

**State of South Carolina
Department of Agriculture**



**Accountability Report
2007-2008**

Accountability Report Transmittal Form

Agency Name: South Carolina Department of Agriculture

Date of Submission: September 15, 2008

Agency Director: Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner of Agriculture

Agency Contact Person: Becky Walton

Agency Contact's Telephone Number: 803-734-2182

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I -Executive Summary

Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values	page	1
Major Achievements	pages	1 - 2
Key Strategic Goals	page	2
Key Strategic Challenges	page	2
Accountability Report	page	2

Section II- Organizational Profile

Main Products and Services	pages	3 - 4
Key Customers	page	5
Key Stakeholders	page	5
Key Suppliers and Partners	page	5
Operating Locations	page	6
Number of Employees	page	6
Regulatory Environment	page	6
Performance Improvement System	page	6
Organizational Structure	page	6
Organizational Chart	page	7
Expenditures and Appropriations Chart	page	8
Major Program Areas	pages	9 -10

Section III- Elements of Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria

Category 1-Senior Leadership, Governance, and Social Responsibility	pages	11-14
Category 2-Strategic Planning	pages	14-16
Strategic Planning Chart	pages	17-18
Category 3-Customer and Market Focus	pages	18-19
Category 4-Measurement, Analysis & Knowledge Management	pages	19-20
Category 5-Workforce Focus	pages	20-22
Category 6-Process Management	page	23
Category 7-Key Results	pages	23-43

South Carolina Department of Agriculture Accountability Report 2007-2008

I - Executive Summary

1. South Carolina Department of Agriculture Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values

Purpose

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture exists to ensure the viability of agriculture in the state.

Mission

Our mission is to promote and nurture the growth and development of South Carolina's agriculture industry and its related businesses while assuring the safety and security of the buying public.

Vision

Our shared vision is for the state economy to grow and prosper providing everyone, producers and consumers, opportunities to enjoy the fruits of agriculture.

Values

Our core values include a commitment to integrity, diversity, inclusiveness, fairness, excellence, accessibility, protection, accountability and growth.

2. Major achievements from past year

- The Department created a new Web site, www.agriculture.sc.gov to address the needs of external and internal audiences - customers and stakeholders as well as staff. The Web site improves online services for producers and consumers and provides enhanced channels of communication to assure the safety of the buying public.
- The Department launched the "Fresh on the Menu" phase of the Certified SC branding and marketing campaign. The goal is for consumers to be able to easily identify, find and buy South Carolina products as the state emerges as a culinary destination in the U.S. With the "Fresh on the Menu" program, the Department has challenged local restaurants to incorporate locally grown produce and products into their menus. In partnership with other agencies and organizations, the Department also participated in "Go Wild," a program designed to encourage consumers to buy local shrimp and seafood.
- Agency Services saved over \$28,000 this past fiscal year by leasing vehicles for Consumer Services inspectors rather than paying travel mileage for use of personal vehicles.

- Through a unique private-public partnership, the Department has created a solution for the new State Farmers Market, reducing the state's costs by over \$20 million. The new South Carolina State Farmers Market will be located in Lexington County.
- Reduced the volume of individual disbursement requests and increased financial rebates to the state by maintaining a high usage of a Visa Procurement Card.
- The use of a remote check processing machine allows the agency to make significantly large deposits electronically, saving time and travel costs. The agency also has online access giving immediate bank confirmation. The savings acquired by this investment are immeasurable in workflow issues, employee time and travel, and greater efficiency and accountability within the agency.
- The agency initiated the SC Enterprise Information System (SCEIS) for financial and material management functions. When fully implemented, this system is expected to provide a comprehensive platform for managing the state's financial resources.

3. Key strategic goals for the present and future years

- Effectively manage agency operations and workforce
- Protect producers and consumers
- Promote agriculture and agribusiness
- Provide public awareness, promotion, and publicity of South Carolina agricultural products

4. Your key strategic challenges

- Providing agricultural marketing opportunities which support the state's economy, particularly in rural communities.
- Maximizing safety and protection of goods and services offered for sale to the public
- Professional development for staff.
- Integrity of programs and services.
- Downturn in the economy creating a significant reduction in the Department's budget.
- Loss of institutional knowledge and information due to retirement and natural attrition.
- Enforcing over 30 laws mandated in the SC Code of Laws.

5. How the accountability report is used to improve organizational performance

Senior leaders collaborate with staff to prepare information for their respective area for the accountability report. In doing so, they are documenting improvements and performance measures. From this documentation, the accountability report is created. The report serves to monitor the Department's progress and identify gaps in performance. In addition, the accountability report is a valuable self-assessment tool in determining how well the Department focuses on the agency mission.

II – Organizational Profile

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) is mandated by 37 separate South Carolina laws related to:

- fostering the state's commerce of agriculture through marketing and promotion
- protecting the citizens of the state by ensuring proper weights and measures, grading and inspection of the state's agriculture products, and laboratory analysis of food, feed, seeds, cosmetics, and petroleum products

Originally created by an Act of the General Assembly on December 23, 1879, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture continues to provide programs and services affecting all the people of the Palmetto State – *producers and consumers*. The SCDA is charged with supporting the efforts of the state's second largest industry – agriculture. While the Department of Agriculture provides programs and services that focus on agriculture and agribusiness, the agency also touches the lives of every citizen of the state.

The Department's role is crucial in promoting and safeguarding an industry with a \$7 billion impact to the state's economy. However, the activities of the Department also impact and influence many other industries in the state.

1. Main products and services and the primary delivery methods

Many of the Department's activities are related to commerce – developing, expanding, and protecting the integrity of agricultural commerce in our state and providing the highest quality consumer service with regards to food protection and value.

- Broad-based marketing programs to increase consumer awareness and product demand for quality South Carolina agricultural products at local, national, and international levels.
- SC Certified Roadside Market Program, established in 1972 as the first official roadside market program in the state, and the Small Farms Program which includes about 75 local community-based farmers markets across the state.
- In May 2008, Marketing's "Certified South Carolina" marketing and branding program celebrated its first birthday. In a little over one year, the program has grown to over 450 members. "Fresh on the Menu," phase two of the program, was implemented in February 2008 under the Certified South Carolina umbrella program to encourage diners to look for local products in local restaurants. Participating chefs have committed to serve 25% of their menu with SC grown products when in season. In June 2008, the SCDA partnered with the SC Shrimp industry and several other agencies to "Go Wild" and demand local, wild shrimp instead of buying product shipped across the ocean.
- Three state farmers markets have a significant impact of hundreds of millions of dollars on the state's economy, particularly in rural areas.

- The SCDA also works cooperatively with the US Department of Agriculture to provide commodity Grading, Inspection, and Market News Services. Grading and/or inspections are performed for fruits, vegetables, peanuts, poultry and eggs, grain, and livestock throughout the state. And, products are inspected and certified at export warehouses for international shipments.
- Market news reports on price, volume and other market information for fruits and vegetables, grain, and livestock are issued to all segments of the industry and to consumers through printed reports and telephone and Internet audio recordings.
- In addition, the *Market Bulletin*, a valuable resource for farmers and non-farmers, includes millions of dollars in ads in each issue. Subscriptions to the 95-year-old publication are now available online as well as in print and advertisers may submit their own ads through the SCDA's new Web site.
- The SCDA has created a new Web site at www.agriculture.sc.gov which is compatible with the branding and marketing site at www.certifiedscgrown.com. The new site is more interactive and user-friendly for consumers and producers. A Hay Exchange is always available on the Web site for use by hay buyers and sellers.
- Consumer Services inspectors check scales and measuring devices throughout the state for accuracy. They make sure that a pound weighs a pound and a gallon is really a gallon. Now that the price of a tank of gas has reached epic proportions, consumers demand to know that gas pumps measure accurately. At nearly \$4 dollars a gallon, this function is more important to consumers and marketers than ever.
- Laboratory technicians through testing and analysis ensure that the ingredients listed on packages are actually the ingredients in the packages. Livestock owners want assurance that the feed bag marked "no animal protein" actually contains no animal protein. Farmers and gardeners want to make sure that their seeds germinate properly. And, consumers want to know that the gasoline they pump into their cars is free of water or any other contaminants.

Currently, the Department serves producers who earn their livelihood on approximately 24,700 farms spreading over 4.85 million acres of farmland in the state. Cash receipts for crops and livestock total about \$2 billion but the ripple affect goes far beyond the farm gate. Billions of dollars are generated in revenue, taxes, and jobs, particularly for the rural communities of the state. Add to that the food and forestry agribusiness sector, and the industry of agriculture in South Carolina is significant to the vitality of the state's economy. Nationally, South Carolina ranks near the top in the production of several agricultural products.

The Department of Agriculture, a relatively small agency with a \$6.4 million general fund budget, has very large responsibilities to both producers and consumers regarding the safety, security, and marketing of agricultural products, both fresh and processed. The 129-year-old agency is dedicated to promoting and heightening the public's awareness of South Carolina's agriculture commodities and the farmers who produce them.

