



# PABC Journal



## SC Food Hub Network Helped Farmers Feed More People in 2020

The South Carolina Food Hub Network helped food distributors in South Carolina buy and distribute more than \$1.3 million of South Carolina-grown food in 2020, strengthening local food systems and buoying farmers during the pandemic.

Food Hub Network staff worked with four South Carolina distributors on their successful applications for contracts through the US Department of Agriculture Farmers to Families Food Box program, funded by federal COVID-19 stimulus money. South Carolina-based distributors bought, boxed and distributed more than \$5 million in fresh food, \$1.3 million of it from South Carolina farmers. Charleston food hub GrowFood Carolina secured a USDA contract with help from the Network, as did distributors Limehouse Produce, Senn Brothers and Taylor Boys Produce.

Also with the Network's assistance, Columbia food hub Axiom Farms Cooperative won a contract through the South Carolina Department of Agriculture's Farmer to Food Banks program to distribute 887 boxes of food worth \$30,000 purchased locally and provided to families in the Midlands; and Charlotte food hub Freshlist secured a contract through a Carolina Farm Stewardship Association program called FarmsSHARE to buy food from South Carolina farmers for 1,897 food boxes.

"The South Carolina Food Hub Network has helped build capacity for the state's food hubs, ultimately helping farmers grow more and feed more people," said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers.

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Harry L. Ott, Jr.



Jane Sosebee



Sarah Windham

## PABC ELECTS OFFICERS FOR 2021

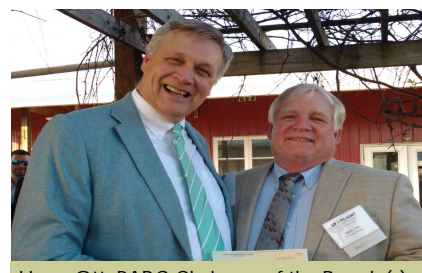
The PABC Board recently elected officers for 2021. **Harry L. Ott, Jr.**, President of the South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, was elected Chairman; **Jane Sosebee**, President of AT&T South Carolina was elected Vice Chair and **Sarah Windham**, Partner with Dixon Hughes Goodman, LLP, was re-elected Secretary/Treasurer.

Mr. Ott is a row crop farmer from Calhoun County where he and his brother, Mark, produce cotton, corn, and peanuts on the family farm near St. Matthews. A graduate of Clemson University, he served on the local school board for 12 years and then served in the South Carolina House of Representatives for 15 years. He resigned his seat in the General Assembly in 2013 to accept an appointment as State Director for the USDA Farm Service Agency for South Carolina and served in this position from 2013 to 2015. He was elected the sixth President of the South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation in 2015. Mr. Ott currently serves on the Palmetto AgriBusiness Council Executive Committee and Board and the Clemson Cooperative Extension 4-H Foundation Advisory Board. *(cont. on page 3, see Officers)*

## PABC CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPORT AGRIBUSINESS PROGRAMS



PABC CEO Ronnie Summers (r) presents a check to Dr. Louis Whitesides, Exec. Dir. SCSU 1890 Programs.



Harry Ott, PABC Chairman of the Board, (r) presents a check to Cam Crawford, President & CEO of the Forestry Association of SC.

The Palmetto AgriBusiness Council (PABC) recently announced contributions to eight different agribusiness educational and leadership programs which promote agriculture and forestry in South Carolina.

As part of PABC's commitment to sustain the economic viability of South Carolina's largest industry – agribusiness, which contributes \$46.2 billion to the state's economy and provides 246,000 jobs, programs were selected that focus on education and leadership development for those individuals who are the future of the industry.

"Agriculture is a constantly changing industry," said Harry Ott, Chairman of the PABC Board and President & CEO of SC Farm Bureau. "It is important that those of us who are currently in this industry support and cultivate the next generation of

*(cont. on page 3, see Contributions)*

## CHAMBER SPOTLIGHT



New SC Chamber of Commerce CEO Bob Morgan welcomes participants to the Spotlight on Agriculture & Forestry at City Roots.



