

# *South Carolina Department of Agriculture*

**Hugh Weathers, Commissioner**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 5, 2013**

## **Small Farms Can Mean Big Business for South Carolina**

### ***-Study shows small farms can expand economic development & jobs***

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – South Carolina’s small farms have more potential to grow the economy, create jobs and build healthier communities. The South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) commissioned the *Making Small Farms into Big Business (MSFBB)* study to look at the impact of expanding the state’s local food infrastructure.

Statistics show South Carolinians buy \$11 billion of food each year, with more than 90% sourced outside the state. However, the demand to buy local is growing and implementing recommendations of MSFBB could increase SC producers’ revenue to \$1.2 billion annually.

“We can expand market opportunities for farmers across the state by developing a strategic plan based on the recommendations found in this report. As more consumers buy local, we need to not only meet that demand, but we must also capitalize on it,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers.

In the coming months, SCDA and members of the MSFBB Advisory Committee will establish a strategic plan for Making Small Farms into Big Business in South Carolina. To read the entire report, visit [www.agriculture.sc.gov](http://www.agriculture.sc.gov) and look under Hot Topics. (Please note the report is a large file and will take some time to download.)

Here are some of the study’s findings and recommendations:

- MSFBB identifies ways to increase the \$34 billion economic impact of agribusiness in South Carolina and the nearly 200,000 industry related jobs.
- Establish 15-20 food nodes, clusters of farms collaborating and using common food production infrastructure.
- Establish three food hubs, businesses that manage aggregation, distribution, and marketing of products grown by local producers to satisfy wholesale, retail and institutional demand. (GrowFood Carolina, located in Charleston, is currently the state’s only Food Hub.)
- Leverage SCDA’s Certified SC Grown branding campaign to encourage consumers to increase spending on local food by \$5 a week.

- Educate low-income and rural South Carolinians about the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables.

Several private sector groups and state agencies are working together to make MSFBB a reality.

“This is the most massive project ever undertaken to develop a local food supply in South Carolina. Implementation of the results of the study can increase significantly the income of rural counties in our state,” said Jack Shuler, President of the Palmetto Agribusiness Council.

Hugh C. Lane, Jr., Chairman of the Board for the Bank of South Carolina agrees. “As a lifelong South Carolinian, I have been very concerned about the plight of rural South Carolina and this study gives us an opportunity to allow South Carolina farms to capitalize on the ‘Grow Fresh – Eat Fresh phenomenon’, which the public is demanding. This should lead to more jobs and more revenue going into rural South Carolina. This will offer people an opportunity to produce more revenue on their land and enjoy a wonderful way of living. I certainly want to thank Commissioner Hugh Weathers and Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt for their enthusiastic endorsement and support of this effort,” said Lane.

The MSFBB committee will work to release a strategic plan for implementing the study’s recommendations by spring 2014. Learn more about partner organizations by visiting the following websites:

South Carolina Department of Commerce, [www.sccommerce.com](http://www.sccommerce.com)

Palmetto Agribusiness Council, [www.scagribusiness.org](http://www.scagribusiness.org)

Coastal Conservation League, [www.coastalconservationleague.org](http://www.coastalconservationleague.org)

Carolina Farm Stewardship, [www.carolinafarmstewards.org](http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org)

South Carolina Farm Bureau, [www.scfb.org](http://www.scfb.org)

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