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PABCJournal

Congressional Staffers Tour SC Agribusinesses

Celebrating



Years

1999-2024



This year's Congressional Staff Tour, coordinated by PABC and the SC Department of Agriculture, took staffers to agribusinesses in the Orangeburg area and surrounding counties. One of the stops was SC State University's Research Farm in Olar, where the latest farm technology using drones, was demonstrated for the group. **(Cont. on pg. 7, see Congressional Staff Tour)**

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CEO MESSAGE

FROM RONNIE SUMMERS



Late in Q1, the first SC Ag Tech & Business Forum was held with significant participation from PABC and its members. Since the Forum, I have heard so many times about robotics and AI, and how these technological innovations can change agribusiness. Just recently someone provided me photos of robots picking various fruit. For what it is worth, the Forum did shed light on these tech tools, but the comments received were not all directly associated with the March event. More so, these comments have resulted from the fact that robots and AI could very well provide specific solutions for dealing with the labor issues faced in agriculture and forestry. What a changing world as we look for technological ways to deal with real challenges that can directly improve our farm and forestry industry.

As PABC, SCDA, SCSU, Mixon Seed, Collum Lumber Products and Connelly Farms hosted the Congressional staffers in mid-May, the use of technology was very evident both in ag and forestry operational activities. For example, at Connelly Farms much is being done with irrigation efficiency to control the administration of the quantity of water utilized and to reduce operating expenses. If you ever have an opportunity to visit Collum Lumber, please do so as this family-owned sawmill is putting technology directly to use to again create efficiencies and exponentially improve the quantity of lumber produced compared to the past. As the tour concluded and feedback was sought from the participants, nothing but “positive responses” were received as to the operations visited as virtually all Congressional staffers provided comments.

With the second quarter coming to a close, there have been so many other positive events such as the SCSU Expand Climate Smart SC Training Workshop, SC FFA Convention, the SC Sustainable Forestry Teachers Tour, and right around the corner is the SC Poultry Federation Annual Meeting. All these events are great ways to find out more about SC agribusiness and to network with others working daily in SC agriculture and forestry.

With the recent primaries held here in our state, there again will be several changes down at the Statehouse when the next two-year session begins as some incumbents have already been defeated. Please consider the candidates closely as the general election occurs later this year and policies affecting all walks of life including agribusiness and areas that directly impact agribusiness are debated by the candidates. The voting process is so important.

While preparing this Q2 CEO message, I have to say it is quite hot and especially humid in the southeast. Let's hope Mother Nature sends some moisture our way for our state's crops as the dryland crops in many areas really need it. As noted many times in the past, your PABC staff is here to support your business, so please utilize our service as you encounter areas of concern or challenges. We want to assist you or point you to those that can, so advise if we can help. Have a great summer!

SCDA ACRE Awards \$200,000 in Grants to Agribusiness Innovators

The SC Department of Agriculture's Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE) awarded \$200,000 in grants to 12 local businesses as part of its Advanced Entrepreneurship program.

In addition to funding, the awardees will also receive access to a network of business advisors, and professional assistance with further state and federal grant applications.

The diverse group of awardees encompass animal agriculture, specialty food producers, produce farms, and new and established farmers:

Dragonfly Creek is a diversified market farm in Walterboro growing seasonal vegetables, herbs, fruits, cut flowers, and chicken eggs. As they continue to grow, they plan to develop a weekly Community Supported Agriculture program for Walterboro-area residents. They plan to use ACRE funds to invest in wildlife fencing to protect their crops, and drill another well to expand irrigation.

Blue Ridge Rabbit Meat Company is a family-run rabbit farm in Spartanburg County that raises and processes rabbits, shipping the high-quality meat to customers across the country. The company plans to use ACRE funding to add heating and cooling systems throughout their barn.

Crossroads Processing was founded in Leesville in 2022 with a focus on deer processing, but quickly expanded into processing different kinds of meat, including livestock, to address gaps in the local market. Their goals for the company are to increase direct-to-consumer processing, increase local meat processing infrastructure, and to shrink the gap between farmers and consumers.

