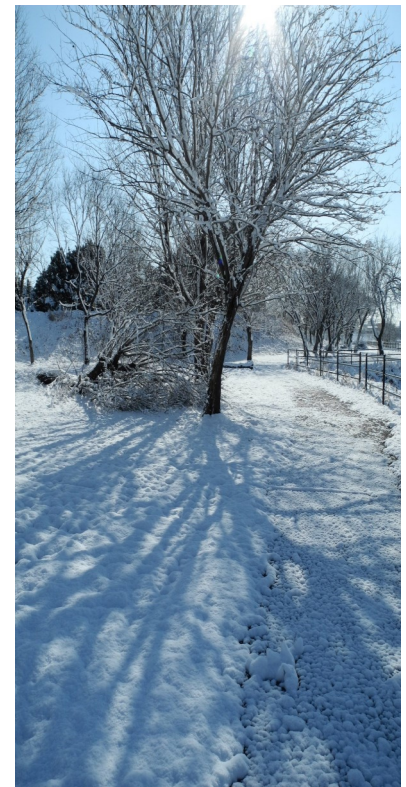




PABCJournal



New CAFLS Dean Matt Holt (center) was the guest speaker at the end of the year PABC Board meeting in November. Dean Holt presented an update on the College, future plans and projects.

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CEO MESSAGE

FROM RONNIE SUMMERS



Well, there is an old saying that you don't know what you have until you lose it. I can honestly say, that applies to me at this time as I always valued my parents, but now I have a real sense of loss. But, for what it is worth, this old boy recognizes how blessed I was to have had these two outstanding individuals as parents and also to be closely associated with the great people at the Palmetto AgriBusiness Council. The outpouring of sympathy and thoughtfulness to me and my family from our membership and close associates during this time of loss has been unreal. "Thank You" from the entire Summers family to each of you!!!

Entering 2025 from a business perspective, it frankly looks to be a challenging year. Recent row crop meetings indicate budgets are real tight for essentially all crops, while the task of finding additional or expanded markets for timber continues to persist. That being recognized, I was reminded recently that over the course of 365 days a lot can change. Let's hope that we observe some positive movement in commodity prices for both farm and forestry products along with a reduction in critical operating costs leading to improved profit margins in the near future.

So, challenge number one is profitability, but ... there are so many other closely related issues such as the need for an effective Farm Bill, increasing rural land values and the loss of ag/timber land, labor cost and regulations, access to water, tort issues affecting agribusinesses, regulatory actions limiting access to effective input products, looming trade issues, a need for improved tax laws, and much more. As we enter 2025, the hope is that reasonable, practical solutions will come into play to address these concerns and the ultimate impact on SC agribusiness. It has been noted in the past, but bears citing again, that the overall collaboration of our PABC membership relative to business challenges is a real benefit of our organization. Here's to PABC exhausting a strong effort to tackle the issues at hand along with our valued membership. As a team, we can make things happen to benefit our industry!

In typical CEO Message closing fashion, please advise Sandy and me how we can support your business interests. We sincerely want your business to succeed!!!

SCDA Accepting Specialty Crop Block Grant Applications

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture is now accepting applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is administered by the US Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) to enhance competitiveness of the specialty crop industry and expand markets for producers. Through this program, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) funds projects that strengthen the state's specialty crop industry through marketing, education, and research.

Specialty crops are defined by law as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Applications will only be accepted from producer groups, industry, or community-based organizations involved with specialty crops.

Applicants should propose projects that provide one or more of the following benefits:

- Enhancing food safety
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers, and processors
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes
- Pest and disease control
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems Sustainability

“The Specialty Crop Block Grant program is one of our most valuable tools in helping South Carolina farmers grow and sell more crops, and make a better living doing it,” said South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers.

Applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program are available at agriculture.sc.gov/grants and are due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 14, 2025. Applications must be submitted by email to scbgp@scda.sc.gov.

For more information, contact Hannah Arndt at scbgp@scda.sc.gov or by phone at 803-939-5751.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 29-30

SC Green Industry
Association
Annual Conference &
Trade Show
Columbia Metropolitan
Conference Center
scgreen.org

Feb. 20

2025 Forestry Day
at the Capital
SC State House
8– 10 am

March 18

SC Chamber
Spotlight on
Agriculture & Forestry
Stone River
West Columbia
scchamber.net/events/

March 26

SC Ag Tech & Business
Forum
Phillips Market Center
State Farmers Market

March 27

Certified SC Showcase
Columbia Metropolitan
Convention Center
agriculture.sc.gov/

GreenGas USA and Pilgrim's Pride Commission RNG Project

Pilgrim's Pride and GreenGasUSA are working together on a renewable natural gas (RNG) project at the Pilgrim's Sumter processing facility.

GreenGasUSA is building upon existing methane capture capabilities and investment to convert biogas from wastewater streams, upgrading the biogas to pipeline quality RNG. The collaboration is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the Sumter facility while improving wastewater operations, as well as local air and water quality.

