

Ombudsman
In Re Black Farmers
Discrimination Litigation

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www.inreblackfarmersombudsman.com

April 20, 2012

Dear Madam or Sir:

We are writing you because you may be a class member in the current *In re Black Farmers Discrimination* lawsuit.

The Judge for the *In re Black Farmers* case appointed us to be Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman for the settlement. The Ombudsman is independent from the parties in the lawsuit. We report directly to the Judge and do not take orders from either USDA or the lawyers for the class.

This letter has three purposes. First, we want you to know about the Ombudsman and how to contact us. Second, we want to remind you about the May 11, 2012 deadline for filing Claim Forms in the case. Third, we want to warn you about scams targeting people involved in the case. Each of these topics is discussed below.

Ombudsman Role

The job of the Ombudsman is to learn about and try to solve problems with the implementation of the *In re Black Farmers* settlement.

The Ombudsman cannot change the settlement itself. For example, under the settlement only people who made a written request to be a part of the *Pigford* lawsuit – the first Black Farmers case – can be a part of *In re Black Farmers*. That request must have been to the *Pigford* Monitor, Facilitator, Arbitrator, Adjudicator, or the Court. The *In re Black Farmers* Settlement Agreement sets this requirement, and the Ombudsman cannot change it.

The Ombudsman may be able to help a class member if there are problems with the way the settlement is being carried out or implemented. For example, if a class member has tried to sign up for a Class Counsel meeting to get help in filling out a Claim Form, but cannot get through to set up a meeting, that would be a problem with the way the settlement is being carried out, and the Ombudsman may be able to help.

There are three ways to get in touch with the Ombudsman.

First, you can call the Ombudsman toll-free at 1-866-686-8682.

Second, you can send us an email at info@inreblackfarmersombudsman.com.

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Third, you can write us a letter at:

Ombudsman
P.O. Box 19100
Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Ombudsman also has a website with a bit of information about the case at www.inreblackfarmersombudsman.com. Class Counsel also has a website with information about the case at www.blackfarmercase.com.

Claim Forms and the May 11, 2012 Deadline

The only way to be a part of the *In re Black Farmers* settlement is to submit a completed Claim Form. The deadline for filing a Claim Form is May 11, 2012.

Class Counsel – the lawyers the Court appointed to represent class members – are holding meetings to help class members who want to submit a Claim Form. Class Counsel also is helping class members by phone. You can find out more about the dates and places of the Class Counsel meetings and the help Class Counsel may be able to give you by calling the Claims Administrator at 1-877-810-8110. This is also the number to call to request a Claim Form.

Your Claim Form must be filed by May 11, 2012. Although Class Counsel is helping people complete Claim Forms, you do not need to use a lawyer to file a Claim Form. You have the right to send in the Claim Form on your own. Make sure that it is filled out completely. Also, if your Claim Form has already been sent in, you may send in additional or corrected information about your claim up until the May 11 deadline.

Scams against Farmers

Together we have worked with farmers – and especially African American farmers – for nearly thirty years. One of the things we have seen repeatedly is that there are people and organizations that will try to swindle farmers. Unfortunately, it should not be a surprise that there are people who are using the *In re Black Farmers* settlement to cheat class members and the public.

We ask that you remember two things in order to avoid a scam.

First, in order to be a part of the *In re Black Farmers* settlement, you must fill out and send in an official Claim Form that came from the Claims Administrator or Class Counsel. Other sign-up sheets or questionnaires that you might have filled out will not make you a part of the settlement. If you filled out a form or signed up with an organization several years ago,

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those actions also will not make you a part of the settlement. In order to make a claim under the settlement, you must send in an official Claim Form.

Second, there is no charge to you for filing a Claim Form. If someone tells you that you must join an organization, or pay a membership fee, or pay for a notary in order to be a part of the *In re Black Farmers* settlement, that person is not telling you the truth.

There are many good community and farm organizations. Many have membership fees. It is never the case, however, that you need to join an organization or pay an organization in order to be a part of the *In re Black Farmers* settlement.

Conclusion

In order to be a part of the *In re Black Farmers* settlement, you must send in an official Claim Form by May 11, 2012. If there are problems with the way the settlement is being carried out, it is possible that the Ombudsman may be of some help.

Sincerely,

Stephen Carpenter
Ombudsman

Alva Y. Waller
Deputy Ombudsman