



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity

www.usda.gov/strikeforce

GEORGIA

Georgia Fast Facts - 2014

State's Child Poverty Rate:	24.8%
State's Overall Poverty Rate:	17.6%
StrikeForce State Since:	2010
Number of StrikeForce Counties:	60
Total Outreach Events:	81
Number of Community Partners:	88
Total USDA Projects:	3,631
Total USDA Investments:	\$360.8 million

Contacts

Contact us to be a partner, or to learn more about StrikeForce opportunities:

Debra.Bell-Dison@ga.usda.gov
(229) 995-5811 ext. 115

Congressional Inquiries:
(202) 720-7095

Media Inquiries:
(202) 720-4623

Some of Our StrikeForce Community Partners

Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
Ben Hill County Development Authority
Digging Roots Educational Farm
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Fort Valley State University & Cooperative Extension
Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
Georgia Center of Innovation for Agribusiness
Mc SEED
Second Harvest Food Bank
Southeast Agricultural Coalition
University of Georgia & Cooperative Extension

Currently, 85 percent of our country's persistent poverty counties are in rural America. More than one third of rural Americans, and one in four rural children live in poverty. Kids growing up in families earning twice the poverty threshold are nearly three times as likely as other children to have poor health, are more likely to finish two fewer years of school, and are more likely to earn half as much money in their adult lives.

Growing the economy by investing in rural communities and increasing opportunities for families is key to our Nation's future. In 2010, Secretary Vilsack established USDA's StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity to address the specific challenges associated with rural poverty. Since then, StrikeForce teams have collaborated with more than 500 community partners and public entities to bring targeted assistance to rural areas experiencing chronic poverty.

These efforts have invested more than \$16.5 billion to create jobs, build homes, feed kids, assist farmers and conserve natural resources across twenty states. In 2015, StrikeForce expanded to include Oklahoma and Puerto Rico. Now, USDA StrikeForce teams will operate in 880 counties in 21 states and Puerto Rico. Each StrikeForce project is a commitment to America's economic future.

StrikeForce At Work

In Georgia, many low-income rural African American families have experienced problems through the probate process when title to a home is unclear or split among heirs. As a result, many families lack access to the wealth-generating tools commonly associated with land ownership.

In 2014, USDA Rural Development provided an \$80,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant to Ben Hill County for a groundbreaking pilot project offering pro bono legal services to assist low-income families, farmers and small business owners in South Georgia. Services focus on property inheritance issues, business start-ups, expansions and contracts. The nonprofit Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice recruits and coordinates volunteer attorneys, while the Development Authority of Ben Hill County serves as program coordinator. McIntosh County Sustainable Environmental and Economic Development (McSEED), a community coalition, delivers public outreach, counseling and technical assistance to rural small businesses. In addition, funding supports telecommunications to connect remote rural clients with lawyers in Atlanta. The project aims to assist 30 low-income clients by providing up to 160 hours of legal assistance.

These services are keeping assets in the community and giving families economic security. According to Cam Jordan, Director of Community Development for the City of Fitzgerald, "Nobody was able to get a handle on the problem until this project came along."

