



# Jubilee Justice Black Farmers Rice Project

Review 2021



# Jubilee Justice Black Farmers Rice Project

Founded by Konda Mason in 2019 with the goal to transform livelihoods of Black farming communities through regenerative SRI rice production



Alexandria, Louisiana



Mound Bayou, Mississippi

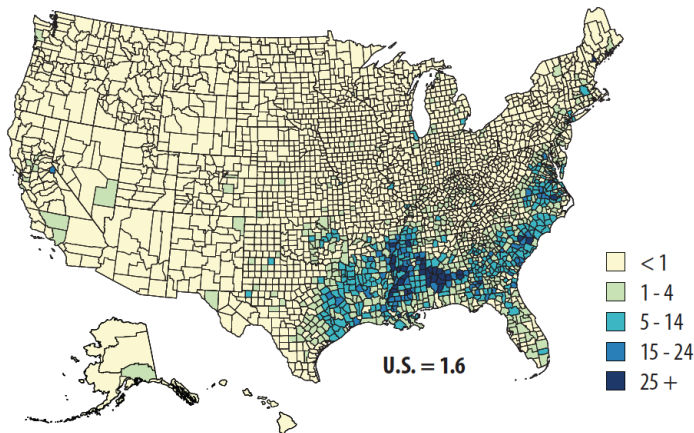


Jackson, Mississippi

# Background

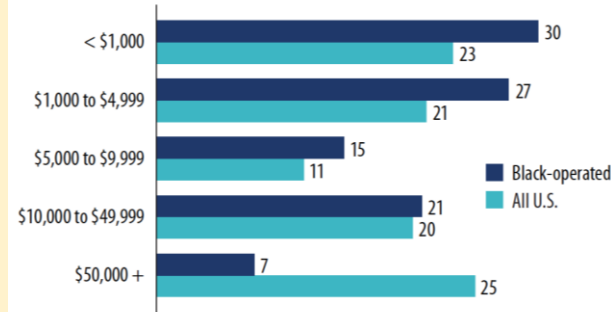
- Systematic discriminatory practices from loan agencies, extension offices, and the USDA have forced Black farmers out of landownership and farming since the early 20th Century.
- The number of Black farmers has decreased from one million farmers in 1920 to less than 33,000 in 2017.
- Most Black farms are concentrated in the Southeast, which is where Jubilee Justice is focusing its work.

**Black-operated Farms as Percent of Total Farms, by County, 2017**



Based on 32,910 farms with producers who identified as Black alone

**Black-operated and U.S. Farms by Economic Class, 2017 (percent)**  
(sales and government payments combined)



57% of black-operated farms and gov payments of less than \$5000 per year; 7% had \$50,000 and more, compared to 25% of all farms

Farm Size in Acres	Black- operated	All U.S.
	(percent of total)	
1 to 9	16	13
10 to 49	36	29
50 to 179	33	28
180 to 499	11	15
500 +	4	15

85% of black-operated farms were smaller than 180 acres, compared to 60% of all farms

# Background

## Origin of rice production in the USA

- Rice was first introduced to USA in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Technical knowledge of growing rice in the tidal swamps of South Carolina came from the enslaved Africans who successfully produced rice in these difficult environments. Soon, rice became the most important plantation crop in SC.



## Rice production in the USA today

- Commodity large-scale farming
- High agro-chemical use (sprayed by airplanes)
- Permanently flooded fields, emitting methane
- Very few rice varieties (long and medium grain)
- Very low price and profit margins for farmers

**Creates toxic landscapes – biodiversity deserts –  
soil degradation - greenhouse gas emissions – arsenic in rice**



Missouri rice field – early spring

**Regenerative, climate-friendly alternatives exist**



## The System of Rice Intensification



The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) is an ecological approach to rice production based on improved soils, reduced irrigation water, and giving plants more space to fully develop their potential. SRI has been successfully implemented in more than 50 countries, but not yet at scale in the USA.

With SRI, rice yields are increased and soils improved, while using less seed, water, chemicals, and emitting less greenhouse gases.

**Jubilee Justice, together with the Black  
farming community, have set out to change  
the way rice is grown in the USA:**

**Regenerative, no-till and organic  
SRI rice production**

# Jubilee Justice Rice Project

**Vision:** Black farming communities in the USA farm more land, thrive economically and have an improved quality of life

