



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

**South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Table of Contents**

List of Key Officials

1

Agency Overview

2-5

Performance Update

6-7

Financial Update

8

FY 20-21 Prioritized Budget Request Summary

9

Proviso Request Summary

10-11

Industrial Hemp Map

12

Industrial Hemp Guides

13-15

ACRE Brochure

16-17

ACRE Entrepreneurship Track Success Story

18-19

ACRE Curriculum Track Success Story

20



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

**South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Key Officials**

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner of Agriculture

(803) 734-2179

hweathe@scda.sc.gov

Aaron Wood, Assistant Commissioner-Agency Operations

(803) 734-2182

awood@scda.sc.gov

Clint Leach, Assistant Commissioner-External Affairs and Economic Development

(803) 734-2191

jcleach@scda.sc.gov

*key point of contact/liaison for legislative issues or inquiries

Derek Underwood, Assistant Commissioner-Consumer Protection

(803) 737-9702

dunder@scda.sc.gov



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

Agency Mission:

To promote and nurture the growth and development of South Carolina's agriculture industry and its related businesses while assuring the safety and security of the buying public.

Agency Vision:

For the State's economy to grow and prosper, providing everyone, producers and consumers, opportunities to enjoy the benefits of agriculture.

Daily Operations / Major Programs:

Agency Operations

- Administration
 - Finance / Budget
 - Procurement
 - Facilities & Fleet
- Commissioner's Office
- Grants Administration
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- State Farmers Markets

External Affairs and Economic Development

- Agribusiness Development
- Agricultural Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE)
- External Affairs
- Marketing & Promotions
 - Brand
 - Commodities
- Public Information
 - Communications
 - Market Bulletin

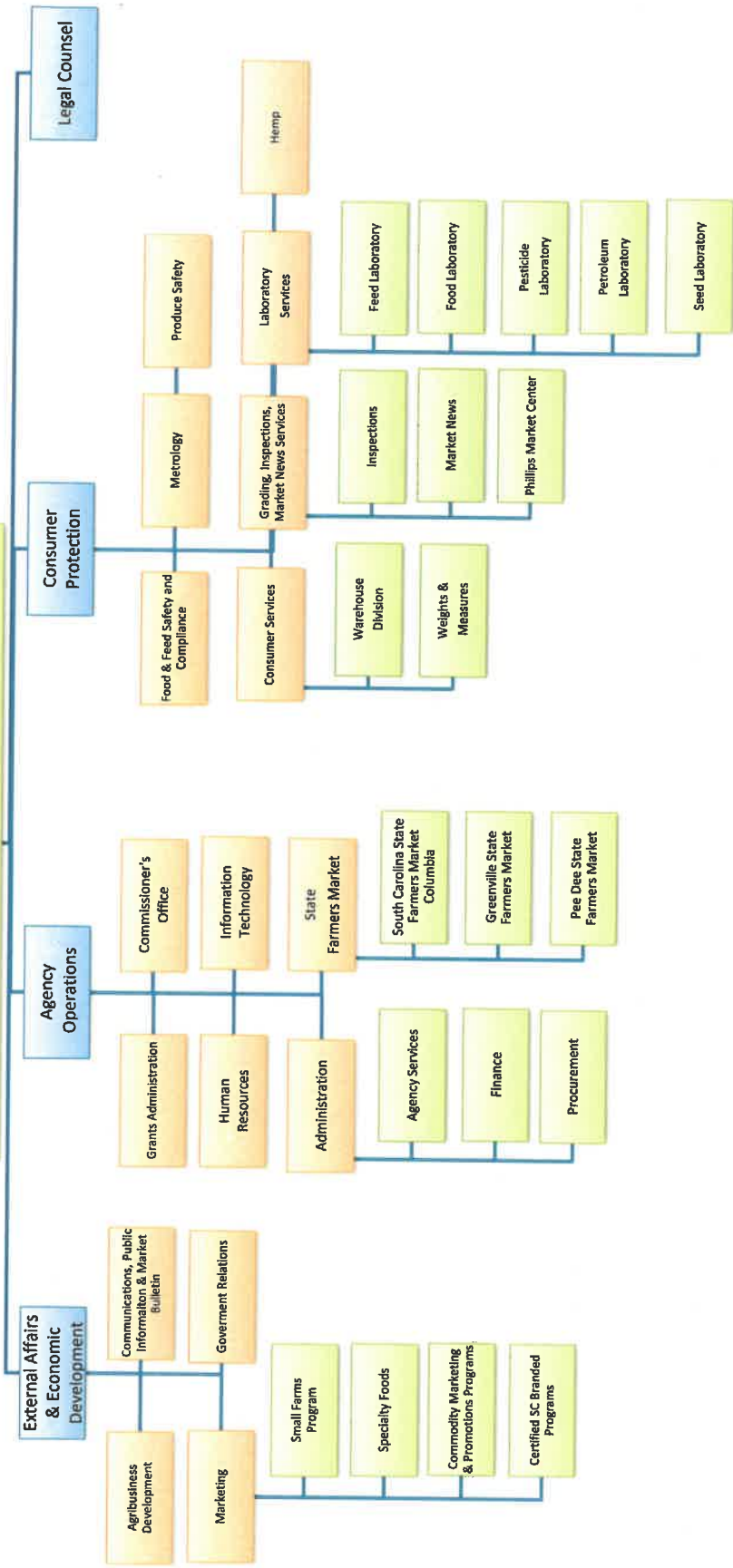
Consumer Protection

- Consumer Services
- Food & Feed Safety Compliance
- Grading & Inspections
 - Fruit & Vegetable
 - Market News
 - Poultry & Egg
 - Peanuts
- Hemp
- Laboratory Services
 - Petroleum & Pesticide
 - Food & Feed
 - Seed
- Metrology
- Produce Safety Rule

