



## Press Release

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### **Documentary from John Deere and AI Roker Entertainment Puts the Spotlight on Land Ownership Challenges Facing Black Farmers**

MOLINE, Illinois (June 13, 2023) – Deere & Company (NYSE: DE) and AI Roker Entertainment today announced a new documentary focused on the legacy of Black farming in America and the devastating impact of heirs' property – property passed to family members by inheritance, usually without a will or proper estate planning. Without a clear title, Black farmers are unable to qualify for government assistance, equipment financing or agricultural programs designed to optimize their land. In 2020, John Deere created the LEAP Coalition in partnership with the National Black Growers Council and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund to provide resources for farmers and landowners to resolve heirs' property issues.

“This film serves as an important platform for Black farmers to delve into their history while also discussing impactful ways to sustain agriculture and places to go for help with legislation and available grants,” said AI Roker, executive producer. “The organizations featured in the film are creating change and it’s one of the reasons our company was so interested in getting involved with this important work.”

Created in partnership with Emmy-nominated director Eternal Polk, the documentary, [Gaining Ground: The Fight for Black Land](#), addresses how landowners are reclaiming their agricultural rights and their paths to generational wealth. The film will debut at the American Black Film Festival in Miami on June 15, 2023, and appear in screenings across the country this summer.

“Documentaries can offer a lens into history and shed light on a forgotten or untold story. It's more than just a form of storytelling, it's a way to offer new viewpoints on an issue, create lasting dialogue, and drive change,” said Gaining Ground director Eternal Polk. “With Deere’s support, we were honored to help bring this important story to life. This documentary provides resources to those who are dealing with heirs' property and shows others how they can get involved to support this cause.”

Black land ownership peaked in 1910 at 16 to 19 million acres, which was about 14 percent of total arable land in the United States. A century later, 90 percent of Black-owned land has been lost, and heirs' property has been the leading cause for that decline. The documentary shines a spotlight on the challenges Black farmers and landowners' must navigate to preserve their land

for future generations. The film additionally showcases subject matter experts and practitioners who are actively working to address these issues.

"For farmers, land provides more than a livelihood, it provides a legacy. For far too long, Black farmers have had to deal with often coercive constraints, barriers and systems that result in involuntary loss of land, economic value and wealth. This documentary provides an opportunity for folks to tell their stories, highlight injustice and hopefully serve as a catalyst for concerted action to address this little known but important and pervasive issue" said Marc Howze, Senior Advisor, Office of the Chairman, Deere and Company. "The message of this documentary is clear: We need to do more to help Black farmers and landowners unlock the tremendous value in the land they already own to help us feed, clothe and shelter a growing population while pursuing opportunities to build wealth and provide a legacy for future generations."

### **ABOUT THE LEAP COALITION**

John Deere created the LEAP Coalition in 2020 in partnership with the National Black Growers Council and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. The LEAP Coalition provides legal, educational and other resources to help farmers and landowning families gain clear title of their land. It works to unlock economic value for farmers, while also eliminating systemic barriers to wealth building faced by Black farmers and other historically disadvantaged communities.

To learn more about the LEAP Coalition, to help Black farmers, and provide support to support LEAP coalition partners visit: <https://www.deere.com/gainingground>.

To learn more about the documentary, visit: <https://gaininggroundthefilm.com/>.

### **About John Deere**

Deere & Company ([www.JohnDeere.com](http://www.JohnDeere.com)) is a global leader in the delivery of agricultural, construction, and forestry equipment. We help our customers push the boundaries of what's possible in ways that are more productive and sustainable to help life leap forward. Our technology-enabled products including John Deere Autonomous 8R Tractor and tillage solution, See & Spray™, and E-Power Backhoe are just some of the ways we help meet the world's increasing need for food, shelter, and infrastructure. Deere & Company also provides financial services through John Deere Financial.

For more information on Deere & Company, visit us at [www.deere.com/en/news/](http://www.deere.com/en/news/).

### **About AI Roker Entertainment**

Formed in 1994, AI Roker Entertainment (ARE) is an industry-leading producer of original, award-winning TV programs and digital content. Led by 14-time Emmy winning TV personality and trusted media authority AI Roker, ARE partners with a creative consortium of producers, directors, writers, agencies, and talent to ideate, produce, activate, and amplify original content globally, using a variety of broadcast, cable, OTT, social, and streaming platforms. ARE works with brands, non-profits, ad agencies, and PR companies to generate and inspire audiences through social impact branded entertainment storytelling.