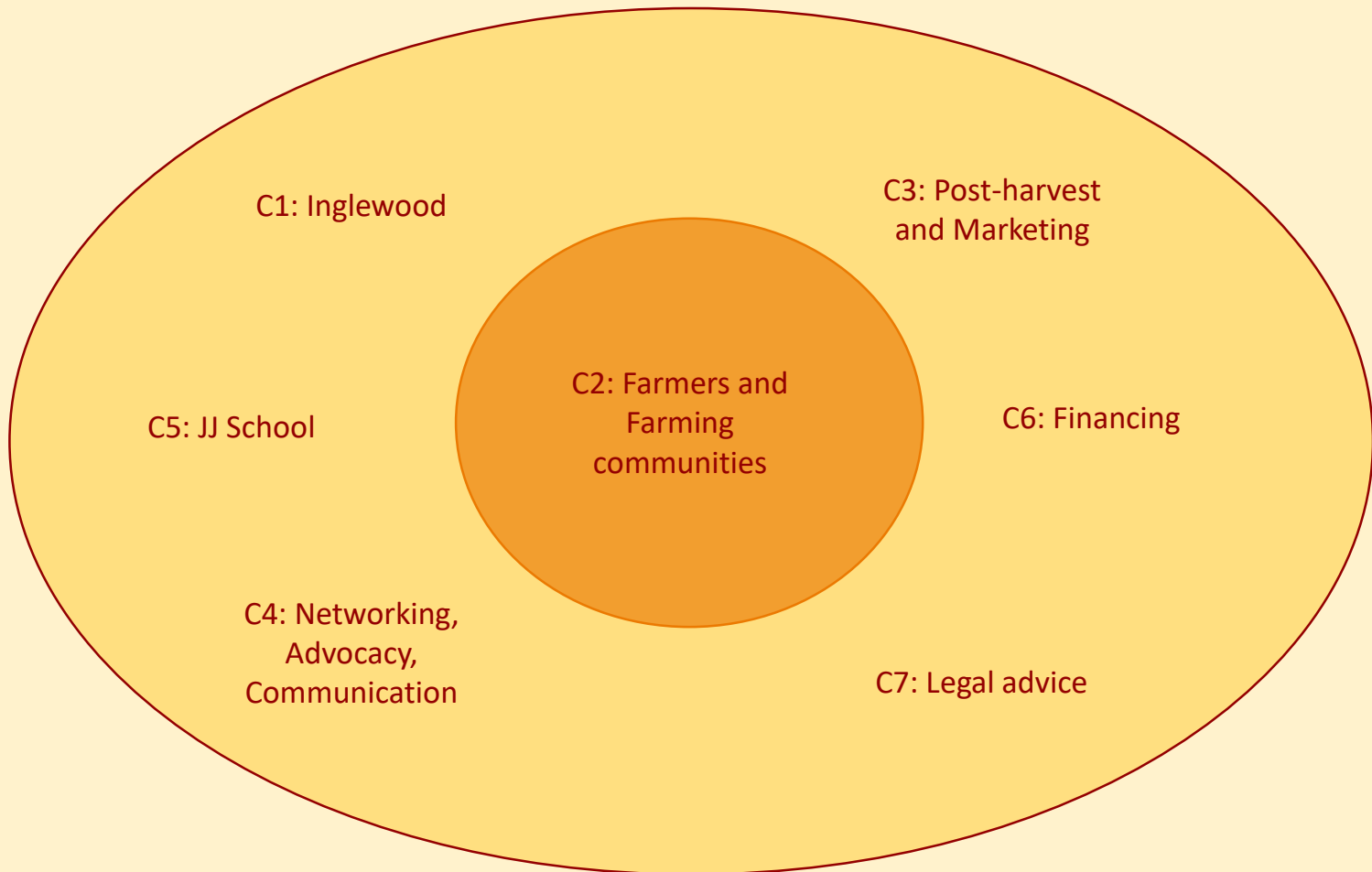
**Mission:** Support black farming communities in implementing sustainable and regenerative crop production practices, accessing new markets, sustainable financing and legal services in LA, MS, SC, GA and CA

**Components and Activities:** there are seven components that lead to the implementation of JJ's mission. In 2020 (year 1) JJ started with C1, C2. In 2021, JJ focused on C1, C2, C3, C4 and C6. In 2022, all components will be included.

Components	1. Inglewood	2. Farmers	3. Postharvest, Market	4. Networking, Advocacy, Communications	5. JJ School	6. Finance POTLIKKER	7. Legal support
Objectives WHAT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JJ Headquarters</li> <li>• Experimentation</li> <li>• Seed production</li> <li>• Crop production</li> <li>• School/training</li> <li>• Demonstration site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SRI Rice production</li> <li>• Other crops production</li> <li>• Transition to regenerative/organic farming</li> <li>• Create independence</li> <li>• Increased income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processing (mill, harvest)</li> <li>• Branding/marketing</li> <li>• Market access and choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection with Black organizations (BO)</li> <li>• Outreach and advocacy activities</li> <li>• Publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop training materials</li> <li>• Internships</li> <li>• Teach at HBCUs</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>	<p>Potlikker is a sister organization to JJ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support farmers</li> <li>• Create independence</li> <li>• Income increase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal outreach and advice to interested farmers</li> </ul>
Activities HOW?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-acre farm design</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Farm equipment (EQ)</li> <li>• Greenhouse</li> <li>• Field days/trainings</li> <li>• "Farming" the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training/ know-how</li> <li>• Assist in EQ</li> <li>• Technical assistance support and troubleshoot</li> <li>• Community of practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist farmers in harvest, threshing, drying, storing, milling and selling their rice</li> <li>• Set up and run mill</li> <li>• Branding and packaging of produce</li> <li>• Market access: Lotus foods, self-marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional mapping and connecting with BOs</li> <li>• Develop communication strategy</li> <li>• Publications</li> <li>• Talks</li> <li>• Visits/outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum development</li> <li>• Technical manuals</li> <li>• Lectures, seminars, training courses</li> <li>• Advice service (Call desk?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify farmers</li> <li>• Grant-making</li> <li>• Loan-making</li> <li>• Follow-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop/update legal information materials</li> <li>• Set up a call desk?</li> <li>• Promote information</li> </ul>

# Jubilee Justice Rice Project

The farmers and farming communities (Component 2) are at the core of all activities undertaken by JJ. All other components (C1, C3-C7) are in support of the farming communities.