Legal

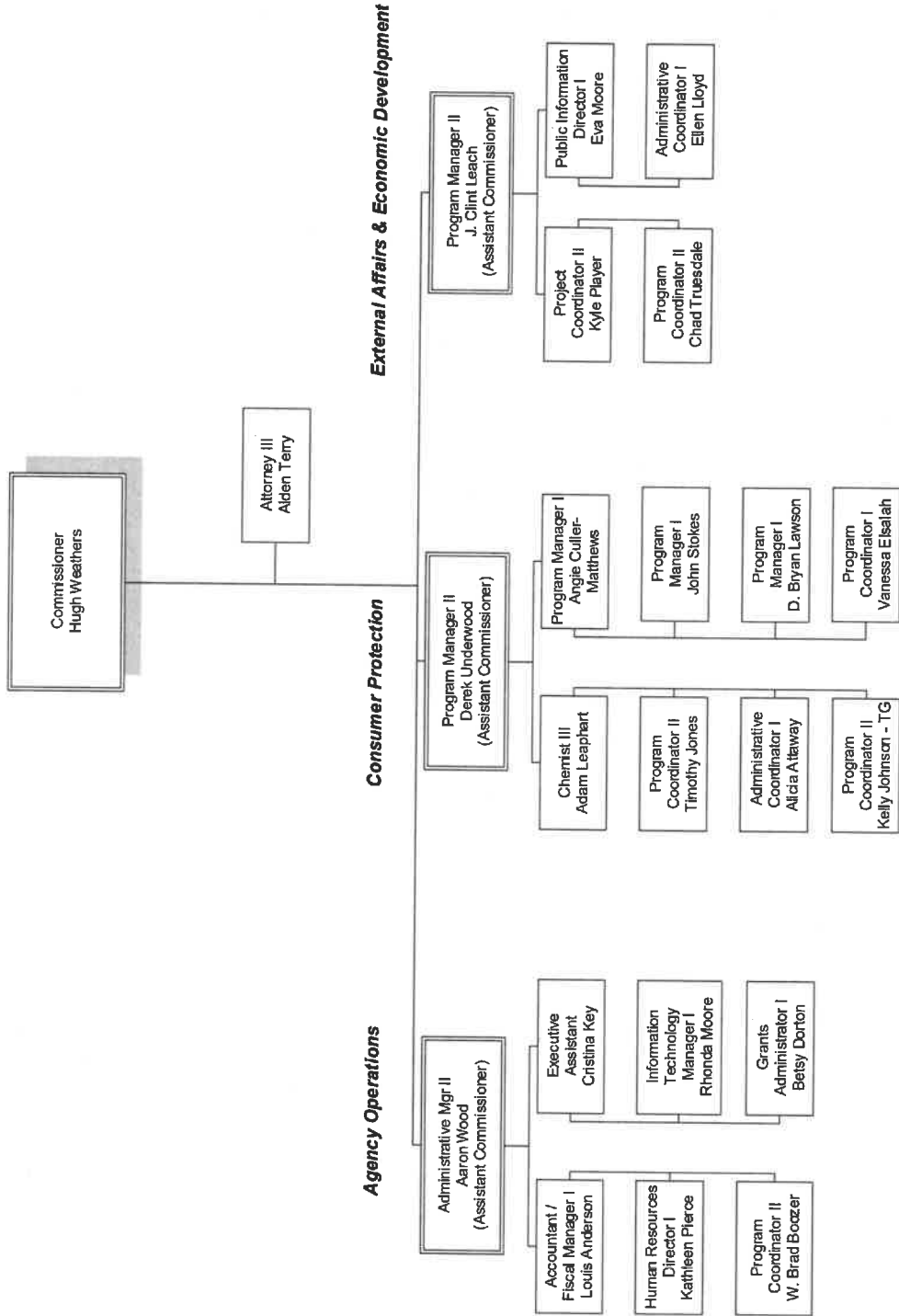
- General Counsel

South Carolina Department of Agriculture Commissioner of Agriculture



Agency FTE Authorized: 138
 Agency FTE Filled: 126
 14 TG
 9 TL

January 2, 2020



**South Carolina Department of Agriculture
FTE Breakdown January 2020**

Personnel Area		Authorized Total FTE
P160	DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	138.000

Job Class Code	Number of Employees as of 01/01/2020
AA75	4
AC20	1
AD22	3
AD28	1
AE30	1
AG10	1
AG15	1
AG20	1
AH10	4
AH15	1
AH25	1
AH30	1
AH35	4
AH40	6
AH45	3
AH50	2
AI10	1
AM55	1
AM65	2
BC10	1
BC40	1
BE30	1
BG30	1
ED10	2
ED12	4
ED15	1
ED35	2
ED40	1
JB40	4
JB50	7
KA10	2
KC32	1
KC34	2
KC35	1
LA20	2
LA25	3
LA40	3
LA50	1
LA55	8
LA60	2
LA65	2
LA70	10
LA75	17
LA80	7
UA01	1
Total:	126

Pay Grade	Number of Employees as of 01/01/2020
AHNSC	1
BAND 02	5
BAND 03	12
BAND 04	38
BAND 05	33
BAND 06	25
BAND 07	9
BAND 08	3
Total:	126

2018-19 Performance Update and Accountability Report Executive Summary

Goals:

1. Improve agency operational readiness and workforce development. (Government and Citizens)
2. Protect consumers and business entities through physical inspections, laboratory analyses, accuracy and precision calibrations of measuring devices, product (food, feed, fuel) sampling, facility and product licensing, and routine, risk-based or consumer-complaint driven inspections. (Maintaining Safety, Integrity and Security)
3. Promote, develop and expand South Carolina's agriculture / agribusiness industry, both domestically and internationally, by providing opportunities to farmers and industry players. (Public Infrastructure and Economic Development)

Agency Highlights and Achievements

1. All agency employees were provided training on the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and ethics compliance.
2. As evidenced by multiple reports, South Carolina state government worker salaries lag both other public employers and the private sector, and this economy has widened the gap. SCDA has taken several steps beyond salary increases to attract and keep productive workers.
3. SCDA is performing educational outreach and regulatory inspection during the phase-in period of the state law called The Produce Safety Act, and the federal Produce Safety Rule, part of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). To date, SCDA has conducted 19 trainings with 254 farms on the outreach and education side; and 14 regulatory inspections of the 65 large and small farms.
4. In December 2018, following the third year of a 5-year cooperative agreement with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), SCDA Food & Feed Safety Division achieved full implementation and conformance with all ten Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards (MFRPS). Subsequently, three additional years of MFRPS maintenance funding were awarded to include the institution of a Food Safety Task Force.
5. SCDA received a subaward from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) cooperative agreement with FDA to be part of a state food/feed Rapid Response Team (RRT). This RRT will improve traceability and response to feed and foodborne illnesses and other public health emergencies.
6. The 8,878 square foot Metrology Laboratory opened in April 2018 for calibration and certification of its own equipment and environment. It received that certification from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in January 2019 and opened for business in February 2019.