SC Ports Expanding Inland Port Greer

South Carolina Ports is enhancing its intermodal connections in South Carolina with the ongoing expansion of Inland Port Greer and construction of the Navy Base Intermodal Facility.

SC Ports is investing to expand Inland Port Greer with more cargo and rail capabilities to support customers' growth in the Upstate and beyond, giving shippers direct access to the Port of Charleston.

More than 9,000 feet of new rail has already been placed to accommodate longer trains carrying more cargo. The container yard has been expanded to the east and west, doubling the cargo capacity. With these enhancements, Inland Port Greer can handle 300,000 rail lifts annually.

SC Ports is also significantly expanding rail capabilities at the Port of Charleston. With \$400 million in state funding, the Navy Base Intermodal Facility is taking shape on a 118-acre site in North Charleston near Leatherman Terminal.



The Forestry Association of SC held its annual meeting in November with several PABC members serving on a CEO panel, including from left Reg Williams, Log Creek Timber; Micky Scott, Collum's Lumber Products; Furman Brodie, Charles Ingram Lumber and Trip Chavis, Milliken Advisors. Also pictured is Skipper Beal with Beal Lumber Company.



At the SC Farm Bureau annual meeting in December- Neil Crisp (center), SC Advocates for Agriculture VP, & SCAFA Board member JEB Wilson (left) presented Farm Bureau President Harry Ott (right) with a \$50,000 contribution which was provided by AgSouth Farm Credit for the SC Farm Bureau Ag Aid Foundation. The Foundation funds go toward the disasters affecting SC ag during 2024 and especially Hurricane Helene.



During the CAFLS outstanding alumni awards celebration, Aaron Wood (right), Assistant Commissioner for agency operations with the SC Department of Agriculture, received the 2024 Professional Achievement Award from CAFLS Dean Matt Holt (left).

Clemson Names New Vet School in Honor of State Senator



Officials and state leaders broke ground Nov. 22 on the [Harvey S. Peeler Jr. College of Veterinary Medicine](#), the state's only college of veterinary medicine.

Earlier that day, Clemson's board of trustees approved the name of the new college, which honors Harvey S. Peeler Jr., a 1970 graduate of the university who has served as a senator in the South Carolina General Assembly since 1980.

"Sen. Peeler has passionately supported the development of a college of veterinary medicine for more than 20 years, and his efforts throughout the process have been instrumental in developing this new college at Clemson," Clemson Board Chair Kim Wilkerson said in a news release. "In recognition of his contributions to this historic development for Clemson and the entire state, our board is excited to name this new college in his honor."

Peeler, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and a cattle farmer in his hometown of Gaffney, has experienced firsthand the need for large and small animal veterinarians in the state. "Today marks a historic milestone for our state as we break ground on the new College of Veterinary Medicine — a dream that's been a long time in the making," Peeler said in the release. "This is not just about education — it is about taking care of our animals, supporting our farmers, growing our economy and filling the need for veterinarians in South Carolina."

The groundbreaking was held on the site of the new complex near Clemson's [T. Ed Garrison Arena](#) in Pendleton. Speakers included Clemson University President Jim Clements, founding Dean Steven Marks, current pre-veterinary student Ashlee Romp and Peeler. Clemson trustees in February approved a phase 1 \$10 million education and general portion of the college project and a phase 2 \$95 million budget for design work, to begin initial site work and other early portions of the project such as HVAC equipment, electrical transformers and switchgear.

"The Harvey S. Peeler Jr. College of Veterinary Medicine will be an incredible asset not only for Clemson University but for the entire state of South Carolina, our region and beyond," said university President Jim Clements in the release. "Today's historic groundbreaking is a testament to the dedication and commitment of the South Carolina General Assembly, the Clemson University Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students and champions like Sen. Harvey Peeler. Together, we are further elevating our land-grant mission and continuing to meet the needs of our communities through education, research and service."

The complex is located across the street from Clemson University's Equine Center on W. Queen Street. Adjacent to the Clemson Experimental Forest, the college will prepare veterinarians to address what the university calls a critical shortage in the state. The complex comprises six buildings designed to provide students with spaces for collaboration, hands-on learning and personal growth.

(continued on page 8, see [New Vet School Named for State Senator](#))

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS



Congratulations to PABC member Terrance Ford, Vice President South Carolina External Affairs– AT&T, who was named one of the 50 Most Influential Hall of Fame Inductees by *Columbia Business Monthly* magazine.

Ford is a 24-year veteran of AT&T and its former company BellSouth. Throughout his career, Ford has held various positions, including overseeing the installation of advance services like broadband in the network operations department, managing technicians, and leading economic development and community outreach efforts in Upstate South Carolina.

Originally from the Charleston area, Ford holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Webster University. He is a graduate of Leadership South Carolina and a Riley Fellow.

Senn Brothers Expands to Jasper County

Senn Brothers, a produce distributor in West Columbia, announced it is growing its South Carolina footprint with a new operation in Jasper County. The company's \$2.9 million investment will create 19 new jobs.