Lowcountry Fungi is an indoor farm on Johns Island supplying culinary and medicinal mushrooms to restaurants and wholesale customers. The company recently launched a "mushroom coffee" that blends local coffee with fungi grown on the farm. With the ACRE grant, they plan to expand into another warehouse unit to expand production, and add a certified kitchen.

Farm in the Wildwood in Greenville County uses eco-friendly, no-till, and regenerative agricultural methods to grow baby greens, herbs, and various vegetables for customers in the Greenville area, CSA members, and a seasonal farmstand, as well as agrotourism offerings. With the ACRE money, they intend to make facility improvements, improve marketing, and expand their product offerings.

Oswego Flowers in Sumter County focuses on growing unusual flower varieties. The 2024 grant award will help them buy a larger greenhouse to extend the growing season of cut flowers to year-round production and start shifting into wholesale production of cut flowers.

The Pickled Pepper People in Greenville County make spicy slaw from fresh vegetables that are locally and sustainably sourced, using a traditional family recipe. This minority-owned business will use the ACRE grant money for equipment, marketing and social media, and shared kitchen expenses.

Bradford Farms in Sumter County grows, processes, and markets their own heirloom crops which include collards, watermelons, okra and sweet potatoes. They also act as a micro-distributor providing South Carolina-grown produce to restaurants in NC, SC, and GA. Bradford Farms will use the grant money for mechanized wash stations, mechanical choppers, and cold storage with forklift access.

(Cont. on page 6, see ACRE Grants)

UPCOMING EVENTS

SC Poultry Federation Annual Conference

July 11-14

Wild Dunes Resort
Isle of Palms, SC

SC Advocates for Agriculture

**Annual Recognition
Reception**

August 8

Phillips Market Center
West Columbia, SC

PABC Annual Meeting

August 13

Senate's End
316 Senate St.
Columbia, SC

SAVE THE DATES

Sept. 24 –28

**SC State University
Ag and Land-Grant Day
Celebration**

Nov. 5-8

**Forestry
Association of SC
Annual Meeting**

Marriott Grande Dunes
Myrtle Beach, SC



SC Farm Bureau's annual fundraising event—the Palmetto Palate—is back for 2024. The event will be July 18 at 6 pm at the SC State Museum, 301 Gervais Street in Columbia.

The Palmetto Palate will bring in chefs from local restaurants and pair them with farmers from across South Carolina to create tasty tapas that brings the farm-to-table movement to life. There will also be a silent auction with local products donated by Farm Bureau members and county Farm Bureau offices.

All proceeds from the event will benefit the SC Farm Bureau Land Trust, Inc., a non-profit established to help our state's farmers and forestland owners ensure their productive agricultural lands will be protected and passed to future generations.

For more information, scfb.org/events/2024-palmetto-palate

Matt Holt Named New Dean of CAFLS



Clemson University has named Matthew T. “Matt” Holt dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences (CAFLS). Currently head and professor of Virginia Tech’s Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Holt begins his new position on September 1, 2024.

“Matt brings considerable experience as an agriculturist and academic administrator to this role. His leadership, expertise and commitment to our land-grant legacy will serve the University well as we continue to improve the lives of South Carolinians through education, discovery and outreach in the agricultural and life sciences,” said Robert H. Jones, Clemson University Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

Holt is a highly regarded agricultural economist and a leading expert in applied econometric methods. Throughout his career, he has worked to develop and apply modern econometric tools to problems related to agricultural market and price analysis and production and price risk management. His recent work explores the linkages between climate anomalies and the markets for agricultural and natural resource products. Twice a visiting faculty member at the Stockholm School of Economics and once at Aarhus University, Holt’s former Ph.D. students occupy prominent positions in industry and academia.

In 2009, Holt was named a Fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, the highest honor this professional association can bestow on its members. Earlier this year, he received the Distinguished Agriculture Alumni Award from Purdue’s College of Agriculture, where he earned Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in agricultural economics. He also holds a doctoral degree in agricultural economics from the University of Missouri.

“My enthusiasm for this role is sky-high,” said Holt. “The ability to provide students with meaningful learning experiences, conduct and report on pathbreaking research and be of service to communities and stakeholders in South Carolina as the dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences is one of the most exciting and unique opportunities in the nation.”

