



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

MISSISSIPPI



March FY-23

March Newsletter



Kurt Readus, State Conservationist

ABOUT NRCS

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service collaborates with farmers, ranchers, communities, and other landowners to help protect natural resources on private lands. We work side-by-side with landowners to identify & address natural resource concerns. Water quality, soil health, and habitat quantity for precious wildlife are just some of the core focal points of our organization. Find your local service center for more on how NRCS can help you.



A Message From The State Conservationist

This month, we experienced deadly tornadoes and thunderstorms that ripped across Mississippi. The massive, destructive trail was over 90 miles long, causing a deadly path resulting in deaths and devastation.

My condolences go out to everyone who suffered the loss of family members or possessions as a result of this catastrophe.

Keeping with our mission, "Helping People, Help the Land," NRCS staff members are eager to assist in the recovery of the storm-damaged areas. Whenever storms have harmed our communities in the past, our staff members have gathered nonperishable goods, toiletries, and hygiene supplies for the victims and helped with the cleanup. In addition to our local initiatives, USDA will be providing farmers with disaster assistance.

It is my desire that NRCS present a strong and coordinated effort to assist however we can. We are gathering supplies for people living in the impacted neighborhoods. Supplies can be dropped off at the State office or Area offices. I am asking that you record your volunteer efforts as Earth Team volunteer hours.

Our Agency offers and recommends the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to all employees experiencing personal dilemmas dealing with this disaster. The EAP provides confidential counseling services for USDA employees at no charge to the employee. You may call 1-800-222-0364 for assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or visit online at <https://foh.psc.gov>.

NATIONAL AG WEEK

National Agriculture Week is celebrated every year in March on dates announced by the Agriculture Council of America. This year the celebration commences on March 21 through 27. The week celebrates and acknowledges the agricultural industry and the role it plays in stabilizing the economy.

"American farms remind us of the beauty and generosity of our Nation. They feed the country and the world, and with each new planting season, they embody that most American of things possibilities. On National Agriculture Day, we celebrate all the farmers, farmworkers, ranchers, fishers, foresters, and other agricultural workers who do so much to make our Nation strong, fuel our economy, and steward our lands. America owes them." -President Biden

Women History Month

Advancing Women In Agriculture

Story by: Tommi Matthews, Public Affairs Specialist

Photos by: Tommi Matthews



Slowly but surely, gender norms in agriculture are changing, and women are leading the way. More than 1.2 million women make up 36% of the 3.4 million producers in the US. American women who work as farmers and ranchers are essential to the supply of agricultural goods to both our country and the rest of the globe. 9% of farms were run by women, whereas 56% of all farms featured a female producer. We are honoring Mrs. Teresa Ervin-Springs in Mississippi.

Teresa is the Lady Land Steward of Teresa and Kevin Oasis (TKO) Farms in McCool, Mississippi. TKO is a family-owned farm and has been in their family for approximately 80 years. The 73.3 acre property, belonged to Teresa's husband's

great-grandfather and is surrounded by ponds and pine forests. Kevin still wonders why his mother would leave them with such a responsibility after she deeded the estate to them in 2016. Prior to the inheritance, the couple had no farming knowledge nor a desire to farm.

Teresa had no idea where to begin and had never envision herself as a farmer. She started reading books, going to farming conferences, and watching YouTube videos to educate herself. She was introduced to the Winston County Self-Help Cooperative (WCSHC) by the local community farmers, who welcomed her and Kevin. Through the WCSHC they learned about USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Springs sought assistance from their local field office in Choctaw County. J'Nay Domineck, the agency's Acting Area Conservationist at the time, came out to their farm to see how the agency could help. Through J'Nay, the Springs learned more about NRCS programs. TKO Farms has been awarded 9 USDA contracts since 2019. Among the techniques used were a forestry plan, forestry burns, feeding pads, a seasonal high-tunnel, and fencing.

Teresa offers guidance to female farmers. "Finding a mentor who is doing what you want to accomplish is important since farming is not easy, just like any other industry. We reached the standards we have now with NRCS's assistance."



MISSISSIPPI USDA NRCS LEADERSHIP

.....