# JJ Rice Project Team





# Review 2021

1. Regenerative Crop Production Research
2. Jubilee Justice Farm Headquarters at Inglewood
3. Jubilee Justice Black Farmers Cohort
4. Jubilee Justice Rice Mill
5. Partnerships, Collaboration, and Outreach

# 1. Regenerative Crop Production Research





# Regenerative Crop Production Research

We conducted field research on rice, other crops, weed and soil fertility management

- **Jubilee Justice Farm Headquarters:**
  - Rice variety testing
  - Cover crop research
  - Clover/rice intercrop trial
  - Rotation crop screening trials: winter wheat, fall beans, summer cowpeas and sesame varieties
- **On-site Farmer trials**
  - Each farmer tested a slightly different rice planting system, among them:
    - Transplanting vs direct seeding rice
    - Variety trials
    - Fabric, plastic or bare ground
    - Narrow vs wide spacing of rice plants

# Experimental set up for rice trials in 2020 and 2021 at Inglewood, LA

- In 2020 and in 2021, we tested 18 and 24 specialty rice varieties, respectively, on one acre, planted on raised beds and covered by fabric. The use of fabric allowed the Jubilee Justice team to plant an entire acre and collect data on plant performance without having to worry about weed control.
- Fabric helps to suppress weeds but it does not allow for improving and regenerating soils. After the rice was harvested, we experimented with removing the fabric and planted different cover crops (CC) as well as beans and small grains as fall and winter crops. This was done with the goal to keep soils covered and productive year-round. This is not a common practice in the US South, where soils are kept bare over winter in the traditional agriculture systems.

## 1. Rice Trials with raised beds on fabric



## 2. Cover crop trials in the fall and winter of 2020/2021





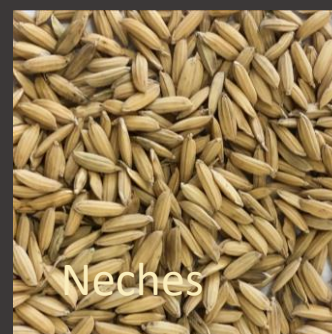
Carolina Gold



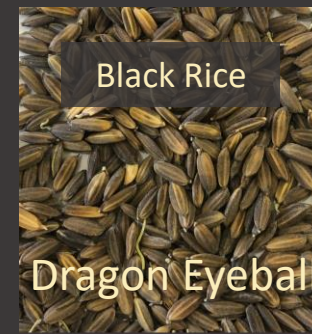
Delta Belle



Jasmine 85



Neches

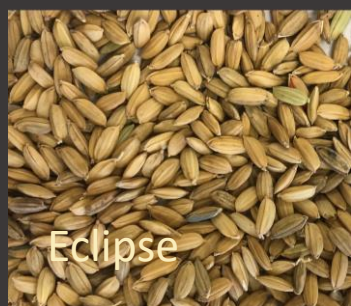


Black Rice

Dragon Eyeball



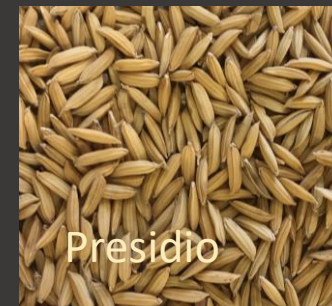
Charleston Gold



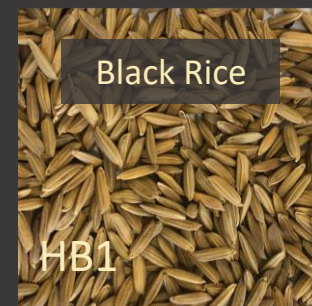
Eclipse



Jupiter



Presidio



Black Rice

HB1



Cheniere



Red Rice

IITA 119



Koshihikari



Red Rice

Scarlett



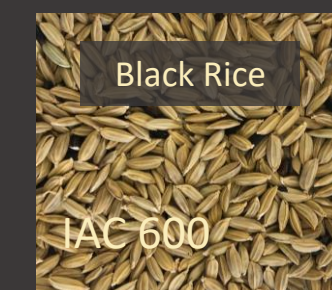
Titan



Wells



Arborio



Black Rice

IAC 600

## 18 Rice Varieties

sourced from USDA were tested in 2020 with the SRI method.

Measurements included: plant tillering and height, production cycle, survival, pest and disease pressure and yield.

Most promising varieties:

- HB1 (black rice)
- Scarlett (red rice)
- Jasmine
- Presidio
- IITA 119 (red rice)
- Arborio

# Rice variety trials in Alexandria, LA 2020 and 2021

Below are the 18 varieties planted with the SRI methodology at 60 days after transplanting.