From left Cam Crawford– President & CEO-Forestry Association of SC, Dr. Boyd Parr, State Veterinarian and Wayne Steffen,-Chairman, Forestry Association of SC.



Larry McKenzie,-Assistant to the President, SC Farm Bureau (l) and Chalmers Mikell- Assistant Director of Government Relations, SC Farm Bureau.



Charleston Laffin– Executive Director, SC Poultry Federation and her daughter Lily.

## PABC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

**Karl Zimmer** has served as President & CEO of **Premium Peanut** since July 2015. He will be their representative on the Board of Directors for PABC. Premium Peanut, located in Douglas, Georgia, was formed in the fall of 2014 and completed construction of the single largest peanut shelling plant in the world (a \$50 million investment) in January 2016. Expanding into peanut oil in 2018 with a \$14 million investment in a crushing plant, the company has grown to \$250 million in annual revenue. With over 400 peanut growers, who are also shareholder/owners in the company, Premium Peanut handles over 10% of the entire U.S. peanut crop.



**Karl Zimmer**



**Michael J. Burney**



**Billy Van Pelt, II**

Prior to joining Premium Peanut, Karl Zimmer spent close to fourteen years with a *Fortune 500* global manufacturer of copper and aluminum wire & cable products, where his last assignment was as Senior Vice President Sub-Saharan Africa, Global Supply Chain, and Europe & Africa Product Supply. In these roles, for which he and his wife lived in Barcelona, Spain, he led all manufacturing, engineering, and supply chain activities across two continents, encompassing 12 plants and over 2,000 associates.

Mr. Zimmer received a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Cincinnati in Ohio and is actively involved in a wide-range of activities with the University of Cincinnati, University of Georgia and Boy Scouts of America. He is Chairman of the American Peanut Shellers Association, and resides in Douglas, Georgia with his wife Joan.

(cont. on pg. 4, see *New PABC Members*)

### SCSU Opens New Research and Demonstration Farm

South Carolina State University 1890 Research & Extension deepened the university's agricultural roots with the opening of a new research and demonstration farm in Olar, SC with a ribbon cutting and ground-breaking ceremony.

The acquisition of the nearly 200-acre farm holds significant historical value for the university, as it has been 50 years since the historically black land-grant university has owned and operated a farm.

Located nearly 30 miles from SC State's Orangeburg campus, the farm features a 2,200 square-foot farm manager residence, 3,650 square-foot hay barn and 4,000 square-foot large equipment shed. Three ponds are also situated on the property.



Local officials joined the SCSU 1890 team for a groundbreaking at the new farm in Olar, SC.

Plans for expansion include the addition of a multifunctional training center, which will house office and community meeting spaces, research laboratories, classrooms and indoor storage for large machinery. Construction of a processing center also is planned.

The SC State University 1890 Research & Extension Program, which serves as the public service arm of the university, will operate the farm. Intensive research studies, as well as research-based educational workshops and training sessions, will be offered through the organization, which emphasizes sustainable agriculture and natural resources among its programmatic areas.

Immediate farm activity will align with SC State 1890's purpose to provide relevant scientific-based programming and conduct problem-solving research which addresses agriculture and agriculture-related challenges impacting South Carolina's nearly \$45 billion agriculture industry. Such activities will include studying the emerging hemp crop and researching vegetable production using conventional and organic practices in hoop houses and a greenhouse. Agroforestry will be explored, and the farm will include opportunities for community gardening.

### OFFICERS (cont. from pg. 1)

Mrs. Sosebee has held the position as President of AT&T South Carolina since October 2018. In this role, she works closely with state and community leaders to help bring new technology and jobs to the state and improve the quality of life for South Carolinians. She joined AT&T's predecessor company, Southern Bell, in 1979, becoming a branch manager in the business marketing group in the Upstate. She moved to the External Affairs organization in 1998 and was appointed Director of External Affairs in 2007. She was subsequently named Director- Legislative Affairs. A native of Laurens, S.C., Mrs. Sosebee is a graduate of Clemson University with a bachelor's degree in English. Her numerous honors and awards include Clemson University's Distinguished Service Award, named Business Person of the Year by Greenville Magazine in 2005; and in 2007, was named a South Carolina Ambassador for Economic Development for Greenville County by the governor.