- ◆ **Kurt Readus**, State Conservationist
- ◆ **Michael Carr**, Assist. State Conservationist, Management & Strategy
- ◆ **Earl McMillian**, Assist. State Conservationist, Programs
- ◆ **Jason Keenan**, Assist. State Conservationist, Easements
- ◆ **Olguy Louis**, State Conservation Engineer
- ◆ **Rogerick Thompson**, State Resource Conservationist
- ◆ **James Curtis**, State Soil Scientist
- ◆ **Laura T. Anderson**, State Public Affairs Officer
- ◆ **Christy Robinson**, Assist. State Conservationist Field Operation (Area 1)
- ◆ **Jamie Keith**, Assist. State Conservationist Field Operations (Area 2)
- ◆ **Dennis Jones**, Assist. State Conservationist Field Operations (Area 3)
- ◆ **Taharga Hart**, Assist. State Conservationist Field Operations (Area 4)

FEED BACK

Conservation Bytes is a newsletter produced by the NRCS Mississippi State Office. Send us your questions or comment tommi.matthews@usda.gov

"Helping People Help the Land"

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

USA TODAY'S WOMEN OF THE YEAR HONOREE: Cindy Ayers - Elliott



Cindy Ayers- Elliot founder of Footprint Farms in Jackson, Mississippi shares about finding her roots in Mississippi and giving back to the community on USA TODAY.



"I'm so proud to be a Farmer and a woman who is a Catalyst for Health & Wealth."

-Cindy Ayers Elliot

Read more at: <https://www.clarionledger.com/in-depth/news/2023/03/19/cindy-ayers-elliott-mississippi-usa-today-women-year/69899414007/>

National Nutrition Month

What you eat plays a key role in bone health, since our bodies rely on nutrients such as calcium and vitamin D to build and maintain strong bones. Not getting enough of these bone-building nutrients can greatly increase your risk of low bone mass. The government recommended daily allowance of calcium is 1,000 and 1,200 mg if you're above the age of 51.

Six Foods to Eat for Healthy Bones

- **Canned sardines and salmon**

Canned sardines and salmon, as long as you eat them with the bones, are good sources of calcium and vitamin D. Vitamin D helps the body absorb the calcium.

Both are inexpensive and very versatile. You can make them into patties to make burgers, make sandwiches and delicious pasta dishes with them, or throw them to your salads.

- **Dark, leafy greens**

Dark leafy, green vegetables like collard greens, spinach, and turnip greens are also good for your bones. Aside from calcium, you can also get magnesium from them, which helps in preserving bone structure. If shelf stability is a concern, a good option would be no salt added or low sodium canned greens.

- **Soy Milk**

If you're not a fan of dairy, soymilk can be a very good option. In one study, it shows that getting soy protein, whether from food or supplements, can help protect older women from osteoporosis. Women are more prone to osteoporosis after menopause because of the decline in estrogen (this hormone is shown to protect against bone loss).

- **Sweet potatoes**

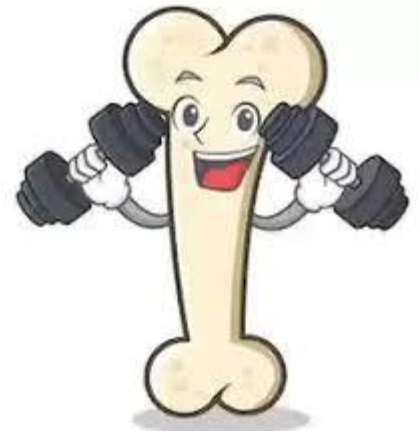
There are two less-known nutrients for bone health that are present in sweet potatoes – magnesium and potassium. When you're low in magnesium you can have problems with your vitamin D balance.

- **Almond butter**

Almond butter is an easy and delicious way to boost your calcium intake. A serving of it (about two tablespoons) provides you with 111 mg of calcium.

- **Prunes**

Prunes may be something you know that others eat to stay "regular" but this dried fruit has been shown to help slow down the breakdown of bone in your body.



J'Nay Domineck

J'Nay Domineck works for the Mississippi Natural Resource Conservation Service as an Urban Conservationist. J'Nay has more than eight years of experience in agriculture as a Soil Conservationist, District Conservationist, and Conservation Stewardship Program Manager. She has educated farmers, producers, and landowners about their land and farming operations throughout her career. She also enjoys introducing young people to agriculture through field days and community-based outreach events. J'Nay is an advocate for education and agriculture. She is passionate about improving early literacy skills and teaching children about the importance of agriculture.

J'Nay combined her passions for conservation and children in 2021 when she founded J. Domineck's Agricultural Literacy Foundation. J'Nay has tutored over 50 preschool and elementary-aged children both in person and online. J'Nay also published her first children's book, "The ABCs of Agriculture," in 2021, to educate children about agriculture.

J'Nay holds a Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Agriculture with an emphasis in Agribusiness from The University of Louisiana (Lafayette) and a Master of Science in Agricultural Economics from Alcorn State University. She is a member of Women in Natural Resources (WIN), National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees (NOPBNRCSE), and services as the Federal Women Project Manager for Mississippi NRCS.



FEDERAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM PICTURES

