

## **Economic group receives certification for Pee Dee food processing plant**

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### Press Release

FLORENCE, SC -- The North Eastern Strategic Alliance (NESASOUTH) has received recognition that gives them the leverage of holding one of the most unique products in the state.

On Wednesday, Cleveland-based Austin Consulting – a leader in site selection consulting for the food and beverage industry – provided NESASOUTH with its "Shovel-Ready" Site Designation Award for the Food and Beverage Industry for its Pee Dee Electric Food Processing Certified Site, located at the intersection of I-95 and Highway 327 in Florence, giving the region bragging rights as the location of the state's only certified food processing site.

A certified site such as the Pee Dee Electric Food Processing Certified Site provides an expanding or re-locating business with detailed property, geotechnical, utility, environmental, ownership, transportation and permitting research within the convenience of a small binder.

Before awarding the designation, Austin Consulting evaluated over 200 critical variables which are summarized in the appropriate sections of the report. As part of the process, Austin Consulting performed detailed field investigations of the site and conducted numerous meetings with economic development and utility officials at the city and county level.

This confluence of information shows the site meets the highest standards in the food processing field and allows companies to expedite the process of doing business in the NESASOUTH region by mitigating much of the time, expense and risk incurred during a typical site selection process.

South Carolina State Senator and Chairman of the NESASOUTH Executive Committee Yancey McGill said the certification of the Pee Dee Electric Food Processing Certified Site will be an incredible buoy for business in the area, by both increasing interest in the region and providing it with the state's only certified food processing site.

"This creation of this certified site marks a great day for the NESASOUTH region," McGill said. "A product like this will give our region a marked advantage against other sites across the country by the merit of it being certified 'shovel ready' and short-cutting any location process for an incoming company. As our region continues to grow and prosper, the certification of sites like Pee Dee Electric Food Processing Certified Site will become common place and make the NESASOUTH region one of the top areas in the nation to do business."

The 39 acre site's certification will make it one of the top destinations for food processing or distribution centers in the coming years.

South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers – one of the top proponents behind the region's move to have the site certified – said the fact that the state now has a certified food processing site will show that Florence County and the NESASOUTH region are prime destinations for new, expanding or relocating companies.

"This first in South Carolina certified food processing site will no doubt make the Pee Dee region even more attractive to agribusinesses looking to expand or establish operations in South Carolina," Weathers said. "A 'shovel-ready' site shows that we are ready and serious about providing the best places to do business."

Jack Shuler, the president of the Palmetto Agribusiness Council, said he believes the site will serve as an opportunity creator for NESAs and give the region a head-start when it comes to locating businesses in the region.

"The Palmetto Agribusiness Council is proud that NESAs has taken the lead and certified the first ever food processing site in South Carolina," Shuler said. "This certification raises the profile and awareness of the Pee Dee by having a ready for construction food processing site. By having this designation, NESAs can now market a site that will give companies a six month advantage when choosing a new or expansion location," Shuler said.

Fred Gassaway, the executive vice president of marketing of the South Carolina Power Team, said as South Carolina continues to focus on agribusiness, the site is a perfect fit for not just the region, but the state as a whole.

"We are delighted to support the creation of a certified site for food processing companies," Gassaway said. "We have designated the food sector as a major growth industry for South Carolina, given our rich agricultural base and strategic proximity to markets up and down the east coast. The Pee Dee Electric Food Processing Certified Site is a perfect fit for companies that require a lot of water for processing operations, a reliable and affordable power supply and quick access to I-95."

<http://www.wbtw.com/story/22594354/pee-dee-economic-group-receives-certification-for-food-processing-plant>