



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity

www.usda.gov/strikeforce

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Fast Facts - 2015

State's Child Poverty Rate:	27.6%
State's Overall Poverty Rate:	18.7%
StrikeForce State Since:	2010
Number of StrikeForce Counties:	48
Total Outreach Events:	176
Number of Community Partners:	41
Total USDA Projects:	3,716
Total USDA Investments:	\$436.8 million

Contacts

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

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Some of Our StrikeForce Community Partners

Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation
Arkansas Natural Resources Commission
East Arkansas Enterprise Community
East Arkansas Planning and Development District
Forrest City School District
Rural Empowerment Development Organization
Seven Harvest, Inc.
Southern Bancorp
University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
Walmart Stores, Inc.
Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

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 1,500 community partners and public entities to bring targeted assistance to rural areas experiencing chronic poverty.

These efforts have invested more than \$23.5 billion to create jobs, build homes, feed kids, assist farmers and conserve natural resources across more than twenty states. In 2016, StrikeForce expanded to include Florida, Missouri, Montana, and Ohio. Now, USDA StrikeForce teams will operate in 970 counties in 25 states and Puerto Rico. Each StrikeForce project is a commitment to America's economic future.

StrikeForce At Work

Arkansas Woman Graduates from Youth Loan to Become FSA's 13,000th Microloan Recipient

At age 18, Dakota Williams knows exactly what she wants to do with her life — own a farm and raise cattle.

Dakota is a member of the Cherokee tribe and began her cattle business on her family's third generation Arkansas farm at age 12 with a Farm Service Agency (FSA) Youth Loan. Dakota is taking that business, working on the land of her ancestors, and expanding it with an FSA Microloan to meet demand for a specialty mix breed of cow.

The microloan program allows beginning, small and mid-sized farmers along with non-traditional farm operations to access up to \$50,000 in loans using a simplified application process.

For Dakota, that equates to purchasing more Angus cows to breed with Brangus bulls to create an Ultrablack breed. "It's a growing breed and what more people are wanting," said Dakota, whose talent for showing and high quality of standards has made her stand out among her peers.

"She is a good leader and a good role model for others," said Willetta Everett, her local farm loan officer. Everett has worked with Dakota to get a youth loan and the microloan. FSA youth loans allow for establishing and operating income-producing projects in connection with their participation in 4-H Clubs, FFA and similar organizations.

While in college, Dakota plans to keep pushing her business by working early mornings and late nights, much like she did in high school.