2. Key customers

- Consumers – everyone who consumes or uses agricultural products
- Producers – everyone who grows or produces agricultural commodities
- Processors/Manufacturers – anyone who prepares, treats, or converts raw agricultural products
- Wholesalers, Retailers, and Direct Marketers – everyone who sells raw agricultural products or value-added agricultural products
- Local, state, and federal government officials and representatives
- Agriculture Commission of SC members
- Commodity Boards and Associations members
- Representatives of existing, expanding, and developing agribusinesses
- Electronic and print media representatives
- Supermarket representatives
- Fuel retailers and distributors

3. Key stakeholders

(Everyone who has an interest in the industry of agriculture)

- Consumers (men, women, and children) are the ultimate stakeholders
- Taxpayers
- Legislators
- Others who have an interest in the industry of agriculture
 - Farm owners and operators of livestock and crops
 - Nursery men and women, greenhouse growers, and floriculture
 - Fertilizer, agrichemical and seed dealers
 - Farm equipment dealers
 - Forest landowners
 - Grain dealers
 - Produce shippers and handlers
 - Specialty producers and processors
 - Dairy producers, processors, shippers, and handlers
 - Agricultural educators, students, and researchers
 - Public and private agricultural partners
 - Land grant university and 1890 program representatives
 - Farm workers and migrant labor

4. Key suppliers and partners

Suppliers

- Vendors who are eligible to bid on state contracts, small suppliers, information technology vendors, Federal government grantor, printing companies, ad and PR agency
- Kelly Registration Systems
- Interactive Design and Development (IDD)

Partners

- SC Advocates for Agriculture
- South Carolina Farm Bureau
- Palmetto AgriBusiness Council (PABC)
- Clemson University
- State and Federal agencies
- Private individuals and organizations

5. Operating Locations

- SCDA Headquarters, *State Capitol Complex, Wade Hampton Building, 5th Floor Columbia*
- Columbia State Farmers Market, *1001 Bluff Road, Columbia*
- Greenville State Farmers Market, *1354 Rutherford Road, Greenville*
- Laboratory and Consumer Services, *1101 Williams Street, Columbia*
- Metrology Laboratory, *237 Catawba Street, Columbia*
- Pee Dee State Farmers Market, *2513 Lucas Street, Florence*

SCDA employs graders, inspectors, and market news specialists who are located throughout the state in cooperative programs with the federal government. The Laboratory and Consumer Protection facility along with the Metrology Laboratory are scheduled to be moved to a new State Farmers Market in Lexington.

6. Number of Employees

At the end of FY 07-08, the SCDA had 132 full-time and 22 part-time employees. The Agency Vacancy Rate was 13.2% for the past fiscal year.

7. The regulatory environment under which the SCDA operates

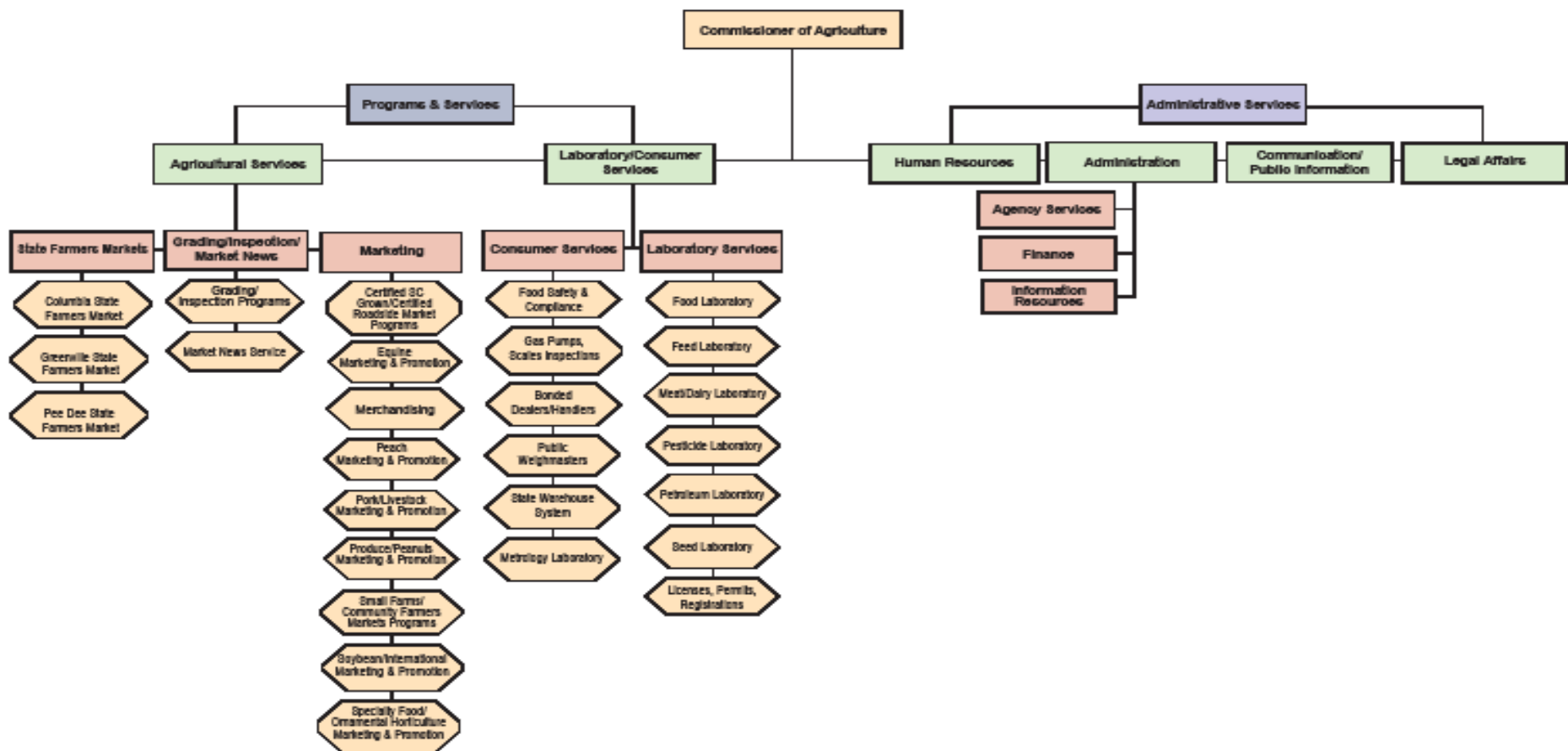
Department of Agriculture operations are authorized by the South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 46 Section 10 to Section 260. The Department oversees and enforces over thirty laws for the State of South Carolina. Certain activities of the Department are regulated by the EPA, OSHA, and other federal agencies. The Department also holds cooperative agreements to perform work for a number of federal agencies including the USDA and the FDA.

8. Performance improvement system

The first two quarters of fiscal year 07-08, the SCDA had a meets by default rate of 26.39%. For the last two quarters of fiscal year, the SCDA has been 100% compliant, a significant step forward.

9. Organizational structure (See Organizational Chart, pg. 7.)

South Carolina Department of Agriculture Organizational Chart



10. Accountability Report Appropriations/Expenditures Chart

Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations						
	FY 06-07 Actual Expenditures		FY 07-08 Actual Expenditures		08-09 Appropriations Act	
Major Budget Categories	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds
Personal Services	\$ 5,369,261	\$ 2,679,334	\$ 5,475,543	\$ 2,665,182	\$5,634,387	\$ 2,568,566
Other Operating	\$ 4,667,673	\$ 1,372,275	\$ 6,554,635	\$ 2,971,505	\$6,399,129	\$ 2,762,958
Special Items	\$ 800,000	800,000				
Permanent Improvements	\$ 3,515,531		\$ 785,267			
Case Services						
Distributions to Subdivisions		\$ 475,543				
Fringe Benefits	\$ 1,550,721	\$ 775,640	\$ 1,764,639	\$ 853,639	\$ 1,862,128	\$ 950,123
Non-recurring			\$ 5,324,195	\$ 5,324,195		
Total	\$15,903,186	\$6,102,792	\$19,904,279	\$11,814,421	\$13,885,644	\$6,281,647

Sources of Funds	06-07 Actual Expenditures	07-08 Actual Expenditures
Supplemental Bills		\$ 5,324,195
Capital Reserve Funds		\$ 785,267
Bonds		