Holt joined Virginia Tech as a professor and department head in 2017. As head, and in partnership with the Farm Credit Administration, he led his department to create and launch its online Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics with an emphasis on applied economic analytics in 2020. Through his leadership, the department

(Cont. on pg. 8, see New CAFLS Dean)

Agribusinesses Benefit from SC Inland Ports

Agricultural producers, retailers, and manufacturers are benefiting from South Carolina Ports inland port network

Inland Port Dillon and Inland Port Greer provide daily dedicated rail service to and from the Port of Charleston. The inland ports speed imports and exports to market, with the added benefit of reducing overall carbon footprints, ancillary costs and transit times by moving more containers via rail.



Inland Port Dillon supports major retailers and agricultural producers in the Pee Dee region and throughout the Carolinas. Alongside CSX, the Dillon operation handles consumer goods, soybeans, forest products, cotton seed and agricultural products.

Inland Port Dillon had its highest monthly cargo volumes ever in April, handling 4,730 rail moves, a 26% year-over-year increase.

Inland Port Greer also had a strong month and a record April, moving 16,105 containers, which is up 20% from last year. Alongside Norfolk Southern, Inland Port Greer handles goods for advanced manufacturers, mega retailers and consumer goods industries across the region.

Inland Port Greer's cargo base has diversified since opening in 2013, and many of these companies have invested in the Upstate to take advantage of the inland port. Inland Port Greer is now undergoing an expansion that will double its cargo capacity."

"Our inland ports are seeing cargo increases month after month as more port-dependent businesses take advantage of the reliable, swift and direct rail connection between the Port of Charleston and inland markets," SC Ports President and CEO Barbara Melvin said. "Our inland ports are an example of what we do best—strategically invest to deliver a creative solution that further supports importers and exporters."

The Port of Charleston provides efficient, productive port service and the deepest harbor on the U.S. East Coast at 52 feet.

Container volumes remained steady at SC Ports' marine terminals, with SC Ports and the broader maritime community handling 215,058 TEU's and 119,840 pier containers last month.

The automotive sector reflected strength at SC Ports, with 18,118 vehicles rolling across its docks last month. Monthly vehicle volumes are up 40% this year.

"We are expanding port capacity and capabilities ahead of demand to efficiently handle goods for our customers," Melvin said. "We are proud to offer reliable, efficient port service to the booming Southeast market."

Clemson Names New Director of Wood Utilization + Design Institute



Emily Huff, associate professor of human dimensions of forestry at Michigan State University, has been named director of Clemson University's Wood Utilization + Design Institute (WU+D).

Huff takes over leadership of the WU+D Institute after a national search followed the retirement of Patricia Layton, the Institute's founding director. Patricia "Pat" Layton Endowed Directorship—is named in honor of Layton and was endowed with a \$2 million gift from Micky and Amy Scott, fourth-generation owners of Collum's Lumber Products, LLC.

While at MSU, Huff's research focused on the integration of social and ecological data to predict the effects of human behavior on forest ecosystems and measuring the influence of resource quality and availability on decision-making. She also serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Society & Natural Resources* and as President of the Michigan Forest Association. Prior to her time at MSU, Huff filled academic, governmental and non-governmental roles, including research forester for the U.S. Forest Service, research assistant for the Sustainable Working Landscapes Initiative and technical intern with Sandia National Laboratories.

"Pat Layton started the Wood Utilization + Design Institute with the idea to create a place where experts in forestry, architecture and manufacturing could collaborate to create new markets and design new building products with wood. Now, the Institute is a vital part of Clemson and an example to the state and region. I am confident that the transition to Emily's leadership will be seamless, and she will continue the great strides WU+D has made," said Greg Yarrow, CAFLS interim dean.

WELCOME NEW PALMETTO AGRIBUSINESS COUNCIL MEMBERS



BINSENTRY

BinSentry has joined PABC at the Associate level. Mitchell Dickey, Account Executive, will be the representative. Their mission is to build the Feed Mill of the Future to support Supply Chain Efficiency, Worker Safety, and Environmental Sustainability. With BinSentry's innovative technology, feed mills and producers are reducing feed waste and miles traveled, optimizing truck loads, and eliminating accidents from climbing bins as they work to provide high-quality protein for a growing global population. Monitoring feed bin inventory levels with BinSentry's best-in-class 3D optical sensors provides the most accurate and reliable feed inventory data fed into proprietary software tools focused on improving feed management decision-making through notifications, suggestions, and advanced reporting supported by artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cloud computing.