Founded in 1944, Senn Brothers Produce is a family-owned distributor of locally sourced produce. The company delivers fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables sourced from local farmers and producers.

Senn Brothers Produce's new facility, located in the Cypress Ridge Business Park in Ridgeland, will have cold storage and office space to allow for expanded service to Hilton Head and Savannah markets. Operations are expected to be online in the third quarter of 2026.

"With the growth in South Carolina, especially in the Lowcountry, we recognized a need for a locally owned South Carolina produce distributor," said Senn Brothers Produce President Gregg Senn. "Not only will Senn provide produce for end users but one of our goals is to make it easier for farmers in the area to get their products to market. We are looking forward to building a strong agricultural distribution network that will benefit South Carolina.

The Coordinating Council for Economic Development awarded a \$75,000 Set-Aside grant to Jasper County to assist with the costs of site preparation and building construction.

Welcome New Member Coosaw Farms



Coosaw Farms, owned and operated by the O'Neal family, has joined PABC at the Executive level. Louise O'Neal, Director of Operations and Development, will be their representative.

Coosaw Farms, headquartered near Fairfax, SC, is a major producer of South Carolina watermelons and blueberries.

For more information on Coosaw Farms, visit <https://www.coosawfarms.com/>

PABC to Participate as Partner in SC State PSA Urban Forestry Project

PABC has been chosen to participate as a partner in the SC State University Public Service and Agriculture (SCSU PSA) Urban Forestry project. SCSU PSA was awarded a \$5 million USDA grant to create more tree canopies in South Carolina. The grant will enable SC State PSA to revitalize green spaces and restore the region's native tree diversity in disadvantaged communities across South Carolina.

As a collaborative partner, PABC will receive \$18,000 per year over four years as a subaward grant from SC State PSA. PABC will provide outreach and promotion for the project including speaking engagements, disseminating information and providing opportunities for presentations on this initiative.

SC State PSA will implement the program collaborating with 10 counties, two state agencies and community organizations for strategic project execution. Along with PABC, SC Advocates for Agriculture is among these collaborative partners. Execution of the plan includes focusing on planting native and naturalized tree species suited for urban settings, including edible plants to address food deserts. The plan is to plant 20,796 trees covering 1,800 acres of land, removing 2,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually, and providing fruits in food deserts. SC State PSA will host workshops, education programs and volunteer events to involve local communities.

"We will work with counties across the state to design urban forests," said Dr. Louis Whitesides, SC State Vice President for Public Service and Agriculture. "So, we will be planting trees across South Carolina, starting with our own Orangeburg and Bamberg County." Dr. Whitesides said the grant will allow SC State PSA to work with landscape architects and county personnel to identify locations and design the canopies. The project will establish multidisciplinary collaborative activities directed toward youth internships and empowerment, policy, practice and community engagement.

WP Rawl Celebrates 100 Years



Congratulations to PABC member WP Rawl, a premier grower, processor and shipper of leafy greens in the U.S. for reaching the milestone of 100 years in business in 2025.

Building on the foundation of the company established in 1925 by founders Walter and Ernestine Rawl, the company has continued to uphold principals that guided them for nearly a century: faith, family and farming.

Marking the centennial year, the company will hold a celebration at the Edventure Children's Museum in Columbia where the WP Rawl Farm Exhibit recently underwent a renovation. The exhibit provides an opportunity for children to learn more about growing food and farming through hands-on interaction.

Palmetto AgriBusiness Council

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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 Vet School Named for State Senator *(continued from page 5)*

The Hub will be a center where students can attend classes, study and engage with one another. The Clinical Teaching Building will house several labs and serve as the home for the Peeler College of Veterinary Medicine Community Clinic, where the public can access veterinary care. The Research Building will house faculty and graduate student offices, as well as research labs dedicated to advancing veterinary science. The Ambulatory Service Building will have a significant impact on the Upstate region, the university says, providing fourth-year students with vital clinical rotation experience on area farms as mobile veterinarians. The Equine Teaching Building will offer students a dedicated space to practice and learn about equine health in a safe and controlled environment. The Farm Animal Teaching Building will include specialized spaces essential for training students in farm animal care.

“What an amazing time for this university and our state,” Dean Marks said in the release. “Our goal is to create day-one-prepared veterinarians to serve communities around South Carolina. Animal and human health are directly connected, and we are so proud to be a part of creating the next generation of veterinarians.”

A third of South Carolina counties have fewer than five veterinarians, and 48% of the state's counties have fewer than 10 veterinarians. While qualified candidates are applying to veterinary colleges, 500-1,000 are not admitted due to a capacity shortage at existing colleges.

The Harvey S. Peeler Jr. College of Veterinary Medicine continues the process of earning accreditation. It's expected to welcome its first class of 80 students in fall 2026. The Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree and curriculum have all been approved by the trustees, and faculty and staff hiring will continue for the next two years.

Palmetto AgriBusiness Council

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