

Case Study

Models for a Regenerative Economy: Social Environment Impacts in the Southeast

Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network (SAAFON) Based in Atlanta, Georgia (2006 - Present)
Prepared by Bailey Shea, Program Coordinator for Policy

Overview¹

Service area: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Louisiana and the US Virgin Islands

Mission: The Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network (SAAFON)¹ is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to further the liberation and empowerment of Black communities in the Southeastern United States through farming, food and land strategies.

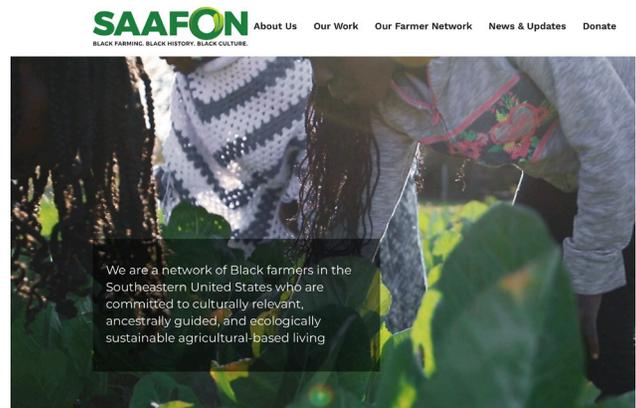
Social Environment Impact

- SAAFON works with Black farmers across the Southeast to promote sustainable agricultural and land management practices "that are rooted in indigenous ways of knowing that span geographies, space, and time."²
- SAAFON works individually with farmers to enhance their work and connect them to build collective power and support across the region. SAAFON works at the food system level to build movements, create change and achieve their mission of centering the well-being of Black farmers and Black communities. SAAFON centers Black well-being through productive and sustainable (i.e., regenerative) land management and food production and in doing so strives to reverse historical wrongs and invest in a regenerative social environment. Increasing access to healthy foods and providing healthy, safe, gainful opportunities to earn a living through agriculture contribute to the restoration of historically oppressed Black communities in the South. Part of regeneration must include restoration of communities like the Black communities of the South that have suffered for decades and continue to suffer from racism, economic and social disenfranchisement and disconnection from land, nature, food and sources of well-being that so many in "sustainability" communities take for granted today.
- Major initiatives include a Black-owned agricultural land trust and a database of Southeastern Black-owned land that aims to promote and record efforts toward food and land sovereignty. Land sovereignty is an important concept in any regenerative and restorative society; communities who have land sovereignty hold the rights to their own lands – a simple concept in this brief definition, but a deep and complex one when considered within the context of centuries of colonization, enslavement and systematic exploitation that communities of color have faced. In the Southeast United States, Black people have been exploited for centuries, and while they were depended on for cultivation of the land, they were given no sovereignty over it. Likewise, with food, Black people in the South have long provided sustenance for white and privileged Americans while having no real or recognized claim to the right to that sustenance themselves and have been distanced from food sources and healthy foods through various means of consumer exploitation. Both food and land sovereignty are critical for sustaining a regenerative, restorative social environment across the Southeast.³ SAAFON's focus on restoring food and land sovereignty for Black farmers specifically is a critical piece of that complex puzzle

¹ <https://saafon.org/>

² Id.

³ <https://climatejusticealliance.org/regenerativeeconomy/>



One of the main issues addressed by SAAFON is land sovereignty for the Black farmers they serve. Visit saafon.org for more information. (Photo from www.saafon.org)

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- Food and land sovereignty are important to regeneration of social systems; reconnection of ownership and access to healthy foods, nutrient-rich soils and sacred land are critical steps to empowering historically marginalized communities. Uplifting communities through food and land ownership drives wealth and reshapes communities and power structures over time —important steps towards an economy that is regenerative and not degenerative.

Connection to Natural Environment

- Through small-scale agriculture and land management practices that emphasize a return to indigenous methods, SAAFON promotes an agroecology approach to farming, which means a commitment to utilizing what nature has to offer as responsibly as possible so that lands are sustained and enriched rather than stripped of nutrients. This cyclical, sustainable, and additive practice exemplifies a component of a regenerative economy.