11. Major Program Areas Chart

Major Program Areas

Program Number and Title	Major Program Area Purpose (Brief)	FY 06-07 Budget Expenditures		FY 07-08 Budget Expenditures		Key Cross References for Financial Results*
I Administrative Services	Provides executive leadership, support, policy development and review, financial services, information technology, facilities management, and other administrative services	State: 1,100,138 Federal: -0- Other: 90 Total: 1,100,228		State: 1,219,947 Federal: -0- Other: 4,448 Total: 1,224,395		pgs. 23-36
			6.9%	% of Total Budget:	6.2%	
II Laboratory Services	Protects consumers from unsafe, ineffective, or fraudulent goods that may be offered for public sale; assures that goods meet acceptable standards of quality; monitors labeling; registers animal and pet foods, frozen desserts, gasoline, and antifreeze; issues licenses for butterfat testers and milk samplers and weighmen; grants permits to salvage food operations; issues two to three thousand licenses, permits and registrations; provides assistance regarding food safety and security in the event of a natural disaster or an accidental or international emergency related to Homeland Security.	State: 1,346,012 Federal: 211 Other: 129,446 Total: 1,475,670		State: 1,400,930 Federal: -0- Other: 171,759 Total: 1,572,689		pgs. 27-30
			9.3%	% of Total Budget:	7.9%	
III Consumer Services	Draws samples for analysis in the SCDA's laboratories; protects the people of the state, farmers and non-farmers, from fraud by ensuring the accuracy of weights and measures; provides grading and inspecting of poultry products; inspects food and cosmetic manufacturing and storage facilities; assures farmers that they receive full and prompt payment for the products they produce and that their stored cotton and grain crops are protected in warehouse facilities; inspects gas pumps, grocery store scales, vehicle tank meters, and liquid petroleum gas measuring devices; collects official samples of petroleum, produce, meat and feeds for laboratory analysis; licenses, bonds and audits warehouses and dealers; inspects storage facilities for sanitation compliance.	State: 388,641 Federal: -0- Other: 1,119,123 Total: 1,507,765	State: 408,158 Federal: -0- Other: 1,083,363 Total: 1,491,521			pgs. 30-33
		% of Total Budget:	9.5%	% of Total Budget:	7.5%	

11. Major Program Areas Chart (Continued)

IV Agricultural Services	Develops and implements broad-based marketing programs; provides programs and services designed to increase consumer awareness and product demand for quality South Carolina agricultural commodities; strives to improve the economic vitality of business and individuals in the industry of agriculture; encourages expansion and development of existing industries that use South Carolina agricultural commodities, both fresh and processed, to increase the marketability of locally-grown products; provides quality grade standards and up-to-date first-hand market news to the allied industry through a cooperative agreement with the USDA; oversees and operates the three state farmers markets; domestic and international marketing assistance; certifies roadside markets; promotes specialty crops and specialty products; assists small farmer and provides support for organically grown certification; promotes the green industry (nursery, greenhouse, landscape, etc.); authorizes individual farmers and farmers' markets to be able to accept coupons from those who are nutritionally at risk to buy fresh, unprepared produce issued in the WIC and Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Programs; serves as a liaison to commodity boards, associations, and the state's Ag Commission; publishes the Market Bulletin which is designed as a vehicle for farmers and non-farmers to buy and sell agricultural and agricultural-related items, as a resource for economic stability especially in rural areas.	State: 1,216,816 Federal: 67,957 Other: 4,668,495 Total: 5,953,269 % of Total Budget: 37.4%	State: 2,607,651 Federal: 65,995 Other: 5,067,927 Total: 7,741,573 % of Total Budget: 38.9%	pgs. 33-43
V	Employer Contributions	State: 775,640 Federal: -0- Other: 775,081 Total: 1,550,721 % of Total Budget: 9.8%	State: 853,639 Federal: -0- Other: 911,000 Total: 1,764,639 % of Total Budget: 8.9%	

Below: List any programs not included above and show the remainder of expenditures by source of funds.

N/A

Remainder of Expenditures: Supplemental Appropriations Permanent Improvements	State: 800,000 Federal: -0- Other: 3,515,530 Total: 4,315,530 % of Total Budget: 27.1%	State: 5,324,195 Federal: -0- Other: 785,267 Total: 6,109,462 % of Total Budget: 30.6%
--	---	---

* Key Cross-References are a link to the Category 7 - Business results. These References provide a Page number that is included in the 7th section of this document.

Section III –Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence Standards

Category I – Senior Leadership, Governance, and Social Responsibility

1. How do senior leaders set, deploy, and ensure two-way communication for: a) short and long term organizational direction and organizational priorities, b) performance expectations, c) organizational values, and d) ethical behavior.

Under the leadership of the Commissioner of Agriculture, the agency and its leadership team continue to focus on the mission of growing the business of agriculture in the state and protecting the buying public from deceptive business practices. This focus has instilled a sense of pride in staff and those served by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture.

Senior staff meetings are held to assess progress and resolve short term issues. Also, regular and frequent communication between senior leaders serves as an important part of leadership in the Department. Division Directors meet regularly with staff to keep employees informed of agency issues. Long-term, under the leadership of the Commissioner, current and prospective programs, new initiatives, and new and innovative ideas for future direction continue to be examined and action taken accordingly.

The Commissioner and his leadership team value partnerships with customers and stakeholders, fostering a free exchange of ideas that are used in evaluating the agency's programs and services. Employees are committed to enhancing the lives of our taxpaying citizens, providing them a good return on their investment.

Over time, an internal system encompassing policies, processes and people has been developed and expanded. Management activities are directed by the Commissioner of Agriculture with a good business sense, objectivity and integrity.

Managers and supervisors are encouraged to make decisions that define expectations, grant power, and verify performance.

Senior staff and/or their designated apprentice liaisons gather twice monthly at "Tuesdays @ 10" meetings to discuss team activities related to everything from promotion and publicity efforts to resolution of external and internal issues and problems. Through face-to-face discussions with managers and other staff, through written guidelines and policies, through EPMS links to program performance standards, and through development of effective modules, managers set clear performance expectations, goals, and objectives for employees.

Agency leadership communicates social responsibility and ethical expectations through individual evaluations and discussions, policies and procedures, and employee participation in professional organizations. As a state agency serving the people of South Carolina, the rights and privileges of the citizens are ensured. While the agency complies with the Freedom of Information Act, the Department also maintains the privacy of those served. For instance, the result of official samples that are taken by inspectors for analysis by the laboratory technicians is public information. Those samples that are submitted by private parties are considered private information. The Department of Agriculture ensures that rights and privileges are maintained.

In addition to maintaining the rights and privileges of citizens, the human rights of employees are also respected. However, irresponsible and unethical behavior that may bring harm to the agency, community, its people, or the environment is not tolerated. Employee performance is directly enhanced by the attention to the details involving their benefits. Employees have a vested interest in what the agency does and how it is run. When employees perceive that they are a valuable asset, productivity increases.

Professional development is offered whenever feasible. Managers and supervisors are active in professional organizations that foster their continued growth in knowledge and expertise in their fields of specialty. Employees, especially lab scientists, chemists and technicians, are encouraged and supported in outside professional activities that contribute to their growth and professional competence. Employees are also encouraged to present a professional attitude at all times with a commitment to the agency and the public it serves.

2. How do senior leaders establish and promote a focus on customers and other stakeholders?

Every South Carolinian is a customer and stakeholder of agriculture, including SCDA employees. In reality, they are their own customers. They are constantly in touch with the public, assisting with agribusiness development and expansion, product testing and analysis, and providing reasonable assurances for the consumer.

3. How does the organization address the current and potential impact on the public of its programs, services, facilities and operations, including associated risks?

The agency receives excellent feedback on programs and services from the agriculture community, commodity boards and associations, and consumers. Testing and inspection error rates provide vital information concerning safety and risk to consumers. Also, the Department in cooperation with Clemson University, the Palmetto AgriBusiness Council, Farm Bureau and market research companies are working to develop formulas that provide the return on investment for the Department's marketing and branding program. In addition, surveys are performed to see how well programs are working. The Department also regularly receives feedback from a comment/information request section of the Web site. The number of information requests for gas pump inspections alone has increased three-fold in the last year, partly due to the increased anxiety over the price at the pump. Consumers want to make sure that they are getting their money's worth.

4. How do senior leaders maintain fiscal, legal, and regulatory accountability?

Department staff is committed to the concept of fiscal responsibility. Many problems cannot be solved by money alone. Leadership is providing fresh approaches and creativity in addressing issues in a cost-effective way. Particularly in the realm of regulatory responsibility, staff is instructed to treat customers fairly and with understanding. The Department's General Counsel deals with complaints, lawsuits or other legal and regulatory issues to ensure accountability.

5. What performance measures do senior leaders regularly review to inform them on needed actions? (See Category 7 for actual results.)

- Tests on feeds, seeds, foods, cosmetic and petroleum products to assure product protection
- Partnerships with stakeholders to promote agriculture in South Carolina
- Buying and selling of the state's agricultural commodities both fresh and processed
- Food sanitation inspections at locations under SCDA regulatory authority
- Market and economic research on the effectiveness of the agency's strategic marketing and branding campaign
- Growth and development of the State Farmers Markets
- Efficiency and effectiveness provided by new technology

6. How do senior leaders use organizational performance review findings and employee feedback to improve their own leadership effectiveness, the effectiveness of management throughout the organization including the head of the organization, and the governance board/policy making body? How do their personal actions reflect a commitment to organizational values?

Senior leaders use the EPMS and other meetings with staff as a discovery mechanism for employee feedback. These discussions are used to help managers determine if they are adequately directing employees and to help them identify activities that may be barriers to the performance of individual employees and of the agency as a whole. In addition, these discussions often set realistic expectations and allow the managers to modify or change priorities. Employees are recognized for their efforts through an Employee Appreciation Day and an Employee Recognition Day. Senior leaders serve as the model for the agency's commitment to core values.