7. SCDA and SC Department of Commerce continue cooperating to recruit value-added agribusinesses to rural areas. From January 2018 to date, agribusiness projects worth \$667,100,000 in capital investment and 1,578 new jobs have been announced.
8. During FY 18-19, SCDA's Agricultural Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE) intensively served 345 South Carolinians, including 105 minority residents, in 30 counties.
9. SCDA is in year three of a five-year phase-in of the federal Animal Feed Regulatory Program Standards (AFRPS), and FDA recently provided a favorable progress assessment towards an audit by a third-party, American Association of Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA), scheduled in late 2020.
10. SCDA has commented on USDA's interim final rule on hemp with proposals to benefit farmers, while laying the groundwork for a state plan that complies with the proposed rule. The permitting and licensing process for growers and processors is being streamlined for the 2020 season, and SCDA plans to begin accepting applications on Feb. 1, 2020.

Restructuring Recommendations

1. Remove the bond requirement (\$50,000) for the Commissioner of Agriculture.
2. Limit service in a hold-over capacity on the Agriculture Commission to a period not to exceed six months.
3. Remove statutory references to the Agriculture Commission's authority to establish the agency's policies and annually approve the agency's budget as the Commissioner of Agriculture is a state constitutional officer.
4. Adopt the model feed law proposed by the American Association of Feed Control Officials, which 49 other states have already adopted, in full or by part.
5. Authorize an application fee (\$25) and tiered annual fee for a registration verification certificate (RVC), which is required for food manufacturers, distributors, warehouses, and wholesalers.
6. Require businesses dispensing petroleum products to notify the agency within 30 days of operating dispensers.
7. Authorize a registration fee per dispenser (\$5) for businesses dispensing petroleum products.
8. Enforce a scalable monetary penalty for habitual and willful offenders of petroleum law that take advantage of consumers
9. Revise state egg law to exempt United States Department of Agriculture graded facilities from state licensing; authorize the licensure of quail eggs; remove licensure requirements for small producers; and authorize a fee for registration.

South Carolina Department of Agriculture
 Budget vs Actual For Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 and Carryforward Balances
 January 7, 2020

	Fiscal Year 2019		Cash Carried Forward From FY2019	Fiscal Year 2020	
	Authorization	Expenditures		Authorization	Expenditures Through 1/17/19
General Funds	12,146,946	11,732,013	675,013	17,919,894	6,271,190
Earmarked Funds	7,966,453	6,743,690	9,697,840	9,983,479	4,129,041
Restricted Funds	-	-	12,942,616	-	-
Federal Funds	5,705,870	3,204,046	1,043,253	4,252,527	2,239,396

* Includes budgeted accounts, capital project funds and unbudgeted trust & agency accounts.

**FY 20-21 Prioritized Budget Request Summary
South Carolina Department of Agriculture**

BUDGET REQUESTS		FUNDING							FTEs					
		General - Recurring	General - NR	Capital	Other	Federal	Total	State	Other	Federal	Total			
1	Operational Costs	\$ 850,000												
2	Consumer Protection Inspectors										5.00			
3	Federal Hemp Farming Compliance	\$ 1,100,000												
4	Hemp Testing Laboratory Equipment		\$ 630,000											
5	Marketing Back-up Generator and Water Purification System	\$ 400,000												
6	Farmland Conservation Study		\$ 325,000											
7			\$ 150,000											
8														
9														
10														
11														
12														
13														
14														
15														
16														
17														
18														
19														
20														
TOTAL BUDGET REQUESTS		\$ 2,350,000	\$ 1,105,000									5.00		

Economic Development and Natural Resources Subcommittee Proviso Request Summary						
FY 19-20 Proviso #	Renumbered FY 20-21 Proviso #	Proviso Title	Short Summary	FY of Proviso Introduction/ # of years in budget	Recommended Action	Proviso Language
44.1	44.1	Market Bulletin	Outlines how citizens subscribe to the Market Bulletin; allows SCDA to charge a yearly subscription fee; and to use that fee to pay for publishing the Market Bulletin.	Unknown	CODIFY	The Market Bulletin shall be mailed only to those persons who request it in writing and a record of each request shall be maintained by the department. Provided further, that the Department of Agriculture is authorized to charge a yearly subscription fee to each person requesting the bulletin and may charge for classified advertisements printed in the bulletin. The funds collected pursuant to this provision shall be retained by the department to defray the costs of publication and related incidental expenses. A daily subsistence allowance of up to \$30.00 may be allowed for temporarily employed fruits and vegetables inspectors from funds generated by fruits and vegetables inspection fees and budgeted under other funds in Program III. Marketing Services, D. Inspection Services, in lieu of reimbursements for meals and lodging expense.
44.2	44.2	Fruit / Vegetable Inspectors 44.2 Subsistence	Sets daily per diem for fruit and vegetable inspectors	Unknown	DELETE	The Department of Agriculture may retain and expend fifty thousand dollars from the Warehouse Receipts Guaranty Fund established by Section 39-22-150 of the 1976 Code as is necessary for the department to administer the funding of the program. All servicepersons required to be registered with the Department of Agriculture pursuant to the provisions of Section 39-9-65 of the 1976 Code shall pay to the department a registration fee of \$25.00. Revenues generated by this provision shall be for use by the Department of Agriculture to offset expenses incurred in administering this registration program.
44.3	44.3	Warehouse Receipts 44.3 Guaranty Fund	Calls for SCDA to retain and expend \$50,000 from the Warehouse Receipts Guaranty Fund to administer the program (Section 39-22-150)	Unknown	CODIFY	
44.4	44.4	Weights and Measures 44.4 Registration	Sets a fee for weighmaster license	Unknown	CODIFY	
44.5	44.5	Sale of Property Revenue	Allows retainage of revenues for properties titled to or utilized by SCDA Allows SCDA to charge up to \$250 for export certificates and retain the revenue to pay for expenses incurred in issuing these certificates.	Unknown	NO CHANGE	The department may retain revenues associated with the sale of the property titled to or utilized by the department, except for the State Farmers Market property, and must expend these funds on capital improvements approved by the Joint Bond Review Committee and the State Fiscal Accountability Authority. The department must continue to occupy any property until replacement capital improvements are completed. The Department of Agriculture is allowed to charge up to \$250 for each export certification of agricultural products and to retain revenues to offset expenses incurred in performing certifications.
44.6	44.6	Export Certification		Unknown	CODIFY	

The Department of Agriculture is authorized to require the annual registration of feed labels by manufacturers and to charge a fee of \$15.00 for such registrations. Revenues generated by these fees shall be retained and used by the department to offset expenses incurred in operating the Feed Inspection Program.

In the current fiscal year, the provisions of the Consolidated Procurement Code related to a commodity boards expenditure of assessments collected from producers, as those terms are defined in Section 46-17-40 of the 1976 Code, are suspended.