Mrs. Windham, a member of the Palmetto AgriBusiness Council Executive Committee and Board, serves as a tax partner in the Charleston, S.C. office of Dixon Hughes Goodman (DHG). She has been practicing as a CPA since 2001, and her exceptional client service has afforded her opportunities to work with a wide variety of clients, including many family-owned and multi-generational businesses. Throughout her career with DHG, she has developed extensive financial areas, including tax planning, business consultation, and generational wealth planning/succession planning, as well as tax research and compliance for corporations, partnerships, limited-liability entities, and individuals with high net worth. Her vast industry knowledge includes agribusiness, construction and real estate. As a valued consultant to her clients and their industries, Mrs. Windham has served as a speaker and CPE presenter at a variety of industry association conferences and events, and has provided testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Small Business Subcommittee on behalf of the South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation. She also has a vested interest in the firm's Women Forward Initiative, frequently facilitating training and information sessions for the firm and community.

### CONTRIBUTIONS (cont. from pg. 1)

agricultural leaders who will continue to feed, clothe, and shelter this country and the world."

The following entities were recipients of the awards:

- Clemson University College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences (CAFLS) - \$1,500 in funding to Clemson MANRRS, which is presently focused on diversity and inclusion issues with CAFLS students.
- SC State University 1890 Program- \$1,500 in funding to contribute to the SCSU 1890 Foundation to cover costs for students to participate in various programs.
- The Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe - \$1,000 in funding to be used to cover cost of students participating in FFA and 4-H programs and meetings.
- Palmetto Leadership for the Environment, Agriculture and Forestry (PLEAF) - \$1,000 in funding to assist with operating costs of this leadership program for existing and future agribusiness leaders.
- SC Ag in the Classroom- \$1,000 in funding for the general operating costs of this agricultural education program for South Carolina teachers.
- SC State Forestry Teachers Tour - \$1,000 in funding to offset costs associated with the expenses of an annual Forestry Teachers Tour in South Carolina.
- SC State FFA Foundation- \$1,000 in funding to offset meeting costs.
- SC State 4-H - \$1,000 to fund a specific award/scholarship within the state 4-H.





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#### OFFICERS

Harry L. Ott, Jr., Chairman  
Cam Crawford, Past Chairman  
Jane Sosebee, Vice Chairman  
Sarah Windham, Sec./Treas.

#### STAFF

Ronnie Summers, CEO  
Sandy Boozer, Exec. Assistant

We're on the web  
[Scagribusiness.org](http://Scagribusiness.org)

## CEO MESSAGE FROM RONNIE SUMMERS

**Pandemic be gone!** Well, we still have a ways to go for this to be the case, but call me an optimist as it sure feels like we are getting there. With vaccinations being received and COVID cases trending down in most places, surely there is reason for optimism.

**There is a lot going on in SC AgriBusiness**, and we have every reason to be proud of agriculture and forestry in our state. As noted in my testimony before the House subcommittee dealing with vaccinations about 75 days back, SC AgriBusiness has not missed a beat despite all the challenges faced within the industry including the COVID pandemic. That statement is a credit to the overall leadership within AgriBusiness and perseverance of all the ag, forestry and rural workers within our state's largest industry, AgriBusiness. South Carolina should not just be proud, but also grateful for the men and women, who work daily to produce food and fiber for each of us to receive appropriate nutrition, clothing, shelter, packaging, and so many more necessities of life. We are truly blessed to have our state's agribusiness workforce!

