Census of Agriculture, the 2007 Census counted 5 percent more U.S. farms and 4 percent more Georgia farms with Black and African American principal operators. The local support received from such organizations as the Federation of Southern Cooperatives was key to the success of the Census. For more information about the Census, visit [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or call (800) 253-4419.

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