The Department of Agriculture is authorized to carry forward any revenues, accrued interest, and unexpended Agribusiness Infrastructure funds from the prior fiscal year into the current fiscal year to be expended for the same purpose.

44.7	44.7 Feed Label Registration	Authorizes annual feed label registration and establishes fees	Unknown	CODIFY
44.8	44.8 Commodity Boards	Exempts commodity boards from the state procurement code	FY 17-18 Appropriations Act	CODIFY
44.9	44.9 Carry Forward Agribusiness Infrastructure	Provides carry-forward authority for agribusiness infrastructure funding	FY 18-19 Appropriations Act	CODIFY

2019 SOUTH CAROLINA HEMP FARMING PROGRAM

114 permit holders in 35 SC counties



MAP KEY

- County with Hemp Permit
- County without Hemp Permit

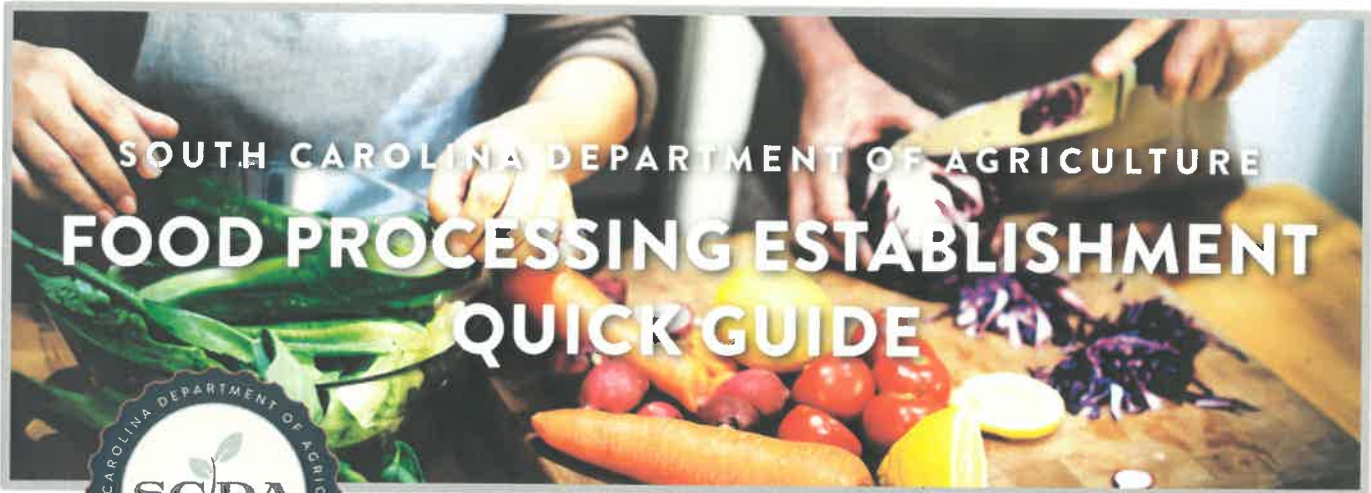


South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

1200 Senate Street
Columbia, SC 29201

AGRICULTURE.SC.GOV



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENT QUICK GUIDE



SC Department of Agriculture (SCDA) regulates the **wholesale** of most (non-beef, lamb, poultry, or pork) food products. Registration is required by state law and food products must be prepared in a registered and approved facility. A domestic kitchen is not an acceptable facility.

Your facility **may or may not** be subject to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule. FSMA requires businesses to have a Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) who prepares and implements a written Food Safety Plan. For more information, contact the FDA Technical Assistance Network (TAN).

If you believe that your business may not be subject to the PC rule requirements, you can complete Form FDA 3942a (for Human Food), which is an attestation form for a food facility meeting the definition of a "Qualified Facility."

BUILDING & INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

1. All employees must be **properly trained** to perform their assigned duties.
2. Employees must be trained on **food hygiene and food safety**.
3. **Records** must be kept of all trainings.
4. **Building/facilities** must be designed and constructed in a way that is **easily cleanable**.
5. **Grounds** must be kept clean by removing litter and waste.
6. **Grass** must be cut so that it does not attract or provide **harborage for pests**.
7. Facilities must be maintained in a **clean and sanitary condition** and kept in **good repair**.
8. Facilities must be **free of pests**. A pest control program and records of pest control treatment are required.
9. **Pesticides** must be used and stored properly as to not contaminate food.
10. **Walls, floors, and ceilings** must be made of solid **cleanable material** and kept in **good repair**.
11. **Drains** must be installed where needed and kept in good repair.
12. Facilities must be **well-lit**. **Light bulbs/ fixtures** must be **shatterproof**.
13. **Ventilation** must be adequate to **prevent condensation** and odors.
14. All **openings to the outside** must be adequately **screened** to protect against pests.
15. **Proper hand-washing practices** and sanitary restroom practices must be used.
16. Sinks must have **hot water, suitable pressure, and be adequate** for the operations of the facility.
17. **Hand-washing sinks** and restrooms must have **soap, paper towels, toilet paper, and be convenient** to all employees.
18. At a minimum, **two separate sinks are required**: a hand washing sink and a mop sink or a combination hand and mop sink and a separate utensil sink. A three compartment sink will allow utensils to be washed, rinsed, and sanitized.
19. **Utensils and equipment** must be **cleaned and sanitized frequently** to protect against allergen contact and cross-contamination.
20. **Non-food contact surfaces** must be **cleaned as frequently** as necessary to protect against allergen contact and cross-contamination.

FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENT QUICK GUIDE

A Registration Verification Certificate (RVC) is required by SC state law to wholesale a food product. You will need to apply for registration. A RVC will be issued after your first compliant inspection. Our Food Safety Officers perform food safety inspections under authority granted by the SC Food and Cosmetic Act section 39-25 and 21 CFR 117 by reference. For more information contact us at rvcregistration@scda.sc.gov or visit agriculture.sc.gov/divisions/consumer-protection/foodfeed-safety-compliance/

All food product labels must be in compliance with the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act and the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act. Labels intended for wholesale use will be reviewed by SCDA at time of registration and prior to use.