**The first quarter of 2021** has seen a marked increase in PABC presentations to groups such as civic organizations, PABC member organizations, educational groups, and within several other venues/organizations. The point is your PABC staff is returning to some semblance of normalcy and working toward increased advocacy, promotion, education, and support of policy for our industry. Virtual visits and presentations definitely have their place and have allowed us to transact business during trying times, but good ole "face to face" events are hard to beat. With this in mind, our PABC membership is set to meet virtually in May and then extra effort will be made to hold an in-person meeting in August assuming no significant increase in COVID cases and that we can nail down a place to meet. Every effort will be made to offer a hybrid meeting arrangement for the foreseeable future utilizing call in / zoom options for those desiring to be engaged but not attend in person. Frankly, this also opens the door for better participation for those with long travels to meetings.

**Your PABC staff** works for each of our member organizations, and we are keenly aware of this fact. Please let Sandy and/or me know if we can provide support including making presentations to your business or associated organizations. Your staff values communicating the SC AgriBusiness message to allow for a better understanding of our industry and rural SC. Thanks for all you do for South Carolina as PABC members and close associates!!!

## NEW PABC MEMBERS (cont. from pg. 2)

**Michael J. Burney, Director of Business Development for Collins & Lacy, will serve as their PABC representative.** Collins & Lacy attorneys in the Trucking Defense Practice Group represent motor carriers, owner-operators, shippers, freight forwarders, and brokers in litigation statewide arising from commercial vehicle accidents and cargo claims across the state of South Carolina.

The Firm's team also represents insurers in coverage matters and litigation related to accidents and claims. They are members of [DRI-Trucking Law Committee](#), the [South Carolina Trucking Association](#), and the [Claims and Litigation Management Alliance \(CLM\)](#), among others. Attorneys in this group provide 24-hour accident response to, and investigation of, catastrophic accidents statewide.

**Billy Van Pelt, II is the Director of External Relations and a Senior Advisor to the President and CEO at American Farmland Trust (AFT).** He will be their PABC representative. Mr. Van Pelt, II works with AFT's national and regional programs, major donors, and partner organizations throughout the Southeast and Texas. Before joining AFT, he ran his own government relations and consulting firm. During this time, he served as the founding CEO of Woodford Forward, a land use advocacy organization in Central Kentucky. As a landscape architect, he worked in both the private and public sectors, including over a decade at the Purchase of Development Rights, farmland protection program in Lexington, Kentucky. Here, he worked as the Director and conserved over 28,000 acres using over \$74 million in local, state and federal funds. Mr. Van Pelt, II grew up on his grandparents' cattle and tobacco farm in Woodford County, Kentucky. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in business administration from Transylvania University, a Bachelor of Science in landscape architecture from the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture and a Master of Business Administration from Midway University. He is the Chair of the Transylvania University Board of Regents and serves on the Midway University Board of Trustees. He is also a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Millions of acres of America's agricultural land were developed or converted to uses that threaten farming between 2001 and 2016, according to ["Farms Under Threat: The State of the States,"](#) a new report by [American Farmland Trust](#). The report's Agricultural Land Protection Scorecard is the first-ever state-by-state analysis of policies that respond to the development threats to farmland and ranchland, showing that every state can, and must do more to protect their irreplaceable agricultural resources. ["The State of the States"](#) report shows the extent, location, and quality of each state's agricultural land and tracks how much of it has been converted in each state using the newest data and the most cutting-edge methods. The Agricultural Land Protection Scorecard analyzes six programs and policies that are key to securing a sufficient and suitable base of agricultural land in each state and highlights states' efforts to retain agricultural land for future generations. It offers a breakthrough tool for accelerating state efforts to make sure farmland is available to produce food, support jobs and the economy, provide essential environmental services and help mitigate and buffer the impacts of climate change.

The report found that SC was the eighth-most threatened state in the nation due to the loss of agricultural land to poorly planned real estate development. Between 2001 and 2016, 281,000 acres of agricultural land were developed or compromised, 111,000 of which were "Nationally Significant," or land best suited for growing food and crops. "South Carolina's farms are under some of the greatest threat of any state in the nation," said Mr. Van Pelt, II. "This report identifies the urgent need for action to protect this land that is critical for South Carolina's agricultural economy and its ability to grow food and other crops. We've all witnessed the impacts of empty grocery stores shelves in recent months—we must be vigilant in protecting our farms and ensuring that our food system is secure and resilient."