7. How do senior leaders promote and personally participate in succession planning and the development of future organizational leaders?

Senior leaders know that the success of the agency depends greatly on the availability of competent people. With a significant staff turnover in the last few years due to natural attrition and retirement and an expected critical shortage of middle and senior leaders within the workforce, succession planning has been a priority for senior leaders. To ensure that there are successors to drive the programs and services, senior leaders are empowered to hire and train managers that may be able to succeed them in a leadership role in the future. Senior leaders are actively involved in mentoring, training and cross-training, and they periodically review the responsibilities of their staff to determine backups for each of their positions. This is important because it often takes years of grooming to develop effective senior managers.

8. How do senior leaders create an environment for performance improvement and the accomplishment of strategic objectives?

Key organizational priorities and objectives are consistently communicated between senior leadership and staff. The consensus of opinions, ideas and thoughts for improvement within the Department has helped guide senior leadership in making important decisions. The primary goal is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency by setting organizational priorities and objectives within the parameters of the agency's financial and human resources.

9. How do senior leaders create an environment for organizational and workforce learning?

The agency actively supports and strengthens communities through employee involvement in civic clubs and various other community-oriented groups or committees. Staff is encouraged to be involved in programs that will provide awareness of SC agriculture and of the SCDA's programs and services. Staff worked collaboratively on various projects in FY06 to assist the community.

10. How do senior leaders communicate with, engage, empower, and motivate the entire workforce throughout the organization? How do senior leaders take an active role in reward and recognition processes to reinforce high performance throughout the organization?

Senior leaders encourage employee motivation throughout the agency. They are focusing more on performance, but they are also spending more time getting each employee aimed properly so the employee understands what he or she is to accomplish – his or her goals and objectives. Employees are empowered to make decisions that affect their own work. Improvement requires creativity, challenging themselves, and learning from their mistakes.

11. How do senior leaders actively support and strengthen the communities in which your organization operates?

Senior leaders support the efforts of employee involvement in urban and rural communities through individual and collective activities. By working collectively to keep agriculture a viable industry in the state, the agency is also strengthening local communities. On an individual level, senior leaders encourage employees to be involved in community activities that will provide awareness of South Carolina agriculture and of the agency's programs and services. Through SC Advocates for Agriculture and the state's community-based farmers markets a total of almost \$3,000 was provided to Share Our Strength in the statewide Certified SC Grown Bake Sale. It was a sweet way for our farmers to help end hunger in our state, but it was also a way to show off South Carolina's bounty of locally grown products. In addition, employees participated in the Walk-for-Life as "Chicks with Agri-tude," Red Cross blood drives, United Way, Good Health Appeal, and other charitable activities as well as local church and school events.

Category 2 – Strategic Planning

The agency continues to evaluate strategic planning processes which involve the assessment of customer needs and the design of agency programs and services. The strategic plan provides a basis for business decisions, resource allocation and management and helps the agency focus on priorities. As part of the strategic planning process, each division within the agency provides a business plan related to their programs and services. Those activities are then compiled into an annual action plan with activities that focus on the agency's mission.

- 1. What is your Strategic Planning process, including key participants, and how does it address;*
- a. your organizations' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;*
 - b. financial, regulatory, societal and other potential risks;*
 - c. shifts in technology, regulatory, societal and other potential risks, and customer preferences;*
 - e. organizational continuity in emergencies; and*
 - f. your ability to execute the strategic plan;*

The weaknesses of the agency are balanced by its strengths. Every problem presents an opportunity. Salaries are generally lower in state government than in the private sector making it difficult to retain qualified employees. However, through a comprehensive analysis involving the Human Resource office, the agency has been able to upgrade position descriptions and better align employees with their abilities. Staff reductions through natural attrition and retirement programs has been intensified in the past few years, but with workforce planning, the agency has been able to blend the experience of veteran employees with the enthusiasm of novice employees. In addition, the agency has previously collected minimal fees or no fees for certain licenses, permits, etc. Fees are now being collected to offset some of the costs involved in providing those special services. Also, laws enforced by the Department, policies and procedures, and rules and regulations that are outdated are now being gradually updated.

Modest financial support for food and feed protection initiatives has been achieved by way of federal grants. The agency received \$23,600 from the FDA for inspecting mills producing medicated feeds and for monitoring BSE (mad cow disease) at sites in the state's distribution chain and an additional \$8,000 from USDA for the Market News Service.

In keeping with the strategic goal of effectively managing agency operations and workforce, the agency has incorporated new technology and computer systems to enhance work performance and customer service. Customers can now renew licenses and registrations online with a credit card. They can also subscribe to print and electronic versions of the *Market Bulletin* online. A laboratory information management system, market vendor rental system, and a new Web site have been implemented to allow the agency to be more efficient and effective.

In the past, the Department has been remarkably resilient during periods when there was a void in leadership. However, under the guidance of the current Commissioner, plans are being or have been developed for organizational continuity in case of a loss in senior leadership or an operational emergency. Emergency systems have been developed at the laboratories, farmers markets, and other facilities in addition to the main headquarters. An emergency crisis communication plan is also in the preliminary stages of development.

Each division within the Department maintains correspondence, calendars, and written and/or verbal reports. Ongoing analysis of the reports and information provided by each division allows senior leaders to monitor the status of the various activities and administrative responsibilities of the Department.

2. *How do your strategic objectives address the strategic challenges you identified in your Executive Summary?*

In order to provide agricultural marketing opportunities which support the state's economy, particularly in rural communities, the agency continues to grow and develop the branding and marketing program.

In order to maximize the safety and protection of goods and services offered for sale to the public, the agency continues to work closely with public and private partners to establish and formalize working agreements. In addition, the agency continues to build trust and integrity by providing prompt and accurate information to the public and other stakeholders.

Professional development for staff has improved significantly this past fiscal year. However, one of the principal challenges is providing professional development for staff on a limited budget. Even with limited resources, agency staff received over 1,800 hours of training and professional development in FY 07-08. The training included supervisory skills training, defensive driving, first aid/CPR, technology training, emergency preparedness, food/feed safety and security, weights and measures training, analytical sciences workshops to name a few. Some activities were extremely technical. Some activities involved leadership training. All activities focused on the goal of producing a highly trained professional staff.

To maintain the integrity of the agency's programs and services, senior leaders periodically review the business results as they relate to the initial action plans. Also, feedback from those served provides valuable insight.

The downturn in the economy has created a significant reduction in the agency's budget. Like other agencies, the agency is dealing with those financial issues as they arise. Finding ways to do the same with less is difficult.

The replacement of experienced staff due to retirement and natural attrition has been intensified in the past few years, but with workforce planning, the agency has been able to blend the experience of seasoned staff with the enthusiasm of new employees.

Enforcing over 30 laws mandated in the SC Code of Laws is being simplified with new technology and alternative funding from fees. Also, updating the laws with modern standards assists in enforcement.

3. *How do you develop and track action plans that address your key strategic objectives, and how do you allocate resources to ensure the accomplishment of your action plans?*

Senior leaders periodically discuss activities with staff, individually and collectively, to track progress in various programs and services.

4. *How do you communicate and deploy your strategic objectives, action plans and related performance measures?*

The accountability report is used as a self-assessment tool for ensuring that the agency remains in line with its mission.

5. *How do you measure progress on your action plans?*

Each division measures progress and tracks opportunities for improvement through action plans, meetings, and discussions. Measures include workload and workflow as well as customer satisfaction.

6. *How do you evaluate and improve your strategic planning process?*

Evaluating and improving strategic planning is an ongoing process. The process of developing an accountability report shows where progress is being made and where improvements are needed.

7. *If the agency's strategic plan is available to the public through the agency's Internet homepage, please provide a Web site address for that plan.*

The agency's Strategic Plan is not currently posted.