Clemson Extension's Food2Market program is designed to help food entrepreneurs with food safety regulations that are necessary to prepare food products for sale. Their staff has extensive knowledge in federal and state regulations. The Food2Market program can assist food entrepreneurs with training certification and with product testing. For more information, go to Clemson Extension's Food2Market website: www.clemson.edu/extension/food/food2market/

21. **Equipment, materials, and ingredients** must be stored properly and safely.
22. **Cold storage units** used to store food must have accurate temperature devices installed.
23. **Cleaning supplies and sanitizing agents** must be safe, adequate, and used properly.
24. **Chemicals** must be identified, held, and stored in a manner that protects against contamination.
25. You must have a **safe water supply**. SCDA will accept the use of either a DHEC approved public water system or well or a private well. If connected to a private well, you must have a Bacterial Analysis performed by an approved lab annually.
26. For **sewage disposal**, you must either be connected to a public sewage disposal system or have an onsite wastewater disposal system (septic system). Onsite disposal systems must have been approved by DHEC and you must provide a copy of your permit or approval of the system to SCDA.
27. **Thermometers, pH meters, metal detectors, and food production instruments and controls** must be calibrated, be adequate in number, and be properly maintained.
28. **Compressed gases** must be approved for food use.
29. **Proper sanitation principles** must be used to prevent allergen contact and/or cross-contamination.
30. **Plant sanitation** must be under the supervision of a competent individual.
31. **Growth of microorganisms, allergen cross-contact, contamination and deterioration of food** must be controlled by cooking, freezing, pasteurizing, pH and/or other controls.
32. **Quality control operations** must be used to ensure that **food and food packaging materials** are suitable for human consumption.
33. Sanitation failures, possible allergen cross-contact, and food contamination must be identified by using **testing procedures** (examples: swabbing of equipment, finished product samples, metal detection).
34. **Raw materials and ingredients** must be inspected, stored, and handled, to ensure they are suitable for food processing.
35. **Raw materials or other ingredients must be thawed** in a manner to prevent them from becoming adulterated.
36. **Human food by-products** for use as animal food must be labeled and stored properly.
37. **Adulterated food** must not be mixed with unadulterated food.



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
 AGRICULTURE.SC.GOV



CBD IN FOODS

It's unlawful under the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act (FD&C Act) to introduce food containing added CBD into interstate commerce, or to market CBD products as, or in, dietary supplements. This is because CBD is an active ingredient in an FDA-approved drug and was the subject of substantial clinical investigations before it was ever marketed as a food or dietary supplement.

SCDA, therefore, cannot allow foods with CBD (the active ingredient in a drug product) to be manufactured in SC.

Hemp is a plant (and an approved food additive) and CBD is a compound. Hemp is not CBD. "Partially processed" hemp is not CBD, either. Even "full spectrum" hemp extracts suspended in a carrier oil are more akin to hemp than pure CBD since they contain an array of phytonutrients. Although such extracts include CBD, they cannot in any reasonable sense be called CBD.

In order to manufacture and wholesale food products with approved hemp ingredients, companies will need to apply for a Registration Verification Certificate (RVC). Please refer to our Food Establishment Quick Guide for more information.

NON-APPROVED HEMP FOOD INGREDIENTS

- Pure CBD isolate
- "Full spectrum" whole-plant extract (i.e. hemp oil) if it includes health claims or if bears any sort of declaration of CBD
- Any hemp or hemp-derived product that promotes its medical or health benefits

JUSTIFICATION

Under section 301(II) of the FD&C Act, it is prohibited to introduce or deliver for introduction into interstate commerce any food (including any animal food or feed) to which has been added a substance which is an active ingredient in a drug product that has been approved under 21 U.S.C. § 355 (section 505 of the Act) or a drug for which substantial clinical investigations have been instituted and for which the existence of such investigations has been made public.

APPROVED HEMP FOOD INGREDIENTS

- Hemp seeds
- Hemp seed protein
- Hemp seed oil
- Hemp leaves and micro greens
- Chopped hemp plant material
- "Full spectrum" whole-plant extract (i.e. hemp oil) if it contains the naturally occurring array of phytonutrients found in hemp (which include naturally occurring CBD) and if it does not include health claims, and if it does not bear any sort of declaration of CBD

JUSTIFICATION

The FDA announced that it "has completed [its] evaluation of three Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) notices related to hulled hemp seeds, hemp seed protein and hemp seed oil and that the agency had no questions regarding the company's conclusion that the use of such products as described in the notices is safe."

For questions about hemp products in human food, contact:

Food & Feed Safety Department
123 Ballard Court • West Columbia, SC 29172
803-737-9700 • rvregistration@scda.sc.gov



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURE.SC.GOV

What is the Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship?

The Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE), an initiative of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, is an umbrella program that capitalizes on opportunities in the fields of agriculture, research, and entrepreneurship. Overall, ACRE seeks to provide additional economic prosperity for South Carolina agribusiness both from within the state and from across the globe. ACRE houses a unique research program devoted to addressing specific challenges for industries that can provide more market opportunities to South Carolina agribusinesses and farmers. The research component combined with an entrepreneurship initiative is designed to help drive new ideas, technologies and solutions into the market to increase jobs and economic development in the South Carolina agricultural sector.

How will ACRE work?

ACRE has six areas of emphasis:

- Research initiatives
- Entrepreneurship center
- Agribusiness development grants
- SC Farm Link
- Policy
- Local food/food hub logistics

ACRE-SC.COM

If you have any questions, please contact:

Kyle Player
Executive Director
803-734-2324
kplayer@scda.sc.gov

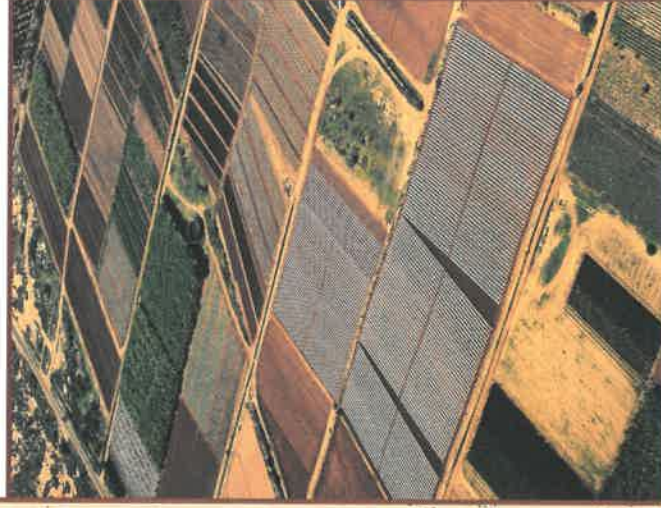


South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner
agriculture.sc.gov

ACRE

**Agribusiness Center for
Research & Entrepreneurship**

**SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP
CENTER**



ACRE

Agribusiness Center for Research & Entrepreneurship

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Entrepreneurship Center

South Carolina is ripe with budding entrepreneurs who have new and innovative ideas in specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops), meat products, aquaculture, timber, agritourism, industrial hemp, hydroponics or aquaponics, container or indoor farming, mechanical harvesting, agribusiness technology, and any other innovative agriculture practices.