We use images to assess the *vigor* of each variety.



Dragon Eyeball 100



HB1



Jasmine 85



Carolina Gold



Charleston Gold



Neches



Scarlett



IITA 119



Eclipse



Presidio



Koshihikari



Cheniere



Wells



Deltabelle



IAC 600



Arborio



Jupiter



Titan

# Fall and Winter Crop Trials 2020: Cool Season Crops

## Fall Beans trial, 2020

- **11 Bush and Pole Bean Varieties** were evaluated on fabric and rice straw mulch.
- Most prominent fungal disease: rust
- The short cycle varieties can be grown as rotation crop following rice and before planting a winter cover crop.
- Top five varieties were:
  - Turkey Crow– Pole Bean
  - Pencil Pod Black Wax– Bush Bean
  - Tiger Eye– Bush Bean
  - Jackson Wonder– Bush Lima Bean
  - Jacob's Cattle– Bush Bean



## Winter Grain SWI trials, 2020

- **51 Winter Grain Varieties** were planted with the SRI method applied to wheat (=SWI method): plants spaced 12"x12" grid
- Grains planted were wheat, oats, barley, rye, einkorn, spelt, triticale, emmer, and timopheevii.
- Major challenges: lodging and disease issues
- Top five varieties included:
  - Hilliard Soft Red Winter Wheat
  - Aroostock Winter Rye
  - Expedition Wheat
  - Norin 10 Wheat
  - Pelon Colorado Wheat



# Summer Crop Trials 2021: Rice Variety Trials on Fabric

- Goal: Repeat variety test from 2020, and add a few upland varieties, named Gopher varieties, resulting in a total of **24 Rice varieties tested**.
- Observations: Plant development (tiller numbers, height), survival, disease pressure and yield
- Lessons learned:
  - The soil where the rice trial was planted was depleted in organic matter and beneficial soil biota, which favored disease pressure.
  - Fungal disease pressure was very high, especially during rice maturation phase
  - Irrigation needs in the middle of summer exceeded the ability to irrigate (insufficient infrastructure)
  - **Highest yielding varieties were: IITA 119 (red rice), Neches, Wells, Presidio, Cheniere.**
  - **Highest tillering varieties: Jasmine 85, Charleston Gold, HB1 (black rice), Jupiter, Presidio**
  - We expect that with improved soil health and irrigation availability, yields of currently lower-yielding varieties will increase. We therefore will stay open-minded to further test medium-performing varieties.
  - The best yielding varieties have shown to be very robust when faced with adverse effects (low soil fertility, low water availability and high disease pressure)



# Summer Crop Trials 2021: Warm Season Crops

## Sesame variety trial, 2021

- Goal: find a summer rotation crop for rice that is not a legume or a grass
- **5 Sesame Varieties** were planted on fabric with wide spacing
- Sesame improves soil tilth, deep root system
- Highly disease resistant, similar crop cycles
- Listed from highest to lowest yield:
  - Monticello White
  - Southern Exposure Benne
  - Afghan Sesame
  - David Shields' Benne
  - Blue Sesame



## Cowpea variety trial, 2021

- Goal: find a leguminous summer rotation crop for rice
- **16 cowpea varieties** were planted on fabric with wide spacing
- Observations: growth habit, disease resistance, weed suppression capabilities, yield.
- Top five varieties were:

Haricot rouge du Burkina Faso  
Fagiola del trasimeno (multicolored)  
Ezelle Family "Fish Eye" Pea  
Iron and Clay  
Speckled Graham





## 2. Jubilee Justice Farm Headquarters

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- JJ Farm Headquarters (HQ): Jubilee Justice has leased five acres on Inglewood farm, a certified organic farm in Alexandria, Louisiana.
- The JJ farm HQ has multiple objectives:
  - JJ staff headquarters
  - Field research
    - Variety screening for rice and other crops
    - Soil health, cover crop and integrated crop rotation research
  - Seed and seedling production of rice varieties, specialty crops and cover crops to be shared/sold with JJ and other farmers
  - Demonstration site for regenerative farming innovations
  - Production, milling and selling of rice and specialty crops to create an income stream for JJ.
  - JJ School, a training and knowledge hub for JJ farmers (to be developed)

## 2. Jubilee Justice Farm Headquarters

In 2021, the JJ 5 Acres were set-up in order to be fully operational as a farm in the 2022 agricultural season:

- **Operational farm team hired.**
  - Farm manager : Iriel Edwards
  - Head of Logistics: Smiley Mason
  - Seed, Harvest, and Compost Manager: Darlene Domino
  - Head of Property and Production: Jose Gonzalez
  - Farm Production and Equipment Manager: Hector Rios
- **Farm plan developed:** parceling fields, create drainage canals, roads, dig well for irrigation, sow multi-species cover crops for the winter
- **Set up farm infrastructure:** greenhouse, hoop house, office, well, tool room, bathrooms, and seed processing room
- **Buy essential farming equipment:** tractor and attachments, transport trailer, truck, irrigation sprinklers, and combine harvester