Strategic Planning Chart

Program Number and Title	Supported Agency Strategic Planning Goal/Objective	Related FY 07-08 Key Agency Action Plan/Initiatives	Key Cross References Performance Measures
I Administrative Services	Effectively manage agency operations and workforce.	<p>Effectively manage financial resources to ensure financial well being.</p> <p>Create a work environment that promotes performance and employee satisfaction.</p> <p>Evaluate programs and services to ensure customer needs are met.</p> <p>Evaluate employee performance and provide materials and technological needs to be successful.</p> <p>Use available technology and aggressively seek new technology to improve office operations.</p> <p>Provide progressive leadership with a clear focus that actively guides the agency.</p> <p>Provide recognition to those employees for their effort.</p> <p>Develop a well trained and diverse workforce.</p> <p>Encourage staff to contribute ideas to means and methods of improving the workplace and the operation of the agency.</p>	pgs. 23-26
II Laboratory and Consumer Services	Protect producers and consumers	<p>Enforce all applicable laws regarding proper warehouse receipting, storage and payment for agricultural commodities.</p> <p>Ensure the accuracy of weights and other measurements.</p> <p>Work with public and private organizations to solve issues related to protection and safety.</p> <p>Perform food sanitation inspections at all locations under SCDA regulatory authority.</p> <p>Perform tests on feed, seed, food, and petroleum products to assure acceptable quality.</p> <p>Grant permits to salvage food operations.</p> <p>Inspect and grade appropriate agricultural products for domestic and international markets.</p>	pgs. 27-33
IV Agricultural Services	<p>Promote agriculture and agribusiness</p> <p>Provide public awareness, promotion, and publicity of SC agriculture</p>	<p>Expand Certified SC Grown, the agency's comprehensive branding and marketing strategy targeted to consumers within the state designed to build brand awareness of SC's agricultural products.</p> <p>Encourage new and existing business which use traditional and non-traditional agricultural products or which service and supply agriculture.</p> <p>Search for new products and look for new value-added ways to use the state's products.</p> <p>Provide assistance to small farmers.</p> <p>Support the growth and development of local farmers markets to encourage those nutritionally at-risk to buy locally grown products.</p> <p>Manage three regional State Farmers Markets in Columbia, Greenville, and Florence efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>Market local farm products to consumers and assist farmers through the Certified Roadside Market Program.</p>	pgs. 33-43

Strategic Planning Chart

<p>IV Agricultural Services (continued)</p>	<p>Support expansion and development of local, regional, national, and international markets for South Carolina agricultural products.</p> <p>Encourage buying and selling of the state's agriculture products both fresh and processed through the Certified SC Grown Program</p> <p>Develop partnerships with stakeholders to promote agriculture in South Carolina.</p> <p>Provide consumers with information on selection, preparation, and nutrition of South Carolina agricultural products through electronic and print media.</p> <p>Provide an agency publication that allows farmers and non-farmers to buy or sell farm-related items and that features timely information regarding agricultural issues and events.</p> <p>Collect and disseminate market news information to all segments of the produce and livestock industries and to consumers through various print and electronic means.</p>	<p>pgs. 33-43</p>
--	---	-------------------

Category 3 – Customer Focus

1. How do you determine who your customers are and what their key requirements are?

Our customers are producers and consumers, virtually everyone in the state. Producers need immediate access to markets and marketing information, and consumers need access to information about buying and using agricultural products. The more accessible the information, the more satisfied are our customers.

2. How do you keep your listening and learning methods current with changing customer/business needs and expectations?

The agency continually seeks input from farmers and processors on how to improve processes. The agency's Web site has been rebuilt with a new, easier to remember location (www.agriculture.sc.gov) to provide current information about agriculture, agricultural events, and other valuable and useful information. In addition, the Web site was constructed for access by everyone.

3. What are your key customer access mechanisms, and how do these access mechanisms enable customers to seek information, conduct business, and make complaints?

The agency uses information from customers and stakeholders to keep services or programs relevant and provide for continuous improvement by surveying customers and evaluating their feedback. Surveys and evaluations of meetings and events provide valuable information for future planning.

4. How do you measure customer/stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and use this information to improve?

The agency continues to train employees on how to communicate effectively with customers. Any customer complaint receives individual attention and follow-up. Also, the new Web site features a complaint/suggestion area where the agency receives approximately 75 to 100 requests for information a week as well as complaints. During this time of high fuel prices, many customers are concerned that gas pumps are measuring properly or that the fuel is free of contamination.

5. How do you use information and feedback from customers/stakeholders to keep services and programs relevant and provide for continuous improvement?

Trade shows and agency events, the Certified Roadside Market and Certified SC Grown, and other general marketing program participant numbers and comments help evaluate success. Widely accepted activities show relevance and the need for continued support.

6. How do you build positive relationships with customers and stakeholders? Indicate any key distinctions between different customer and stakeholder groups.

The agency builds positive relationships with internal (employees) and external (stakeholders) customers. Relationships are strengthened by listening and responding quickly and appropriately.

Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

1. How do you decide which operations, processes and systems to measure for tracking financial and operational performance, including progress relative to strategic objectives and action plans?

Factors affecting marketing of SC agricultural products make it difficult to measure. Effectiveness of that program area is measured by an analysis of communications with the public and media and the quality as well as the quantity of information provided. Public perception of the Department's role is important to the overall effectiveness of the agency.

2. How do you select, collect, align, and integrate data/information for analysis to provide effective support for decision and innovation throughout your organization?

The agency benchmarks with other state and federal agencies whenever possible. Many programs are subject to audit to ensure financial effectiveness and procedure compliance.

3. What are your key measures, how do you review them, and how do you keep them current with organizational service needs and directions?

Data analysis is used in a number of ways to support effective decision-making and assess performance.

4. How do you select and use key comparative data and information to support operational and strategic decision-making and innovation?

The decision-making process is based, in part, on data and information collected. However, decision-making is also based on input from stakeholders and customers.

5. How do you ensure data integrity, timeliness, accuracy, security and availability for decision-making?

Comparative data is selected based on benchmarks relevant to the agency's mission. Participation in national organizations such as the National Association of State Department's of Agriculture, Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture, Southern United States Trade Association also provides information for comparison purposes.

6. How do you translate organizational performance review findings into priorities for continuous improvement?

Program areas that do not measure up to their intended objectives are identified and evaluated. These reviews are either used to identify the next best opportunity for improvement.

7. How do you collect, transfer, and maintain organizational and employee knowledge (knowledge assets)? How do you identify and share best practices?

Staff continues to listen and learn from our customers, monitors their perceptions gathered at the front line, and builds positive relationships with the entire customer base. The agency focuses on a broad base of customers through a variety of print and electronic means. Through the agency web site and through the media and personal contacts, the public is provided accurate up-to-date verbal and written information.

Category 5 – Workforce Focus

1. How does Management organize and measure work to enable your workforce to:

1) develop to their full potential, aligned with the organization's objectives, strategies, and action plans;

Managers and supervisors encourage employees to organize their work according to an action plan which follows the agency's goals and objectives. They realize that enabling the workforce to develop to their full potential is essential to effective management.

Conventional employment development – isolated events in which employees put in a predetermined amount of seat time are being revised to become a “process” in which employees meet performance objectives within a certain timeline. Ample time is provided for feedback, reflection and attention to specific areas in which improvements may be made.

Career path development tracks are now being formalized in our Seed Laboratory and State Farmers Markets areas. On-going opportunities for on-the-job and professional development training provide motivation and are strongly encouraged. An Employee Awards and Recognition Luncheon to present service awards and recognize other achievements was held. Recognition in group meetings is encouraged and recognition on the agency's Intranet site will become a useful tool. State Employee Recognition Day is also observed with an informal meeting and lunch.

2) promote cooperation, initiative, empowerment, teamwork, innovation, and your organizational culture?

In order to promote cooperation, provide a new forum for new employees, and encourage teamwork, a “Tuesdays @ 10” meeting has been established. The meeting is held on the first and third Tuesday of the month and includes all employees have something to contribute or learn. Each participant is allowed time to speak or ask questions. The meeting has become a valuable tool in highlighting the open organizational culture of the agency.

2. How do you achieve effective communication and knowledge/skill/best practice sharing across departments, jobs, and locations?

Knowledge and best practices are shared through senior management, departmental, and open format meetings open to all staff. The open format used for the “Tuesdays @ 10” meetings encourages decision making and exchanges of knowledge and ideas down the chain of command supporting innovative bottom up processes. An employee newsletter keeps staff informed of pertinent issues within the organization. An Intranet site, AgNet, now available to all staff at any time, anywhere, provides a place for posting all departmental policies, and forms and is a way to communicate updates of employee issues.

3. How does management recruit, hire, place, and retain new employees? Describe any barriers that you may encounter.

Management recruits through the new NEOGOV Web site. If the posted job has special knowledge base or certification requirements, ads are placed in trade publications or papers specific to that job or the industry it represents. New employees receive immediate on-the-job training and work closely with their supervisors to determine additional job training and opportunities for growth. Over 424 applications were received and 17 jobs posted and filled this past fiscal year. Thirty-four applicants were interviewed. Retaining employees is evidenced by the 13.2 % turnover rate.

4. How do you assess your workforce capability and capacity needs, including skills, competencies, and staffing needs?

Supervisors and department heads assess staffing needs and evaluate workforce capability. Many of our inspector positions require specific certification that is constantly being monitored and supervisors monitor to ensure that certification is kept current. As retirees leave our workforce, more expert staff is hired to fill those positions. The institutional knowledge is captured from the retirees relevant to these transitions enabling new employee's access to this knowledge. Cross training is stressed and is critical to many of our positions.

5. How does your workforce performance management system, including feedback to and from individual members of the workforce, support high performance work and contribute to the achievement of your action plans?

Great strides were made in EPMS participation for 07-08. The first two quarters of the fiscal year, SCDA EPMS had a meets by default rate of 26.39%. For the last two quarters of the fiscal year, SCDA has been 100% compliant. This is a significant step forward. Using the EPMS system enables employees to review their roles and responsibilities within the agency and determine how to work to achieve higher standards to help attain agency goals. High performance is supported with the use of this tool. Having a universal review date allows employees and supervisors the opportunity to create a plan for more training opportunities, goal setting and to use performance measurement as a tool for the overall plan of the agency. During the EPMS process, each employee's review was completed during a one-on-one meeting with their supervisor. A planning document was also completed during this time. These meetings brought about an exchange of ideas to improve performance and empowered participants to contribute to the improvement efforts.