The ACRE Entrepreneurship Center will serve this audience with two tracks:

Track 1 is for agribusiness entrepreneurs who are ready to launch their product or branch out into new fields but need business mentors and/or funding. Through this program, ACRE will connect entrepreneurs to successful business mentors to help open doors, fuel potential, and provide guidance in furthering their enterprises.

Applications for Track 1 will be open in Spring 2020.

Applicants selected to participate in the EC Program could receive up to \$25,000 for their company or product and/or access to a network of business mentors and grant writing consultants.

Track 2 curriculum program is a partnership between ACRE and Clemson Cooperative Extension. This program is for beginning innovators who have a great idea or prototype for a new product or process and would benefit from a business curriculum program. Participants will learn key principles for developing business and marketing plans, as well as understanding market trends and prospective customers. The curriculum program culminates in an opportunity for each participant to pitch an idea to an agribusiness panel for the chance to win substantial funding. Upon completion of the curriculum program, participants may choose to apply for Track 1.

Applications for Track 2 will be open in late 2020.

MARKET BULLETIN

Vol. 93 • Num. 13

July 4, 2019

Est.



1913

7 INNOVATIVE FARMERS GET ACRE FUNDING

BY JEREMY WARD, ACRE COORDINATOR

They say a tree is only as strong as its roots — and through the Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE), the SC Department of Agriculture is working to strengthen our state's agricultural economy from the bottom up. ACRE recently announced the seven awardees who will participate in this year's Entrepreneurship Program.

These seven agricultural entrepreneurs hail from every region of the state, and are all innovative, visionary and dedicated. Each is eligible to receive up to \$25,000 in funding from ACRE, but the amount varies with the business.

ACRE Executive Director Kyle Player praised the enthusiasm and passion of the entrepreneurs selected.

"We had 36 applicants to this program, all of whom were qualified and impressive," Player said. "I'm convinced that these seven will make a real impact on our state, and we are truly excited to begin working with them."

Launched in early 2018, ACRE provides grants, research support and other services to help expand economic opportunities for South Carolina agriculture. The Entrepreneurship Program will help position these businesses in the marketplace through mentoring, networking, and funding.

JOSH EBOCH BARRIER ISLAND OYSTER CO.

Barrier Island Oyster Co., the first floating oyster farm in Charleston County, has a two-pronged goal: promoting marine conservation and cultivating superior oysters. Spawmed in hatcheries, the oysters grow in a mesh cage in Lowcountry waters until they have reached the ideal size. At that point, the oysters — which the company dubs "Sea Clouds" — are sold to local restaurants and raw bars, where they are a hot commodity.

Eboch and his business partner, Jared Hulteen, plan to use the ACRE funds for equipment to add a third prong to their business: agritourism. "Our oyster farm tours," explains Eboch, will be "a fantastic way to advertise our products and introduce hundreds — even thousands — of potential consumers to the farming process."

JARED JESTER HERITAGE PEANUT COMPANY

South Carolina is the only state to officially recognize the boiled peanut, and Jared Jester is looking to capitalize on our beloved state snack.

"Through this unique connection," Jester says, "our company can help this state differentiate itself from other states throughout the nation."

Jester heads up the Heritage Peanut Company, a new business that is packaging and selling a line of boiled peanut hummus and pre-cooked, frozen boiled peanuts. He is partnered in this venture with Corrin Bowers, a peanut farmer from Estill, SC, in order to provide the highest quality South Carolina-grown peanuts to consumers.

Needless to say, Jester is very excited about the growth of his business. "We're applying modern technology," he says, "to an already-proven product in the boiled peanut, in a state that is already synonymous with that product." He plans to use his ACRE funds for a variety of purposes, including equipment lease, marketing, and labeling.



SC boiled peanuts are "an already-proven product," says Jared Jester. Photo courtesy Heritage Peanut Company

STEVE LORCH TABLE ROCK TEA COMPANY

Steve Lorch has ambitious goals for tea farming in upstate South Carolina — turning this region into "tea country," similar to how Napa Valley is known for wine. Located in the shadow of Table Rock State Park, Lorch is accomplishing this goal by pioneering the resurgent U.S. tea industry.

"We are one of just a handful of tea growers in the continental United States," explains Lorch, "and our trademark slogan is actually 'uniquely American tea.' Instead of trying to recreate Chinese or Indian or Kenyan tea farms, we are playing to the strengths of the United States and, in particular, the Appalachian region where we are located."

Through careful breeding, construction of several greenhouses, and establishment of a tea growers' consortium, Lorch is primed to expand his business into new acreage and fresh markets. He plans to use the grant funding to buy a bagging machine in order to do just that.

As he works to grow the business, Lorch says that he hopes "to generate more awareness of this specialty crop in South Carolina," and to "provide the expertise to anyone interested in starting."



COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

HUGH E. WEATHERS
SOUTH CAROLINA
COMMISSIONER OF
AGRICULTURE

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

I went to Texas last month and came back with a new pair of cowboy boots — and some information for South Carolina farmers.

This year's meeting of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) was held in Fort Worth, Texas, and Assistant Commissioners Clint Leach and Aaron Wood joined me there to talk policy and enjoy some Texas-sized hospitality. In fact, the theme of the conference was "Leave Your Suits, Bring Your Boots."

SASDA represents 14 Southern U.S. states, plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Farmers across this region share a lot of the same concerns, and my colleagues and I got a chance to hear from federal officials and industry experts on some of those issues.

The Waters of the United States rule, or WOTUS, has been a concern of farmers. We were pleased when the Trump administration decided to suspend and revisit this rule with the agricultural community in mind, and in Texas we got a chance to hear from the EPA Regional Administrator from Atlanta about how the revised rule might work.

We also talked about the future of NAFTA and other trade agreements, and the Chinese general consul explained his view of agricultural trade

with U.S. farmers. Open dialogue is necessary, but he definitely was presenting the Chinese view of things.

We received an update on the federal Farm to School program. This grant helps fund South Carolina's own Farm to School program, scfarmtoinstitution.com, which helps promote agriculture education and get fresh foods into schools.

And Texas' Department of Agriculture talked a bit about their Farm Fresh program, which tries to raise awareness of agriculture and improve Texans' health. Of course, here in South Carolina, we've seen a lot of success with our Certified SC Grown and Fresh on the Menu programs.