Hoop house



Greenhouse



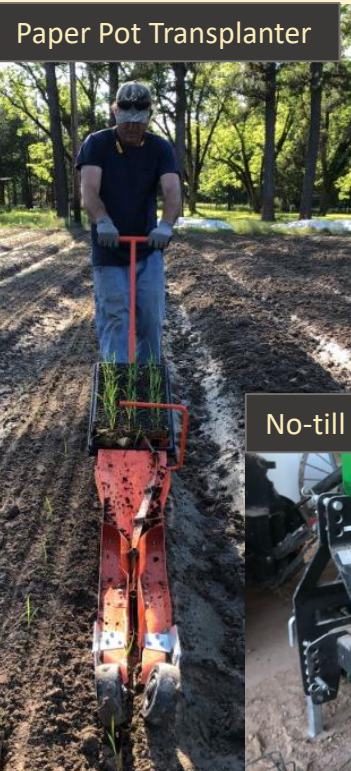
Office



Well and Irrigation Wheel



JJ acquired essential farming equipment  
to be fully functional in 2022



- Additional tractor attachments:
- Bush Hog
  - Tiller
  - Backhoe



Farm Truck





### 3. Jubilee Justice Farmer Cohort

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#### Developing the JJ Farmer Program



The JJ farm team undertook three RV-trips to visit all the farmers in the cohort, to provide technical assistance and have in-depth discussions about the rice trial experience.

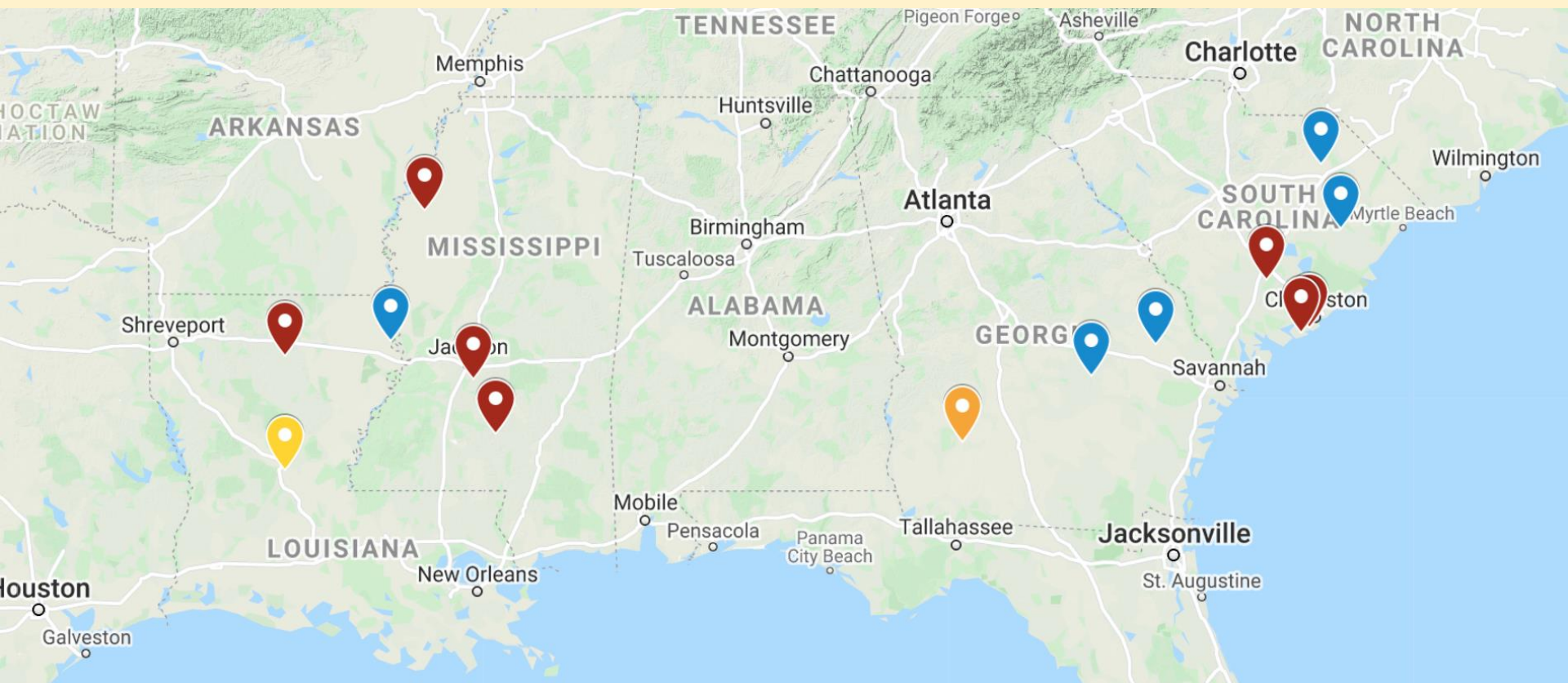
The three trips were:

- November 2020: planning of the 2021 season
- May 2021: visit farmers at planting time
- August 2021: visit farmers right before harvesting

Additional visits by some of the farm team members were organized during the cropping season as needed.

