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## THIS SEASON OF SAAFON

*SAAFON Welcomes Dr. Jahi Chappell as New Executive Director*

It has been a momentous couple of years for SAAFON. Our co-founder, Ma Cynthia Hayes, passed suddenly in 2016, after leading a process setting new directions for SAAFON. Tamara Jones, who worked closely with Cynthia in this process, came on as Executive Director to guide the organization through the fresh and painful absence of our founder. Over the past three years, Tamara, the SAAFON team and Board worked to deepen and expand SAAFON's work.

As with all living things, following this period of recovery and growth, what has followed is a period of taking a needed breath. With Jahi starting in July as the new Executive Director—not to mention the global pandemic affecting us all—SAAFON is approaching a season of sowing. But before we sow, we need to re-engage with our farmer-members, talk to our community, and look at the “weather” ahead so that we can plant and tend the right things, together—the “crops” (programs, activities, support) that will support our members now and into the future.

So all of us at SAAFON are very much looking forward to 2021—we will be doing deep thought and consultation internally, and with all of you, to map the way forward into SAAFON's next phase. We look forward to connecting, re-connecting, learning and, hopefully, working, cooking, laughing, weeping, celebrating and more alongside our members. We look forward to planting and growing for the next phase of SAAFON, together. In the new year we will be releasing a full article and interview with Jahi. We look forward to giving our network the opportunity to learn more about SAAFON's new ED, as well as our future directions.

## UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

### Financial resources

- [National Young Farmers' Coalition Grant Program](#) - \$5,000 grants to 50 young farmers due by Jan 15, 2021 3pm EST
- [ATTRA's Funding Opportunities Page](#) (bookmark it! it is continuously updated)
- [Farm Aid's Farmer Resource Network Search Tool](#)
  - Be on the lookout for funding options in your state. For example, see the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission in NC - <https://agventures.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/07/nc-agventures-grant-program-2/>

### Webinars & Skill building

- [Acres of Ancestry](#) / Black Agrarian Fund - stay posted on their Dirt Rich Community Teach-Ins
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives 2020 Webinar series (recordings linked [here](#) .

### SAAFON TEAM

M. Jahi Chappell, Tammy Harris, Avery Jackson, Whitney Jaye, Maya Jordan, Jason Lindsay, Noah McDonald, and Alsie Parks

### SAAFON BOARD

Mrs. Yvette Browne (Chair), Mr. Jessie Buie (Vice Chair), Dr. Cindy Ayers Elliott (Treasurer), Dr. Owusu Bandele, Mr. Terry Hayes



*A look back back on our 2020...*

## **DIRECT FARMER SUPPORT FUND**

In light of COVID-19's impact on farmers, and the food system in general, SAAFON received funds that allowed us to pilot the Direct Farmer Support Fund, which offered unrestricted grants to farmers in our network. Since June 2020, SAAFON has distributed more than \$150k to more than 40 members, across six states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These funds were used to cover payroll and bills, expand production and build infrastructure, for emergency community food programs, and to meet a multitude of other farm and farmer needs. "Over the next several months, as we continue to re-evaluate, re-conceptualize, and build SAAFON's future work, it is our hope to continue to develop the Fund as an ongoing SAAFON program, as we have heard from members about the impact of the funds, and are committed to finding tangible ways to provide resources to members.

## **AGRO-ECOLOGY ENCOUNTER**

In early March of 2020, our family of farmers from all across the beloved land of Mississippi came together at Ole Brook Organic Farm, in Brookhaven, MS for the first of a series of state-based gatherings intended to share knowledge, relationship build and practice the Southern Agrarian way. We are in deep appreciation of siblings Sylvia, Wilda and SAAFON farmer and board member Jesse Buie for opening their home, their land and sharing their parent's vision for the family actualized and thriving to serve as a reminder of the wealth and quality of life that the land can provide us. Over three days of flexible intergenerational learning, we weaved a quilt that has been in the making for generations and years before. The techniques, practices and history we shared was as rich as the soil we steward. It was our intention, hope and plan to be able to gather with SAAFON farmers to be in this practice in North Carolina and Georgia, but we had to adapt to the emerging pandemic.

## **NORTH CAROLINA FARMER BRIGADES**

Fall 2020, SAAFON & RAFI-USA partnered to host four farmer brigades in North Carolina. SAAFON collaborated with the Rural Advancement Foundation International to organize brigades of 6-8 farmers on 1-2 projects, rotating to each farm. Covid protocols were in place to secure a safe convening. Projects included putting up deer fencing around a nursery, building a fencing enclosure, corralling hogs, tilling and mounding lettuces in the field, and more. Farmers collectively defined agroecology, participated in an improvised spoken word poetry reading, engaged in discussions around traditional farming practices, Black Agrarianism, land healing, and family stories. Attendees were also privy to djembe drumming sessions, great food, an impromptu basketball game and even explored the urban legend known as North Carolina's own "Tricky Sam". As the brigades wound down, farmers and organizers alike expressed a sense of kinship amongst themselves. A good time was had by everyone involved. It was agreed that brigades would continue into year 2021, and beyond.

## **STAY PLUGGED-IN**

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E-mail us at [info@saafon.org](mailto:info@saafon.org) or call (920) 372-2366 for more information.