



July 17, 2020

Office of USDA Rural Development

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Palmetto Agribusiness Council (PABC) in support of a Rural Cooperative Development Grant proposal to provide cooperative development activities in rural areas of South Carolina. Clemson University Cooperative Extension, SC State's Small Business Development Center (SC SBDC) and South Carolina Department of Agriculture's ACRE program will collaborate to expand their activities by focusing on cooperative development under the South Carolina Cooperative Development Center (referred to as the Center).

PABC was formed to create an environment to sustain and grow the economic impact of agribusiness- South Carolina's largest industry. Without a doubt, this project aligns with our mission and will further benefit farmers and farmer cooperatives in the state. This project will increase the Center's capacity to provide technical assistance to groups and cooperatives in rural areas of South Carolina. The majority of these economically-depressed areas desperately need this assistance to expand and establish agricultural cooperatives, and stands to benefit greatly from this grant.

As of now, most economic and business development organizations in South Carolina lack the capacity to provide quality assistance to agricultural groups and cooperatives. While organizations like Extension, SC SBDC and ACRE already provide technical assistance to individual farmers and some groups, a further need exists for dedicated support specifically to develop cooperatives. The Center will expand the capacity for both organizations to directly target and assist cooperatives and groups of farmers working cooperatively.

We are hopeful that this proposed project will be funded, and we expect to share this endeavor with our network of farmers and organizations. This is truly a meaningful and impactful project, and we hope you consider supporting this incredible opportunity for the state.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Summers
Chief Executive Officer
Palmetto Agribusiness Council

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