## Location of Jubilee Justice Farmer Cohort, 2021/2022

In 2021, the Jubilee Justice cohort expanded from **two** Mississippi farmers in 2020, to a total of **eight** farmers in Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina. Demand increased by word-of-mouth and the JJ farm team visited new farmer candidates and identified at least one new farmer in LA, two farmers in GA and two farmers in SC to join the JJ farmer cohort in 2022.

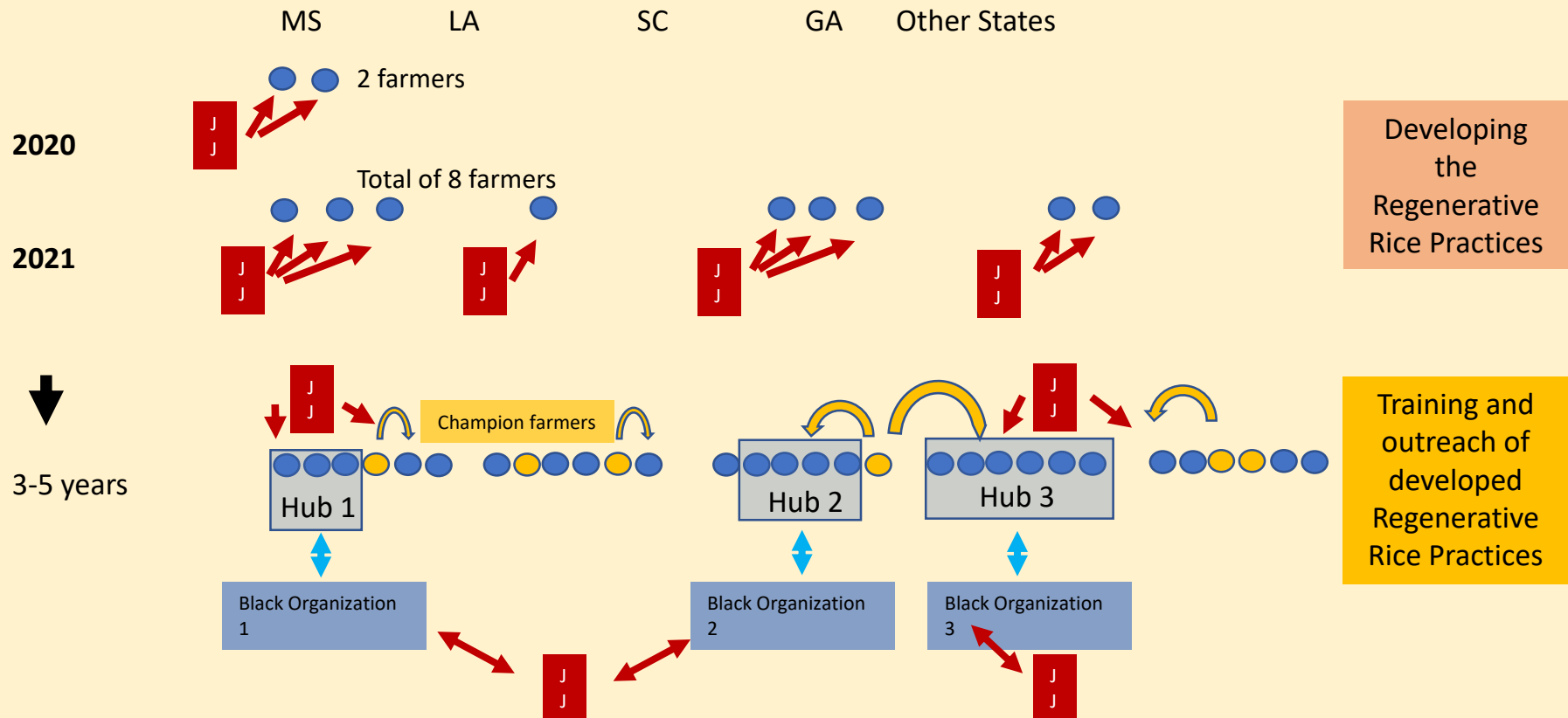


**Red Markers: Farmer cohort 2021**  
**Blue Markers: New farmers joining in 2022**

**Yellow Marker:** JJ headquarters in Alexandria, LA  
**Orange Marker:** New Communities in Albany, GA, part of 2021 cohort and to become JJ Eastern Outreach Hub in 2022

# The JJ's scaling approach to collaborate with farmers

The Jubilee Justice (JJ) farmer approach started out by providing technical assistance to individual farmers. As we are in the early stages of developing the regenerative SRI rice production practices, this approach is necessary. It includes in-depth technical discussions and observations. We will continue using this approach in 2022. But as JJ becomes more confident what works well, develops best practices and training modules, JJ will transition to training NGOs, farmer and outreach organizations, who can then connect with and train farmers. With that approach, we further strengthen human capacity across a wide range of organizations, improve collaborations and can reach many more farmers (see figure below).



## Farmer experiences 2021 (1)



First planting : Rice suffered from drought and disease.



Second planting : Rice developed very well with disease monitoring and watering at critical development stages of the rice crop.



## Farmer experiences 2021 (2)



**The Sanders, Mississippi**

The Sanders are conventional rice growers, but are interested in growing organic specialty SRI rice on a smaller area on their land.



