



AG ADVOCATES TO BE RECOGNIZED AT AUGUST RECEPTION

SC Advocates for Agriculture will hold their annual reception August 9 at the SC Farmers Market to honor public and private advocates.

This year, **Edgar Woods**, CEO of Palmetto Grain Brokerage and a PABC Board member will be recognized for his contributions to the agribusiness industry from the private sector.

Senator Brad Hutto and **Senator Kent Williams** will be honored as the public advocates. Both Senator Hutto and Senator Williams were instrumental in their support of the Poultry Bill, which passed this year. Invitations have gone out to PABC members. We hope you will be able to join us for this great event.

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Congressional Staffers Visit Agribusiness Operations



PABC, along with the SC Department of Agriculture, SC Farm Bureau, Forestry Association of SC and the SC Forestry Commission hosted a farm tour for SC Congressional staffers. Staffers visited Super Sod, Cox Industries and WP Rawl. Pictured clockwise (from top)– Martha Burleson of SuperSod gives a tour of the sod fields in Orangeburg with Ronnie Summers (PABC), Freddie Gault (Rep. Norman's office); Van Cato (Sen. Graham's office); Bill Crowther, (Rep. Rice's office) and Margaret Spaulding (Sen. Scott's office); Charles Wingard (W.P. Rawl) visits with from left Kelly Long (Senator Tim Scott's office) Cristina Key and Aaron Wood (SCDA) at W.P. Rawl headquarters and SC State Forester Scott Phillips addresses the group with Jim Healey (Cox Industries) and Ronnie Summers at Cox Industries in Eutawville.

ACRE Selects Five Entrepreneurs for Program

Five South Carolina agribusiness entrepreneurs are one step closer to taking their businesses to the marketplace or expanding an existing start-up, thanks to a competitive application and pitch process offered by the Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE).

The ACRE Entrepreneurship Program will provide funding and/or mentoring to Matt Miller of Manchester Farms in Columbia; Sam Norton of Heron Farms in Charleston; George Nelson of SweetBay Produce in Huger (Berkeley County); Dr. Janice Ryan-Bohac of CAREnergy in Smoaks (Colleton County) and Robbie Weathers of Southern Crop Solutions in Holly Hill.

"This inaugural group of ACRE entrepreneurs represents a broad range of agriculture in South Carolina and the start of a new initiative to expand agriculture and economic development in our state," said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. "Our plan is to grow this program annually and ultimately to bring new industries to South Carolina."

Manchester Farms (a PABC member) is the oldest quail producer in the United States. Co-owner Matt Miller pitched "Quail Qwap," a high quality, nutrient rich compost made from quail manure, grass clippings and cotton waste. Miller will use ACRE funding to design and purchase two different size bags so Manchester Farms can sell Quail Qwap in different markets.

SweetBay Produce & Nursery, LLC in Berkeley County has produced high quality long shelf-life produce for 10 years. SweetBay co-owner George Nelson applied for ACRE funding to help provide fresh food to the local community through the addition of a Farm Camp and Farm School Program, expanding on the existing Sundrops Montessori Pilot Program.

Heron Farms in Charleston, the first saltwater farm in the United States,

grows the native annual halophyte *Salicornia* (sometimes called samphire, sea pickle, sea beans, sea asparagus or salt-wort) by pumping full-strength seawater onto barren marsh areas degraded by the dredging process. Founder Sam Norton sells the fruiting spikes of this marsh plant to Charleston restaurants and applied for ACRE funding for product research and development.

CAREnergy CEO Dr. Janice Ryan-Bohac is a sweet potato breeder who has developed what she calls "excellent candidates for making attractive chips and fries, with mealy texture and less oil." With the ultimate goal of attracting a sweet potato processing facility to South Carolina, Ryan-Bohac hopes her sweet potato will increase consumer demand and farmer contracts. She will use her ACRE funding to attend food conventions and meet with potential investors.

Created in 2015 by Robbie Weathers, Southern Crop Solutions in Holly Hill is

a precision agriculture company that specializes in implementing technology solutions for growers. From installing auto steering systems on tractors to performing precision soil sampling, Southern Crop Solutions connects farmers and solutions. Weathers will use ACRE funding to hire and train employees.

"We had 30 applicants, and they were all qualified, dedicated and impressive, but these five entrepreneurs best represent the vision of ACRE," said ACRE project coordinator Kyle Player.

For more information on the Entrepreneur Center and other ACRE initiatives, contact Kyle Player, ACRE Project Coordinator, 803-734-2324 or kplayer@scda.sc.gov.

SC Senators Address Two Important Provisions for South Carolina Farmers in the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill (the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018) passed the Senate and included two important provisions secured by our SC Senators.

Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) worked with Senator Doug Jones (D-AL) to help Heirs property owners—thousands of minority and other landowners whose family has been passed through the generations often without a formal title—gain access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs they currently do not have access to without proper documentation certifying their possession of the land. Senator Scott and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) also secured the inclusion of the Peanut Parity Act, which ensures South Carolina, the fourth largest producer of peanuts in the country, has a presence on the federal Peanuts Standards Board.

Overall, the Farm Bill represents critical federal legislation for farmers, ranchers, the forestry industry and many entities serving rural America. Due to differences in the House and Senate approved bills, a Conference Committee will now convene to consider resolving the differences in the two approved bills.

KOPPERS HOLDINGS, INC. BUYS COX INDUSTRIES

Koppers Holdings, Inc. has acquired the industrial division of Cox Industries for \$200 million. The transaction creates a leading utility pole and wood treatment producer and advances Koppers strategy of being a vertically integrated, high-value global supplier of wood-based technologies to infrastructure markets.