6. How does your development and learning system for leaders address the following:

a. development of personal leadership attributes;

The SCDA provides supervisory training classes for all supervisors.

b. development of organizational knowledge

The SCDA creates an environment for organizational knowledge through Senior Staff Meetings.

c. ethical practices;

The SCDA leadership encourages employees to use professional ethical practices involving fiscal responsibility and accountability, non-discrimination and privacy, equal opportunities and other ethical issues and phenomena which may arise out of specific functional areas of the agency or in relation to key customers and stakeholders.

d. your core competencies, strategic challenges, and accomplishment of action plans?

Action Plans for FY08 were requested from the agency head. Each division reported their plans. Each report was analyzed for cost/benefit, staffing requirements, and relevance to the overall agency plan.

7. How do you identify and address key developmental training needs for your workforce, including job skills training, performance excellence training, diversity training, management/leadership development, new employee orientation, and safety training?

All supervisors are required to attend Supervisory Skills Classes and all employees are offered computer training and professional certification. A Laboratory Safety Officer was named to implement new and innovative safety measures. The Laboratory Division is also staffed with trained scientists and technicians to minimize risk. The agency has two employees who serve in the ESF-15 Public Information function and four employees who serve on the SERT team in the ESF-11 Food Safety function who are responsible when a statewide emergency arises. Eight employees are certified in First Aid/CPR enabling each division to have someone trained to assist with any in-house emergency. Two employees attended a Quality Management Accreditation Training Seminar benefiting the Seed Laboratory.

8. How do you encourage on-the-job use of new knowledge and skills?

Supervisors track new training methods and skills by first requiring written assessments of outside learning opportunities, then implementing the new methods into the work flow along with follow up evaluations periodically.

9. How does employee training contribute to the achievement of your action plans?

One way is by helping to achieve a higher standard for employees work processes. Many department employees are required to retain a professional license, so new training is vital. Training requirements are now incorporated as an objective into EPMS planning stages.

10. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your workforce and leader training and development systems?

Surveys are conducted after initial new training and feedback from participants is compiled and reviewed.

11. How do you motivate your workforce to develop and utilize their full potential?

Ongoing opportunities for further professional development training can provide motivation to employees. Computer training and many in house-opportunities are given. Employee Appreciation luncheon is given for all employees along with Service Awards and Special Recognition Awards. Employees are recognized on the SCDA Intranet and in the quarterly agency newsletter. A new Workforce Progression Plan has also been implemented which gives employees the chance to move up.

12. What formal and/or informal assessment methods and measures do you use to obtain information on workforce?

Surveys and EPMS reviews along with planning stage meetings and frequent informal staff meetings are used as assessment methods for obtaining information on the workforce.

III. Category 6 – Process Management

6.1. *What are your key processes that produce, create or add value for your customers and your organization, and how do they contribute to success?*

As policies and procedures are developed, standardization and communication have become extremely important. Technology has also become an integral part in meeting the agency's mission.

6.2. *How do you incorporate organizational knowledge, new technology, changing customer and mission-related requirements, cost controls, and other efficiency and effectiveness factors into process design and delivery?*

The agency works collectively and collaboratively with producers and processors to help ensure consumers receive the best possible products. While regulatory requirements are designed to help protect the consumer, the agency works closely with agribusinesses and other government agencies not only to enhance partnerships but also to maximize awareness of Certified South Carolina products.

6.3. *How does your day-to-day operation of these processes ensure meeting key performance requirements?*

Communication is essential to stay abreast of new developments and to ensure information needs are met.

6.4. *What are your key support processes, and how do you improve and update these processes to achieve better performance?*

Key support processes include Administration, Information Technology, Human Resources, Procurement, Finance, Budget, Legal and Governmental Affairs, and Communications and Public Information. With a shrinking workforce, technology is a critical component in improving agency performance.

III. Category 7 – Key Results

The SCDA is comprised of **Administrative Services**, **Agricultural Services**, and **Laboratory and Consumer Services**. The performance level of customer satisfaction in each area is measured differently. Our business results are similar to those of Departments of Agriculture in other states with comparable programs and services.

Administrative Services Business Results

Administrative Services includes Administration, Human Resources, Legal and Governmental Affairs, and Communications and Public Information.

Administration which includes Agency Services, Finance, and Information Resources (IT) provides executive leadership, policy development and review, financial services, information technology, facilities management, and other support services.

Agency Services has the sole responsibility for issuance of purchase orders to obtain goods and services for the agency. In addition, the support group focuses on paying vendors in a timely and efficient manner. A procedure manual is strictly followed, and all agency employees are urged to plan ahead to obtain goods and services in a timely manner. Agency Services also oversees the management of all of the agency's resources such as supplies, space management, fleet management, inventory, and telephone services as well as the mailroom which is responsible for receiving and sending all mail, including express mail and freight services.

Finance Services which includes payroll, auditing, and budgeting, is required to promptly process all receipts of revenue and expenditures of the agency and maintain proper records of these transactions consistent with state laws, regulations, and objectives of the agency and generally accepted accounting principles. Finance Services is required to promptly process all receipts of revenue and expenditures of the Department and maintain accounting records of these transactions consistent with state laws, regulations, and objectives of the Department and generally accepted accounting principles. Finance Services requires at least five working days to complete all transactions. The staff focuses on paying vendors in a timely manner and on depositing incoming checks in a reasonable time frame. The employees of Finance Services have various job functions and are able to work with limited supervision.

Information Technology (IT) is an area of Administrative Services designed to keep the computer resources of the agency in line with the technology of other state agencies and private industry in order to provide an efficient work environment. The current computer network includes an 84-user LAN and an AS/400. IT services are also provided to approximately 20 stand-alone personal computer users. Users are located at six sites across the state. The service provided includes writing and maintaining custom software for in-house use, the purchase of pre-packaged software, purchase of hardware, user-training, and maintenance in the form of in-house repairs and maintenance agreements.

New projects addressed by IT during FY08 include:

Implementation of the following programs

- Kelly Registration Systems software which includes:
 - Pump and Scale Repairmen Licenses
 - Feed Registration
 - Dealers & Handlers Licenses
 - Milk & Bulk Hauler Permits
 - Weighmaster Licenses
 - Petroleum Registration
 - Antifreeze Registration
- South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS)
- Warehouse Inventory
- New agency Web site with SQL database
- Automated check deposit software

Final preparation for the following programs

- Laboratory Information Management System (developed by Accelerated Technology Laboratories)
- Farmers Market Vendor Rentals

In the development phase for the following software

- New Certified SC Grown Website with SQL database
- Kelly Registration Systems software which includes:
 - Commodity Assessments
 - Poultry Inspections
 - Fruit and Vegetable Inspections
 - Laboratory Stop Orders

Hardware Purchases

- Replaced 25 desktop computers
- Replaced 5 laptops
- Replaced 8 printers
- 2 sealers for the pressure seal forms used in mailing from the newly developed and existing programs from Kelly Registration Solutions
- 7 scanners for the new SCEIS program
- 5 dual video cards for the new SCEIS system
- Acquired a check scanner from NBSC for automated check deposit program
- 2 PDAs and printers for the new Market Rental program

Impact of Kelly Registration Systems software since the implementation

- Increased productivity
 - Allowing users the capability to renew licenses and registrations online
 - Online renewals has increased by as much as 7%
 - Ability to print licenses and automate mailing by using pressure seal technology
 - Ability to generate reports
- Increased revenue and licensees
 - Feed Registration
 - Generated \$132,120 with 11,975 renewals during FY08 (first year of implementation)
 - Parking
 - Increased revenue by \$74,932 with an increase of 442 spaces reserved
 - *Market Bulletin*
 - Increased revenue by \$78,712 with an increase of 1,590 subscribers

Software and hardware support were maintained for the following during FY08

- 900 COBOL programs involving 370,000 lines of code
- 84 Users supported for LAN and AS/400 environment
- 20 Users supported on stand-alone PCs
- 120 Users supported for email and Internet access
- 120 Users supported for hardware and software maintenance
 - 1 LINUX/SQL server monitored – including maintenance and backup
- 4 100 Mhz 24 port Ethernet hubs maintained
- 4 10 base-T 12 port Ethernet hubs maintained
- 2 10 base-T 5 port Ethernet hubs maintained
- 1 10 base-T 8 port Ethernet hub maintained
- 23 personal computers purchased and installed for users

- 6 laptops purchased and installed for users
- 15 personal computers refurbished for users
- 33 network printers maintained
- 18 stand alone printers maintained
- 8 print server boxes maintained
- 13 on-line user accounts to FDS maintained
- 7 on-line users accounts to CG maintained
- 3 on-line user accounts to Dept. of Insurance maintained
- 3 on-line users accounts to HR maintained

Efficiency Measures

- 100% Real time access to Internet services for 84 users
- 100% Access for network office services for 84 users
- 100% Access for email services for 84 users
- Access for AS/400 computer applications

Effectiveness Measures

- 100% Real time access to Internet services for 84 users
- 100% Access for network office services for 84 users
- 100% Access for email services for 84 users
- 100% Access for AS/400 computer applications

Human Resources

The office of **Human Resources** oversees all personnel matters including benefits administration, state classification plan, payroll, leave accounting, and staff development. Human Resources also ensures that SCDA personnel practices are in compliance with state and federal regulations.

