**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND CHAPTER 3, TITLE 46 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, BY ADDING SECTION 46-3-25 TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN A PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS TO SERVE LOCALLY GROWN, MINIMALLY PROCESSED FARM FOODS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly finds:

(A) A program to link local farms to schools and other institutions to provide school children and adults with fresh and minimally processed farm foods for use in their daily meals and snacks will:

(1) strengthen local economies by keeping money within the area;

(2) create jobs;

(3) open a substantial new market for farmers;

(4) provide beginning farmers with a consistent and secure customer base;

(5) help school children develop lifelong healthy eating habits, combat poor nutrition, and reduce obesity related diseases so prevalent in South Carolina;

(6) provide students with hands‑on learning opportunities, such as farm visits, cooking demonstrations, and the planting and cultivating of school gardens; and

(7) integrate nutritional and agricultural education into school curricula.

(B) A successful South Carolina Fresh on the Campus program requires the resources, expertise, and collaboration of numerous state agencies, including the State Department of Education, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health and Environmental Control, and Clemson University.

SECTION 2. Chapter 3, Title 46 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 46‑3‑25. (A) There is created the South Carolina Fresh on the Campus Program within the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to foster direct relationships between South Carolina farms, schools, and other institutions, and to provide schools and other institutions with fresh and minimally processed foods for consumption by students.

(B) The program must:

(1) identify and promote local farms to school programs and advise agencies on needed actions and strategies to implement the South Carolina Fresh on the Campus program throughout the State;

(2) establish a partnership with public and nonprofit resources to implement a public engagement campaign and establish a structure to facilitate communication between schools, school districts, similar institutions, farmers, and produce distributors;

(3) encourage school districts to develop and implement school nutrition plans which purchase and use locally grown farm fresh products;

(4) conduct workshops, training sessions, and provide technical assistance for school food service directors, school and other similar institution personnel, farmers and produce distributors, and processors regarding the availability of South Carolina farm products, and promote the benefits of purchasing and consuming fresh food products from this State;

(5) regularly consult with the staff of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health and Environmental Control, the State Department of Education, and Clemson University as to the implementation of the program; and

(6) seek grants and private funding as appropriate.

(C) The Department of Agriculture must establish a South Carolina Fresh on the Campus website. The State Department of Education and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture must maintain a direct link to the program website on the home page of each department.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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