



COVID-19NEWSPOLITICS

BLACK FARMERS TO RECEIVE \$5 BILLION CORONAVIRUS RELIEF BILL TO PAY OFF DEBT, ESTABLISH EQUITY COMMISSION



A Farmer walks through his crops. Image: Twitter/@LeftOfBlack

by [Derek Major](#) March 10, 2021 6169

Inside President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill includes \$5 billion in funds earmarked for Black farmers.

The American Rescue Plan allocated \$10.4 billion for the nation's farmers, who were struggling before the coronavirus pandemic due to Trump's trade war. However, half of that will go specifically to Black farmers. John Boyd, head of the [National Black Farmers Association](#) told Yahoo News, Black farmers are literally on the brink of extinction.

"We're quite frankly, faced with extinction. If we can't get a new generation of young people involved in agriculture and farming, Blacks and other farmers of color into farming, you won't see it," Boyd said.

According to [the Associated Press](#), in addition to the same challenges white farmers face, Black farmers have to deal with less [access to credit and technical support](#), which makes it harder for them to update equipment, purchase seed, operate their farms, and buy more land. Black farmers have also had to deal with racial bias at almost every level of government, which has pushed them off their land.

According to Boyd, there were more than one million Black farmers at the turn of the century, but today there are less than 50,000.

Many have praised the Biden administration's effort to help African American farmers. The [Washington Post](#) called the effort the most significant legislation for Black farmers since the Civil Rights Act. According to the Post, Black farmers in America have lost more than 12 million acres of farmland over the past century, mostly since the 1950s. Agricultural experts and advocates for them say the loss is a combination of systemic racism, biased government policy, and social and business practices that have denied African Americans equitable access to markets.

There was some criticism, however. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) criticized the effort on Fox News Tuesday.

"Let me give you an example of something that really bothers me. In this bill, if you're a farmer, your loan will be forgiven up to 120 percent of your loan ... if you're socially disadvantaged, if you're African American, some other minority. But if you're [a] white person, if you're a white woman, no forgiveness. That's reparations. What does that have to do with COVID?" Graham asked.

Majority Whip Jim Clyburn wasted little time attacking Graham.

"He ought to be ashamed of himself, he knows the history in this country and he knows what has happened to Black farmers," Clyburn said on CNN Tuesday. "He ought to go to church and get in touch with his Christianity."

The funds will go toward paying off the debt of disadvantaged farmers and will be used to set up a racial equity commission in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.