Experimenting with Direct Seeding vs. Transplanting and biological seed treatment with the goal to transition to larger acreage

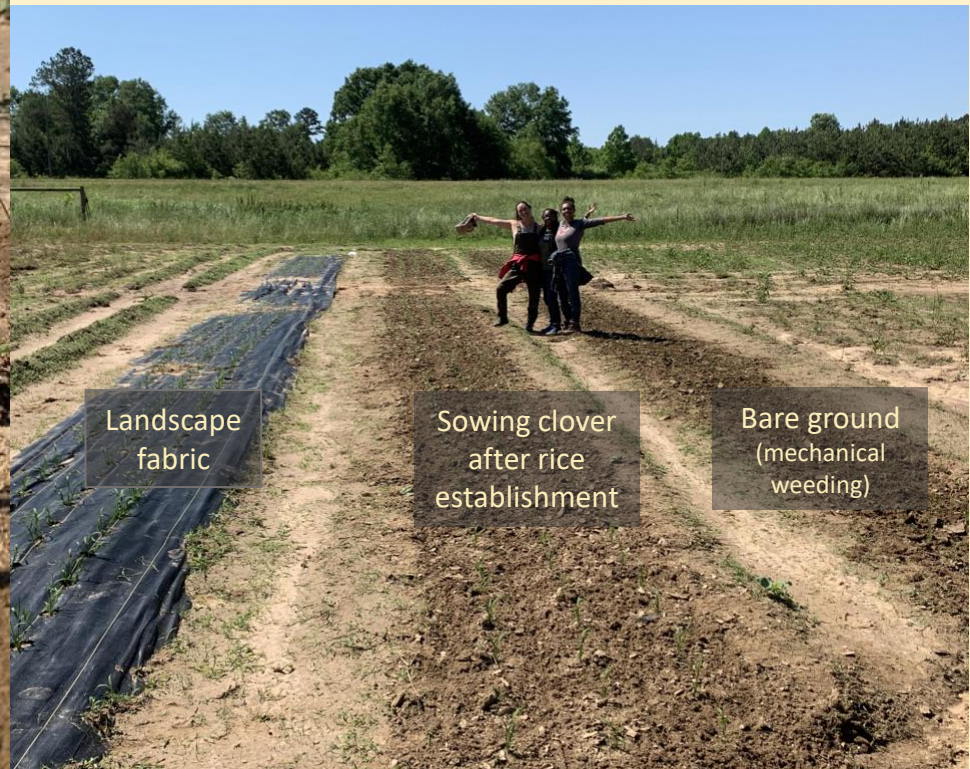




## Farmer experiences 2021 (3)

Mr. White experimented with 2 rice varieties (short cycle and medium cycle) and 3 growing methods (fabric, clover intercropping with rice, and rice planted in bare ground).

Bare ground treatment produced the highest yield. It included two weeding sessions during the season. Landscape fabric was second and sowing clover together with rice yielded lowest.



Landscape  
fabric

Sowing clover  
after rice  
establishment

Bare ground  
(mechanical  
weeding)

Mr. White, Mississippi

Trying out the vegetable transplanting machine:  
the Rainflo transplanter



## Farmer experiences 2021 (4)

Trying out different transplanting machines as  
proposed by our farmers

Trying out the paper pot transplanter with Ms. Issacs, Louisiana



Mr. Gregory, Mississippi

## Farmer experiences 2021 (5)

This year we agreed with New Communities in Albany, GA to become the Eastern Jubilee Justice Hub (GA and SC) for testing, rice processing, and outreach via Southwest Georgia Project

- Outreach Coordinator and Rice Trial Co-manager – Zel Hutchinson
- Jubilee Justice Cooperative Consultant and Rice Trial Co-manager- Collie Graddick
- Location for Jubilee Justice's eastern rice mill



At New Communities with Ms. Shirley Sherrod (second from left), Albany, GA



### Rice variety trials 2020

- Tested 10 varieties in landscape fabric
- Faced seedling establishment difficulties because of weeds and heat associated with late planting.
- Found five best varieties and will test next year in cover crop mulch and fabric

# Farmer experiences 2021 (6)

## Main Challenges: Weeds and Diseases

- This year's challenges stressed the importance and need for soil health
- Jubilee Justice is committed to promoting and preserving the biology in our soils to combat the challenges of fungal disease, weed pressure and drought while increasing the nutrition in our crops and communities.



## Visiting new farmers

The Jubilee Justice team visited farmers in LA, GA and SC interested in joining the JJ cohort in 2022. We plan to especially increase our reach in the project's home state of Louisiana.





## 4. The Jubilee Justice Rice Mill

In 2021, Jubilee Justice bought a rice mill and identified a building to house the JJ Rice Mill in Alexandria, LA.

In 2022, JJ will undertake building renovations, install the mill and solar panels on the roof of the building, and set up the mill as a Black farmers' cooperative.