Legal and Governmental Affairs

The office of **Legal Affairs** consists of an attorney who specializes in agricultural legal issues and provides general legal advice and statutory interpretations to the Commissioner and staff. The agency's attorney continues to review and update over thirty laws under the authority of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. This includes analysis and comparison to other state and federal laws. The attorney also meets with groups to address possible legislative solutions to problems affecting their industries. Satisfaction with the laws currently in effect and the administration of those laws are likely measured by the number of complaints of lawsuits filed in attempts to change the regulatory regime. The attorney works with undergraduate and law school students to complete a wide variety of tasks such as monitoring legislative changes and responding to requests for legal information. In cooperation with the office of **Governmental Affairs**, focus continues on the implementation of new legislation falling under the authority of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. New legislation and statutory amendments are also considered for the purpose of making the operation of the agency more efficient as well as providing important laboratory analysis and consumer safety services for the general public, private entities, and other groups. In addition, the agency's attorney has been involved with the legal issues associated with the coordination and planning of the new State Farmers Market in Lexington County.

Laboratory and Consumer Services Business Results

The **Laboratory Services and Consumer Services Divisions** of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture were restructured during the last fiscal year. The two divisions now operate as one and are directed and managed by an Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture. This manager in turn reports to the Commissioner of Agriculture. There is a focused and unified effort by these two groups to fulfill and comply with their legislated charge. Each unit is dependent on the other to complete tasks as required by state regulation.

Laboratory Services

The **Laboratory Services** program area supports certain regulatory functions assigned to the Commissioner of Agriculture by state law. The Laboratory is structured to provide chemical, physical and biological analytical and testing capabilities necessary to administer and enforce laws and regulations governing the production, storage, handling and sale of products. Those products include food for human consumption and animal feeds, seed sold for agriculture and gardening, and petroleum products sold for heating or automotive uses.

For FY 08, Laboratory Services leadership consists of a Laboratory Director, Chief Seed Analyst, Chief Chemist and Registration Officer plus five Section Supervisors who perform bench work in addition to supervising other scientists and technicians. This cadre of leaders has scientific educational credentials in their respective fields of work as well as years of professional experience that they draw from in carrying out their technical and managerial duties.

All division managers and supervisors are active in professional scientific organizations that foster their continued growth in knowledge and expertise in their fields of specialty. Lab scientists and supervisors and technicians are likewise encouraged and supported in outside professional activities that contribute to their growth and professional competence.

To ensure consumer protection, the Laboratory receives samples and analyzes products from the public food supply to detect adulteration, confirms conformance to standards of identity and quality and assures consumers are protected from fraudulent or unsafe food products. The efficiency of the Laboratory division's testing and analytical effort is reflected in number of analyses tested annually.

The objectives of Laboratory Services Division programs are:

- To receive samples and analyze products from the public food supply to detect adulteration, confirm conformance to standards of identity and quality and assure consumers are protected from fraudulent or unsafe food products.
- To regularly request samples of commercial animal feed and pet foods from the state's markets for analysis of nutritional and medicinal ingredients for conformance to label guarantees and standards of quality. A Feed Control Officer provides a more complete regulatory function for enforcing the state's Commercial Feed Law. Feed mill inspections are a part of our feed regulatory functions. This capacity is supported partially by a contract with the US Food and Drug Administration for conducting inspections of medicated feed mills and BSE inspections. (BSE refers to "bovine spongiform encephalopathy," a disease more commonly known as "mad cow" disease.

- This disease can be transmitted through feeding tissue from a diseased animal to other animals of the same species making feed regulation a barrier to spreading of the disease and the consequential threat to the entire beef industry.)
- To provide seed analysis services to consumers, certifying agencies, seed companies, seed producers, and in support of regulatory surveillance and enforcement under the state's Seed and Noxious Weed Law.
- To regularly receive samples of gasoline, diesel, kerosene, and heating fuels from channels of commerce and test them for conformance to quality standards, label representations and safety. State law requires that petroleum products offered for sale meet standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).
- To administer product registrations required by law including animal and pet foods, frozen desserts, gasoline, antifreeze, and to issue licenses and permits to certain special services and businesses. Licenses or permits are issued for frozen desserts, butterfat testers, samplers and weighers and salvagers.

DIVISION WORKLOAD BY FISCAL YEAR

	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
Food Samples	4,143	3,129	2,915	2,535	2,783	2,871
Animal Feed Samples	1,993	1,674	1,840	1,781	2,120	1,815
Seed Samples	16,423	17,251	15,684	14,423	11,714	10,335
Petroleum Samples	2,854	2,407	2,907	2,595	3,019	2,908
Registration Transactions	2,681	2,641	2,417	7,446	3,997	14,286
Total Samples/Registrations by FY	28,094	27,102	25,763	28,780	23,633	32,215

Figure 7.3

A legislative proviso allowed a change from no-cost Permanent Commercial Feed Registration to an annually renewable Commercial Feed Registration with a registration fee of \$15 per product registered. Registrants have the option to register online or they may register directly with SCDA Registrations Office. Approximately 11,496 products are currently registered with our office.

NUMBER OF ANALYSES PERFORMED BY FISCAL YEAR

	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
Food Analyses	10,383	11,866	11,010	9,635	11,775	12,269
Feed Analyses	5,445	7,142	4,254	5,467	6,005	4,846
Seed Analyses	22,824	24,882	22,144	20,796	16,710	15,459
Petroleum Analyses	16,647	15,093	19,476	16,840	19,748	16,464
Total Analyses by FY	55,299	58,983	56,884	52,738	54,238	49,038

Figure 7.4

The business results of Laboratory Service’s work can be assessed by reviewing compliance records for each of the program areas. (See **Figure 7.5.**)

VIOLATION RATES BY PROGRAM OVER 6-FISCAL YEAR PERIOD (percent)						
	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
Food	7.7	7.36	9.2	8.9	10.6	11.6
Pesticide Residue	1.2	2.47	1.05	1.3	1.6	3.2
Feed	15.3	19.5	12.1	13.8	8.5	11.0
Seed	6.0	6.3	4.6	3.3	4.8	5.4
Petroleum	1.9	3.15	6.3	4.4	4.29	3.1

Figure 7.5

The meat and dairy program’s compliance rate is in the 6-8% range with excess fat in ground meats the most frequent type of violation.

Pesticide residue violations are mostly technical in nature and do not represent a significant food safety threat. It is rare that these technical violations necessitate any enforcement action. The pattern of pesticide residue violations observed in our Laboratory mirrors the pattern of violations found nationwide in USDA’s “Pesticide Data Program.” Pesticide residue tests on fruits and vegetables are performed in compliance with the state and federal food safety laws. Eight hundred and seventy (870) official and submitted samples were screened for chemical residues in FY08.

The official samples were randomly drawn from supermarkets and farmers markets throughout the state as part of a “Market Basket Survey” to comply with the state’s Food Safety Laws. The SCDA Laboratory tests showed that our growers are doing a good job.

Testing is performed at no charge to South Carolina Residents. The Laboratory also tests soil and plant tissue submitted by Clemson Extension agents who request herbicide and pesticide screens.

A total of 2,885 analyses were performed on the 870 samples of produce, feed, soil, and miscellaneous animal and plant material. That is 359 more analyses performed on 47 more samples from the previous fiscal year.

The SCDA Laboratory, currently located at 1101 Williams Street in Columbia, is scheduled to be moved to the new South Carolina State Farmers Market facility when it is completed. Strategically located, the Pesticide Residue Laboratory will have better access to a large portion of the state’s fresh produce at the market.

Animal feed violations occurred at 11.0% as they have over many years. This rate is typical for feed products both in the SCDA’s experience and that of other states.

Seed Lab violations observed remain under 6% again reflecting improved quality assurance by seed merchants compared to past years.

At 5.4%, petroleum violations continue to reflect the rates observed nationally where petroleum laws are in force. Based on these violation rates, South Carolina consumers can be confident that petroleum products they buy in the state meet ASTM standards and are fairly labeled.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has performed a study that reflects violation rates as much as 30% in other states. Petroleum violations include octane, flashpoint, and sediment or other impurities. Our state's statistics show that South Carolina petroleum marketers work hard to ensure compliance with national standards.

To provide the necessary infrastructure for an early warning system that identifies potentially hazardous foods and enables health officials to assess risks and analyze trends, the Electronic Laboratory Exchange Network (eLEXNET) continues to be applied in Laboratory Services. eLEXNET is a seamless, integrated, web-based information network that allows health officials at multiple government agencies engaged in food safety activities to compare, share and coordinate laboratory analysis findings. eLEXNET is the data capture and communication system for the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN). This system will help the Laboratory be more responsive to intentional or unintentional emergency food situations.