In the business session, we addressed the uncertainty that surrounds the industrial hemp regulations. We passed a resolution to urge the FDA to get some clarity to the industry as soon as possible.

The meeting wasn't all business. The assistant commissioners and I also got to tour AT&T Stadium, where the Dallas Cowboys play. That's quite a facility that the locals call "Jerry World" after the Cowboys' owner, Jerry Jones.

I hope to visit the Lone Star State again, but I'm always happy to get back to South Carolina.

Hugh Weathers

Story continues on page 8

ACRE AWARDS, CONTINUED

JASON THOMAS SOW

One of the more unique agribusiness start-ups in our state is Sow, described by founder Jason Thomas as "an online marketplace for direct transactions between small farmers and the people in their communities." Through this company, Thomas believes he can revolutionize the way local farms sell their products.

Sow's main components are secure food boxes that can be placed in any urban location and an inventory app for both consumers and farmers. In a matter of seconds, anyone can check what products are available in the closest box to them, and farmers can just as easily track the sale of their goods.

"We're shining a light on the rich agricultural history that is the lifeblood of South Carolina's culture," declares Thomas, "and giving people the opportunity to know their farmers, just like their grandparents did." With the ACRE funding, Thomas plans to further develop the software behind the business and expand into new cities in the state.

DEBBIE WEBSTER WHISPERING PINES FARM

Located in Pickens County, Whispering Pines Farm boasts the prestigious claim of being the only sheep dairy in the state. Owner Debbie Webster makes several delicious types of cheese and other dairy products, including ricotta, manchego, feta, yogurt, and kefir.

Sheep cheese hasn't yet entered into the mainstream of South Carolina consumption, but Webster is determined to do her part to change that. Dairy products made from sheep milk are great for people with lactose intolerance, in addition to having higher amounts of protein, zinc, calcium, amino acids, and other nutrients compared to cow milk.

Although Webster's business idea is novel, her mission statement is not. "We love people, and we

love the animals we work with," she states with a smile, "and we want to do the right thing and take care of both."

Webster is excited to begin working with ACRE "to help us reach our full potential," and plans to use the ACRE funding to purchase equipment for milk storage, hire more personnel, and increase marketing.

BRIAN WHEAT COMMON JOY

Headquartered in Charleston, Common Joy is currently the only company growing luffa commercially in our state. Luffa, a unique member of the cucurbit family with multiple uses, is a sub-tropical plant that grows well in the coastal regions of our state.

Luffa has the distinction of being prized in two different industries: skincare and consumption. When fresh, the gourds, blossoms, and tendrils are

edible, and highly desired by specialty restaurants in the area. When dried, the gourd is valued as an excellent sponge for cleaning and bathing.

"As people start looking into different crops that could be viable for South Carolina," Wheat explains, "luffa could be a suitable choice. It serves a number of different purposes — it's an edible crop, a value-added crop, and resistant to a number of pests and diseases." He plans to use the ACRE funding for increased marketing and product development.

TY AND TRACY WOODARD COVERED IN COTTON

Covered in Cotton, based out of Florence, is unique in two ways. First of all, they are in the rare position of making a value-added product from their own cotton crop. And second, they are actively focused on charity, while at the same time growing their for-profit business.

Using the highest quality upland cotton from their farm, Covered in Cotton produces sturdy yet luxurious cotton blankets and throws. The business was inspired by the story of their young son, who in 2015 battled for his life with bacterial meningitis in a Columbia children's hospital and was comforted by a blanket given by a nurse. Because of this experience, the Woodards now donate one blanket for every to they sell to local children's hospitals.

"Our goal," Tracy elaborates, "is not primarily to sell blankets, but to help connect people with agriculture, and to show them where their food, fiber and fuel comes from. In addition, we work to share the story of our son's illness, and the grace and hope from God that resulted from that."

The Woodards plan to use their ACRE funding to grow their product line into new bedding and baby swaddle products. "A business that is ag-related is very unique in and of itself," Tracy concludes, "and we are excited to begin working with ACRE to support our mission."



Brian Wheat is the state's first commercial luffa farmer.
Photo courtesy Common Joy

SCHOOL DISTRICT SHARES FREE FRESH PRODUCE AT WEEKLY MARKET

BY EVA MOORE

Perhaps the only thing better than healthy summer produce is free healthy summer produce, and the Lexington-Richland 5 School District is sharing some of South Carolina's bounty with low-income residents this summer by hosting a free farmers market. "It's pretty cool to give away produce and not charge money," said Todd Bedenbaugh, the district's director of student nutrition.

For the first market, held June 20 at an Irmo apartment complex, Lexington-based WP Rawl donated 14 cases of produce. School district staff volunteered their time to make the market a reality.

Each family that visited the market was given a free bag of fresh corn, squash, and kale. Bedenbaugh said staff also cooked a squash recipe and offered samples and recipes to market visitors. "We hope they'll eat healthy, and hopefully have extra food," he said. Bedenbaugh said the idea to hold the market came from Karen Tanner, wife of University of South Carolina athletics director Ray Tanner.

The district plans to hold the market every Thursday through August 1 (July 4 excluded) at the Irmo Village Apartments. In future years, they plan to expand the number of market sites.



Volunteers from Lexington Richland School District 5 gave out free fresh produce June 20.
Photo courtesy Lexington Richland School District 5

PRODUCE PROFESSIONALS GET UP CLOSE WITH SC FARMS

BY EVA MOORE

What do Walmart, meal kit delivery service HelloFresh, food service supplier US Foods, and regional grocers like Harps, Rouses, and Food Lion all have in common? They need reliable sources of fresh produce. The Southeast Produce Council's STEP-UPP program helps new buyers at these and other companies learn about the produce industry, from farms to packinghouses and beyond. And last week, the 2019 class of up-and-coming buyers got a chance to learn about what South Carolina has to offer.

The 11-member group toured Lexington County-based WP Rawl, which grows greens and other produce; peach growers Titan Farms; produce processor McEntire Produce; Vertical Roots, a hydroponic lettuce farm in Summerville; Watsonia Farms, which grows organic peaches and other fruits and vegetables; and Coosaw Farms, which grows blueberries, watermelons, and cabbages.

"I think they were pleasantly surprised by the technology and the passion our growers had," said the South Carolina Department of Agriculture's Katie Pfeiffer, who helped coordinate the visit.

The STEP-UPP participants also shared some meals, including a dinner at West Columbia farm-to-table restaurant Terra sponsored by the SC Peach Council.