SWISS KRONO

Swiss Krono is a new PABC Associate level member. Bo Carson, who is the company Wood Procurement Manager and a present Board member of the Forestry Association of South Carolina, will be their representative. Swiss Krono's USA headquarters is located near Barnwell, SC. For more information, visit the company website: <https://www.swisskrono.com/us-en/about-us/swiss-krono-usa/made-in-the-usa/#1>



Elevated Acres, LLC has joined PABC as an Associate Member. John Helmke, President, will be the representative. Elevated Acres, LLC is a consulting firm, specializing in data acquisition and implementation over land with a large emphasis on drone technology in agriculture, forestry and land management.

ACRE Grants (cont. from pg. 3)

Growing Green Family Farms in Greenville County supplies fresh produce to the Upstate region, using regenerative agricultural practices through compost and interplanting. They aim to expand their Good Agricultural Practices-certified packing shed and walk-in cooler, with which they can increase production and support other farmers in need of a food safety-certified space.

After taking over a pecan farm from their parents, the younger generation of **Yon Family Farms** quickly increased yield through improvements to irrigation and equipment. They operate a retail store in Ridge Spring that sells pecans and pecan products while also supporting other local farms by selling local goods from producers across SC. Yon will construct a new permanent freezer space to improve access and inventory management.

Heartworks Farm in Lexington County is a specialty crop farm producing tomatoes, microgreens, and cut flowers. They intend to build on a multi-functional packing and processing building with a dedicated area, cold storage, and a flexible space for educational workshops and farm events.

Hull and Husk in Beaufort County uses locally sourced peanut shells, pecan shells, white oak, and coffee grounds to produce pellets for wood burning grills and animal feed. With the help of the ACRE grant, they intend to buy packaging equipment, an air purification system, and a drum dryer for materials used in pellet production.

Congressional Staff Tour (cont. from pg. 1)



Tour highlights included a visit to Camp Daniels, (photo at left) Dr. Louis Whitesides, Vice President of SC State 1890 Program, provides information on the facility.

Another stop on the tour was Mixon Seed. In middle photo on left, owner Robert Etheridge gives the group an overview of the company.

In middle photo below, Connelly Farms President Baynard Connelly, provided information on the history of the farm and took staffers on a tour of the fields.



Collum's Lumber Mill hosted staffers at their location in Allendale. In left photo, Jake Scott, Vice President, speaks to the group about the lumber company and its operations.

PABC continues to see value in taking staffers to see hands-on operation of agribusinesses, providing a better understanding of this essential industry.

Palmetto AgriBusiness Council

OFFICERS:

Sarah Windham, Chair
Harry Ott, Past Chairman
Bryant Sansbury, Vice Chairman
Lori Anne Carr, Secretary/Treasurer

STAFF:

Ronnie Summers, CEO
Sandy Boozer, Executive Assistant

New CAFLS Dean (continued from page 4)

reoriented its Kohl Centre to include a prominent agribusiness analytics focus in its experiential learning and outreach efforts. He also facilitated the creation of the department's Data Science for the Public Good program, which merges experiential student learning in data science with public policy problems, elevated by Virginia Cooperative Extension faculty and staff. In 2019, Holt was asked to serve as an inaugural member of Virginia Tech's enrollment management advisory committee because of his econometrics expertise.

Since 2022, he has been co-leader for the Virginia Tech Advantage, a key campus initiative on access and affordability. Before that, Holt held positions as professor and Dwight Harrigan Endowed Faculty Fellow in Natural Resource Economics and head of the Department of Economics, Finance, and Legal Studies at the University of Alabama. Earlier, he was a professor and Wickersham Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Research at Purdue University. Additionally, Holt has held faculty positions at the University of Arizona, North Carolina State University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Palmetto AgriBusiness Council

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