

Ralph Paige
Federation of Southern Cooperatives

Ralph Paige has been the Executive Director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund for the past 15 years and field coordinator and marketing director for the prior 15 years. He is instrumental in improving the quality of rural life through several Federation programs: Over 200 units of low income housing; 18 community credit unions; 75 cooperatives; and a training center for rural leaders. Under his continued advocacy, the Federation led in the development and passage of the 2501 Small Farmer Program.

Paige has worked with the 1890 land-grant institutions for over 25 years and developed joint programs with them. He also represents their views and interest on various bodies. The relationship with the 1890s is strong; the Federation is a collaborator with the Rural Business Development Project at Alcorn State University, forestry and animal health programs at Tuskegee University, marketing and technical assistance programs at Fort Valley State, to name a few. This could serve as a model for 1890 and NGO cooperation for years to come.

Among the awards to the Federation/LAF under his leadership are: the Humanitarian Award in 1987 from the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-violent Social Change; a United Nations award in 1989 for “significant contribution of adequate shelter to the poorer segments of the community”; the first recipient of the Fannie Mae “Excellence in Low Income Housing Development Award: which included \$25,000; in 1999, the Pack Award for exemplary unity and distinguished work in the struggle to protect the survival of African American Business Organizations; and a number of other awards.

Under Paige’s leadership, the Federation publishes The Rural Agenda, which reaches over 5,000 rural residents and keeps them abreast of developments that impact them. The Federation also publishes a series of brochures entitled “What Every Landowner Needs to Know,” which outlines rights and responsibilities and has prevented the loss of thousands of black-owned acres.

For his leadership in such important work and for his excellent collaboration with the 1890 land-grant community on behalf of rural farmers and households, the 58th Professional Agricultural Workers Conference proudly confers on Ralph Paige in the year 2000 its George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame Award given to individuals working in significant partnership with the 1890 land-grant institutions.