STEP-UPP participants met with Commissioner Hugh Weathers.
SCDA photo

South Carolina Department of Agriculture

SC AGRIBIZ AND FARM EXPO RETURNS FOR EIGHTH YEAR

BY MIRIAM PFLUG, EXPO SHOW COORDINATOR

The eighth annual SC AgriBiz & Farm Expo features a great lineup of programming, speakers, exhibitors, hands-on activities, great food and lots of information.

Make plans to attend the Expo at the Florence Center, located at 3300 West Radio Drive in Florence, South Carolina, on Wednesday, Jan. 15 and Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020.

The Expo kicks off with the Farmer Appreciation Breakfast on Wednesday, Jan. 15, at 8:30 a.m., featuring keynote speaker Dr. Ron Prestage. Prestage is a hog and turkey farmer and owner/president of Prestage Farms — no stranger to agriculture and Carolina farmers. An engaging and dynamic speaker, Prestage will share challenges and opportunities in the agricultural and agribusiness industry, including key environmental battles, animal welfare, commodity markets, and effects of urban sprawl. He will also discuss some exciting industry expansion projects and future opportunities for farmers.

The trade show floor will open at 10 a.m., providing an opportunity for farmers to connect with suppliers and see new products.

The 2020 Expo presents several different tracks, so there is something for everyone. The lineup includes a Forestry Track on Wednesday morning which includes presentations about the next beetle outbreak, how to combine farming and forestry, how forestry is an alternate income source as well as an educational session on good pond management.

On Thursday, Jan. 16, Dr. John Chastain with Clemson University will present the

Confined Animal Manure Managers (Camm) Conference providing five credit hours for \$125. This session will provide lots of recertification educational credits needed.

The Fruit, Veggies & Alternative Track will have two days of information on various crops and how to meet customers' needs as well as information on growing alternative crops and alternative income sources for your farming operation.

New this year will be the Carolina Hemp Conference. The two-day schedule includes educational classes on the economics of growing hemp, diseases diagnosed to date, insurance, the diversification of hemp, how to build a successful hemp company, package distribution and much more. There will be top speakers from around the country.

As in previous years, there will be a Women In Ag Track as well with information shared on profitability, meeting with other successful women farmers to learn from their experiences, and the Women's Leadership Session.

And to top off a great Expo, there will be the outstanding Taste of South Carolina on Wednesday evening and the Commissioner's Breakfast on Thursday morning. Visit the website at scagribizexpo.com to obtain your tickets for these events. As in previous years, general admission to the Expo is free and open to all.

Mark your calendar, purchase your special events tickets, and see you Wednesday, Jan. 15, and Thursday, Jan. 16.



AGRIBUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS LEARN BUSINESS SKILLS, PITCH IDEAS

BY EVA MOORE

Fifteen entrepreneurs participated in the 2019 ACRE/Clemson Extension Curriculum program, and five of them have been awarded \$5,000 each for their agribusiness projects.

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture founded the Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship in 2018 to help identify and nurture new ideas and businesses in the Palmetto State's agribusiness sector. One of its programs is the ACRE Curriculum, a partnership with Clemson Cooperative Extension that guides beginning entrepreneurs through creating a business plan and other business skills.

In its second year, the ACRE Curriculum program offered skills training and opportunities for entrepreneurs to network and learn.

"This year, I think we vastly improved on what we were able to deliver to these 15 businesses," said ACRE Executive Director Kyle Player. "Only three of our 15 had any semblance of a business plan when we started, so we taught them about business planning, finances, marketing, operational planning, how to give a pitch, how to apply for a grant or loan," and other crucial business skills.

Following a live "Pitch Day" on Dec. 17, a panel of judges awarded five participants \$5,000 each for their projects:

- Ben Crawford and Rebecca Goldberg of Woodland Valley Mushrooms grow gourmet mushrooms in a converted shipping container in the Aiken County area. Crawford and Goldberg plan to acquire and upfit a second container to expand their market.
- Justin Hancock of Wando River Farm, a small produce farm in the Lowcountry with a

community-supported agriculture (CSA) program and a few restaurant clients, plans to expand the farm's production.

- David and Caroline Harper run CHI design indigo, a Midlands company making hand-dyed indigo textiles and working to bring back the historic crop to South Carolina. The Harpers are working with three in-state farms to grow indigo, and have plans for further educational outreach.
- Melissa Price of Saluda-based Patchwork Farm plans to use the ACRE funding to launch an educational agritourism project in which students will be able to adopt a cow on her farm and follow it virtually from their classroom. "We're always looking for ways to connect kids with agriculture, because that is a disconnect these days, unfortunately," Player says.
- Toshiba Traynham-Jackson is one of three family members behind Jackson Farms II, which sells produce in the Upstate. They plan to build a mobile farmers market to serve food deserts in their area, expanding their community outreach as well as their business.

"We obviously had 10 other wonderful ones, but we only could give funding to five of them," Player noted. "But it wasn't just about the money; it was about helping them make connections, helping them build business plans, helping them meet peers, and to continue a relationship with ACRE."

ACRE also has a track for more experienced entrepreneurs looking to push their businesses to the next level with funding. Applications for that track will open in spring of 2020.

To learn more about ACRE, visit acre-sc.com.

SC SOYBEAN FARMER RE-ELECTED TO NATIONAL BOARD

BY UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD

ST. LOUIS — United Soybean Board farmer-directors elected Jim Carroll III from Brinkley, Arkansas, as Chair at the annual board meeting on December 11. The board also elected nine directors to serve alongside Carroll on the Executive Committee, including Woody Green of South Carolina.

In addition, 19 new directors, appointed by Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, were sworn in by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We've made great strides to innovate beyond the bushel and infuse every opportunity we can into growing markets and creating new uses for soybeans," said Carroll. "We have a lot to be proud of but also have tremendous potential to further demand as we continue our progress through wise and strategic investments. One of my priorities as Chair is to recognize the performance and sustainability of U.S. Soy and show our customers its many capabilities as a renewable alternative."

USB leadership, with oversight from USDA, guides the activity of the national soy checkoff in accordance with the strategy outlined by the 78-member board. USB continues to focus on three priority areas for investment: meal, oil and sustainability. During the meeting, they considered market impacts, challenges and opportunities that will affect soybean value, hearing from several key industry influencers. USB also recognized the American Soybean Association's 100th anniversary at the meeting, noting its commitment to domestic and international policy issues important to the soybean industry.



MARKET BULLETIN 2020 DEADLINE SCHEDULE

NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
AGRICULTURE.SC.GOV/MARKET-BULLETIN