"We know Koppers well, having enjoyed a strong relationship with the management team over the years, and we share a commitment to providing innovative products and strong customer service to our served markets," said Mikee Johnson, CEO and President of Cox Industries, Inc. "We believe that our complementary customer-centric mindset, expanded pro-

duct portfolio, and enhanced innovation and geographic reach should benefit our collective stakeholders."

"While we were working hard during the past several years to restructure our operations and reduce our balance sheet leverage, Cox Industrial grew to become the largest supplier of utility poles in the eastern US," said Koppers President and

CEO Leroy Ball. "The opportunity to re-enter the market with the scale to better compete, along with gaining a growth-focused management team, was attractive and compelling. We plan to grow the business organically as well as through strategic partnerships and select acquisitions." Cox Industrial will be renamed as the Utility and Industrial Products unit of Koppers.



Mac Rhodes

Mac Rhodes Named District Tree Farmer of the Year

Congratulations to PABC member W. McLeod "Mac" Rhodes who was selected as the District 11 Tree Farmer of the Year by the SC Tree Farm Committee. Mr. Rhodes is the President of McLeod Lumber in Charleston.

KEITH L. BELLI NAMED NEW CAFLS DEAN

Keith L. Belli, the head of the University of Tennessee's Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, has been named dean of Clemson University's College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences (CAFLS). He will assume his new role September 1, succeeding George R. Askew, Jr., who will continue to serve as vice president of Clemson Public Service and Agriculture (PSA).

Prior to joining the University of Tennessee in 2007, Dr. Belli worked at Mississippi State University for 18 years, transitioning from professor to the associate dean of the College of Forest Resources, associate director of the Forest and Wildlife Center and interim head of the forest products department.



Keith L. Belli

Dr. Belli holds a Bachelor of Science in forest science from Pennsylvania State University, a Master of Science in silviculture from Michigan State University and Doctor of Philosophy in forest biometrics from the University of Minnesota. He is currently president of the National Association of University Forest Resources Programs, and is a member of the Tennessee Forestry Association and the Society of American Foresters.



1901 Main St.
Suite 1450
Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: 803-256-9099
Fax: 803-926-3463

OFFICERS

Randy Brown, Chairman
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STAFF

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Sandy Boozer, Exec. Assistant

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CEO MESSAGE FROM RONNIE SUMMERS

Thus far, 2018 has proven a success relative to our state legislative priorities despite the many varying issues confronting our lawmakers. Frankly, the members of the General Assembly did a great job given all the challenges faced. As of this writing, the Farm Bill is approved in the House and Senate, but must be considered by a Conference Committee in an effort to resolve differences in the two bills. As noted in our PABC updates (email messages), this is critical legislation for agriculture, forestry and our rural communities, and deserves close attention as it unfolds. Hope remains high for a strong Farm Bill being approved this year that will provide a level of certainty for the next five years.

Recently, PABC has received several opportunities to share the SC AgriBusiness story in various settings and to attend several excellent pro-business events throughout the state. Invariably, the subject of "SC AgriBusiness" surfaces and the message of our industry being the largest in our state is communicated. A leader within the SC Senate recently was quick to remark to a large, diversified audience that "SC AgriBusiness, collectively agriculture and forestry, is the largest industry in SC". A proud moment to say the least!

While in the Midlands and Low Country in recent meetings, one of the topics emphasized by members of the General Assembly and economic leaders in attendance was the "Poultry Bill Approval". Rural areas are anxiously looking for ways to grow economically, and they clearly realize SC AgriBusiness is a realistic avenue to accomplishing this goal.

As noted in the spring CEO Message, this is exactly what needs to happen – get our story out to the masses. SC AgriBusiness is fortunate to have so many great organizations focused on this very task – SCDA, FASC, SCFC and SCFB. Should there be opportunities for PABC to share and emphasize this message, please contact us.

The Palmetto AgriBusiness Council is here to support our industry and your entity. If there are ways we can assist, please let us know!!!

PABC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS



From left, Jeph, Jerry and Joe Watson of Jerrold A. Watson & Sons farm.

New PABC member **Jerrold A. Watson & Sons** is located in Monetta, SC and is owned and operated by brothers **Jerry and Joe Watson, II** and Joe's son, **Joseph, III (Jeph)**. Jeph joined the business after college in 2003 and is the fourth generation to be involved in the farm and will be their PABC representative.

The farm, which has the brand name Watsonia, was started in 1918 by their grandfather, Joe H. Watson with asparagus being the first major crop grown. Today, the farm grows peaches, bell peppers, apples, cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, pears, plums, nectarines, strawberries and a variety of other produce.

Using cutting-edge agricultural practices, Watsonia has Food Safety Certifications through USDA and Primus, and Organic Certification from the Clemson University Department of Plant Industry and the USDA National Organic Program.

Andy Fogle, CEO, will be the representative for new PABC member, **Carolina Fresh Farms**. He is a graduate of Francis Marion University with a degree in business finance. The business started out as coastal hay farms in the 1950's by Andy's grandfather, John Anthony Fogle growing Bermuda hay and row crops. In 1986, Carolina Fresh Farms was created to grow and market turf grass as a new venture established by his grandfather and his two sons, Johnny and Steve.

With the hard work of 3 generations of Fogle's and countless numbers of dedicated employees, the farm has grown and maintained the agricultural business, which was started almost 70 years ago. Today, Carolina Fresh Farms has over 110 employees and six landscape supply stores that serve most of SC. The three farms ship grass all over the southeast and internationally.



Andy Fogle (second from right) and staff sprigging greens on a golf course.