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Meta Is Transforming Rural Louisiana With a \$200 Billion Data Center.

Mark Zuckerberg's desire to build the world's biggest AI facility has entangled his company deeply in Louisiana's politics, culture and economy.

Dustin Morris steers his propeller plane over farmland shrouded in a ghostly morning mist. From 900 feet up, Richland Parish, Louisiana, looks much like it always has at harvest: The roads are scattered with cotton that's spilled off trucks hauling the crop to the parish's last-standing gin. These days it's hardly worth picking. Even the best farmer can expect to lose \$300 per acre.

It's a similar story for the fields of corn and soybean Morris tends. Aided by new technologies, local farmers say they've never produced a better crop. But commodity prices haven't kept pace with the cost of equipment, seed, fertilizer and, most recently, fuel. Subsidies don't cover the widening gap, and small farms have all but disappeared. A global trade war has left the large operations without reliable buyers. Bankruptcies are mounting. Younger residents, witnessing the fallout, are leaving in search of other work.

Despite all this, Morris maintains his optimism. "Things are always going to get better," the 42-year-old tells himself. A farmer must hold on to that belief, he says, otherwise "why would you stay?" As the sun rises he directs the attention of his passenger, a reporter from Bloomberg Businessweek, down below to the acreage his family has owned for generations, land whose value has always come from soil enriched by the silt of the Mississippi River.

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