**This will be the first solar-operated and first Black farmer-owned Rice Mill in the USA.**



## 5. Partnerships and Collaborations

# 5. Partnerships and Collaboration

## Potlikker Capital and Jubilee Justice

- Our sister organization, Potlikker Capital, is a farm community governed charitable integrated capital fund created to holistically serve BIPOC farmers in America who operate at the intersection of racial and climate justice.
- We work side-by-side to offer a larger menu of resources to black farmers in the Southeast

## Partnerships developed:

- New Communities was originally founded as a collective farm for black farmers and is recognized as the first community land trust in the United States.
  - New communities has agreed to be the Eastern headquarters for Jubilee Justice, housing our second rice mill, conducting research trials, and organizing outreach events in nearby farmers
- Mad Agriculture is a 501 (c )(3) that provides farm and business planning, financing, and access to crop markets to farmers and farmer groups across the country
  - We have partnered with Mag Agriculture to increase our capacity to work with farmers and offer more assistance in the economic planning of their farming businesses.
- National Black Food and Justice Alliance (NBFJA) is a coalition of Black-led organizations aimed at developing Black leadership, supporting Black communities, organizing for Black self-determination, and building institutions for Black food sovereignty & liberation.

# Outreach, Field days and Networking

## Outreach:

- April 27: Konda Mason and Mark Watson presented JJ and PC to the representatives of the Black Caucus of the South Carolina State Legislators.
- Some legislators connected us to farmers in SC, who we've included in our farmer cohort.

## Field Days at Inglewood:

- Still facing COVID restrictions, a few field days and community events were organized where JJ's research experiments at Inglewood were shared with the community. Among the visitors were:
  - Aug 25: Journalist to create a feature in NRCS newsletter
  - Sept 9: Campti Field of Dreams; Back to Your Roots Conference 2021
  - Oct 4-8: New Community collaborators visit

## Networking, Meetings and Visits

- During our field trips to farmers, we also reached out to champion farmers, research institutions, NGOs and private businesses to connect and network. In 2021, we visited (among others)
  - Rodale Institute Southeast Organic Center in Chatahoochee Hills, GA
  - USDA Soil Dynamics Lab in Auburn, AL
  - Nazirahk Amen and Purple Mountain Organics in Tacoma Park, MD
  - Heinz Thomet and Next Step Produce in Newburg, MD

# Jubilee Justice in the Press

NEWS

## Growing rice, healing the soil: Project tests new method in southern US

Melinda Martinez Alexandria Town Talk

Published 6:00 a.m. CT Sept. 30, 2020 | Updated 2:48 p.m. CT Oct. 1, 2020

[View Comments](#)



Konda Mason, owner of the non-profit Jubilee Justice, drove from California with her crew to begin the experimental rice growing project at Inglewood Farms using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method. MELINDA MARTINEZ

PLANNERS DIRECTORY

Green  
Dreamer

SUPPORT US

## Konda Mason: Holding love capital sacred (ep33)



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## Black-Led Investing Funds and Firms Look to Bridge Racial Wealth Gap

Innovative Financial Leaders Are Expanding Access to Capital, Building Generational Wealth, and Helping Growers Convert to Regenerative Practices

Oct 28, 2021

Farm. Food. Life.

modern farmer

FARM

FOOD & LIFESTYLE

NEWS

MTMF

## How One Organization is Restoring a Community of Black Farmers

OCT 21, 2021

Emily Baron Cadloff

Jubilee Justice's rice project helps growers foster meaningful and sustainable relationships with the land.



New Hope  
NETWORK



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How brands should approach digital advertising in the age of privacy protections

## Why Jubilee Justice is teaching Black farmers to grow organic rice



# The JJ School

- **Furthering Education for the Farm Team:** In November 2021, the entire JJ farm team has started to take the one-year-long **Dr Elaine's Soil Food Web course**. We will use what we learn to pass on to our farmers, through technical assistance, trainings and by creating technical manuals.
- The JJ Farm Manager participated in the **Organic Seed Alliance Seed Production Course**, and in the **2021 Louisiana Food Fellowship** to improve service to our farmers.
- **Technical Manuals:** in 2022, the JJ farm team will create technical rice manuals to be shared with our farmers.
- **Trainings** will be organized in 2022 at JJ Farm HQ and in farmers' fields about best practices to cultivate regenerative SRI rice.





# Outlook for 2022

- Install rice mill in renovated building and get mill running
- Sell our first rice through direct marketing and Lotus Foods
- Experiment with new rice varieties, crops, and cropping systems questions on the new five-acre farm in Alexandria, LA
- Expand farmer cohort and provide close technical assistance
  - Make technical manuals and training modules available to cohort farmers
  - Organize trainings and exchange visits
  - Connect farmers with new partners
- Learn new soil regenerating and biological techniques with the completion of the soil-food-web course and create a training module for cohort farmers
- Create new revenue streams: seed and seedling production for rice and other crops, composting business
- Provide equipment support to farmers in planting and harvesting rice and other JJ rotation crops
- Connect to new farmer-supporting organizations, and establish partnerships to develop an improved outreach strategy
- Collaborate with Mad Agriculture to pilot a design with three farmers to transition from conventional to regenerative farming

Get in touch with us:  
[Info@jubileejustice.org](mailto:Info@jubileejustice.org)