The strategic thrust of Laboratory Services is to meet regulatory responsibilities faithfully while minimizing disruption of regulated businesses. There is a conscious effort to assist businesses in meeting their regulatory requirements where such assistance contributes to an orderly marketplace. The Seed and Noxious Weed Law is particularly noteworthy in this regard. The Laboratory is required by law to provide free seed testing service to farmers, gardeners and commercial seed producers and merchants. Approximately 94% of seed testing capacity is devoted to such services while the balance is testing for official regulatory purposes.

Efforts to maintain high quality of the different products regulated by the Laboratory in light of an ever changing marketplace can be seen by the increased resources dedicated to biofuels testing, information management, and improvement in registration capabilities.

Consumer Services

The performance level of the **Consumer Services** program is determined by the satisfaction of consumers that are well-protected. Consumer Services directly enforces nine laws and assists the Laboratory Division in the enforcement of several other laws by drawing official samples of petroleum fuels, animal feeds, seeds, produce, and ground meats.

The laws enforced by Consumer Services include:

- Weights and Measures Law – Section 39-9-10
- Gasoline, Lubricating Oils and Other Petroleum Products Law – Section 39-41-5
- Food and Cosmetic Act – Section 39-25-10
- Egg Law – Section 39-39-110
- Public Weighmaster Law – Section 39-11-10
- Dealers and Handlers of Agricultural Products – Section 46-41-10
- Grain Producers Guaranty Fund – Section 46-41-200
- Grain Dealer Guaranty Fund – Section 46-40-10
- State Warehouse System Law – Section 39-22-10

Weights and Measures

Consumer Services inspectors check commercial weighing and measuring devices for accuracy and inspect packaged goods to ensure correct net content statements. The Consumer Services **Metrology Lab** maintains the state standards for mass, length and volume and provides calibration services to the public and private sector with traceability to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). **Figure 7.6** shows the number of inspections and calibrations performed by Consumer Services during the past five fiscal years

The number of firms and devices to be inspected continues to increase. For example, in 1996, the SCDA had 30 inspectors who checked 45,000 fuel dispensers at service stations. Today, the SCDA has 20 inspectors and over 64,000 fuel dispensers to inspect. Experience has shown that when weights and measures areas are left unregulated, compliance tends to deteriorate, creating unfair competitive situations and loss of equity in the marketplace.

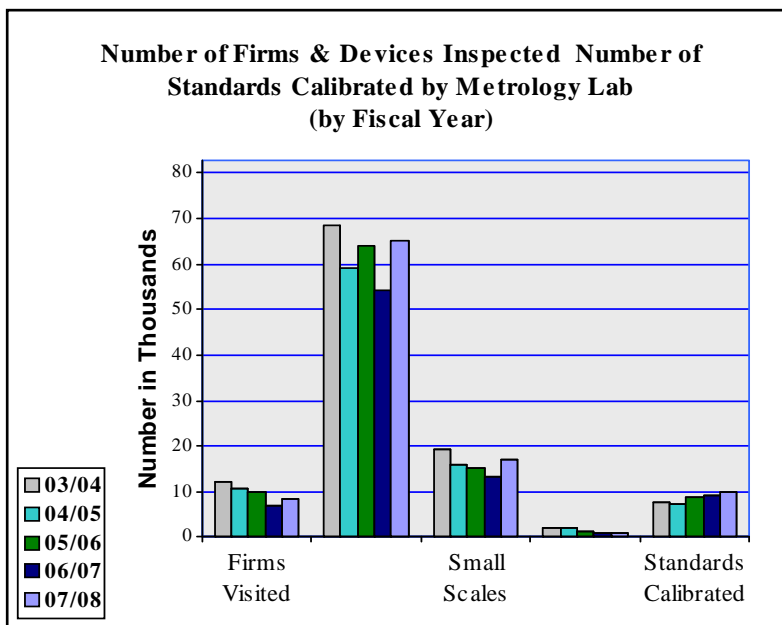


Figure 7.6

Under these conditions, everyone loses except the unethical business operator. New computer technology has allowed the collection of more data that gives greater detail into inspection results and helps maximize available human resources. However, most of the inspections procedures cannot be shortened, and more personnel are needed to keep up with growth. **Figure 7.7** shows the percentage of weighing or measuring devices found incorrect.

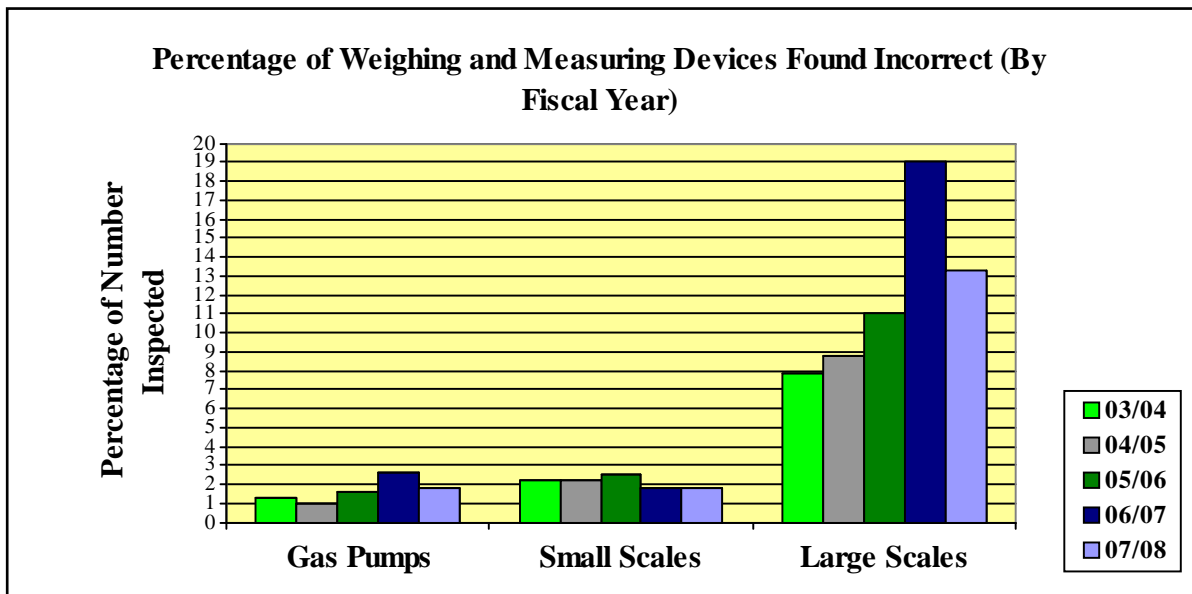


Figure 7.7

When inspecting firms that have weighing or measuring devices, our inspectors also randomly draw samples of gasoline, diesel, kerosene, animal feeds, seeds, produce, and ground meats for analysis by the Department’s chemical laboratory for the enforcement of other laws.

Food Manufacturers and Warehouse Inspections

Consumer Services Food Safety and Compliance Section inspects food manufacturers and food warehouses to ensure that food products are manufactured and stored under safe and sanitary conditions. Some of these inspections are performed under contract with the Food and Drug Administration and the US Department of Agriculture. Persons that weigh bulk commodities and issue weight certificates must be licensed as Public Weighmasters.

Figure 7.8 shows a comparison of the number of food manufacturers and warehouses inspected and the number of licenses issued to public weighmasters during the last five fiscal years.

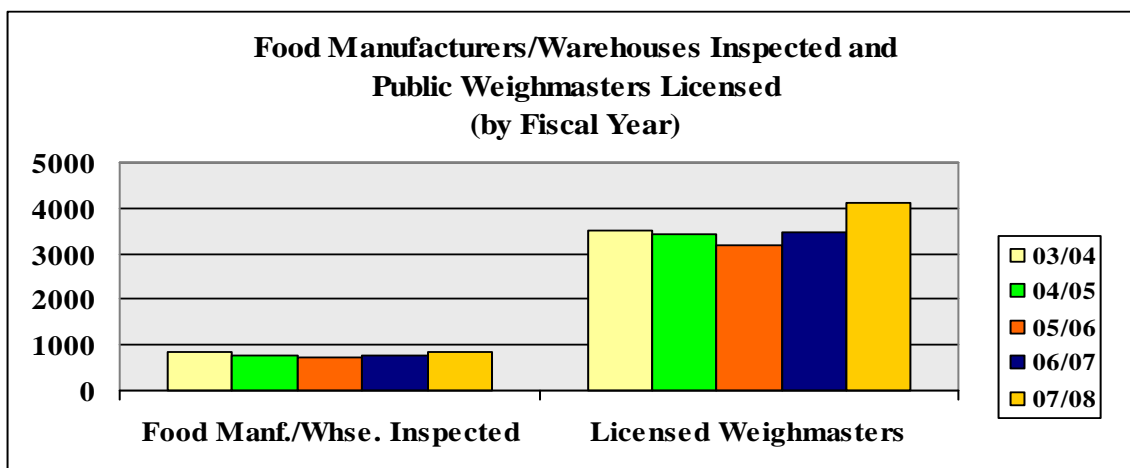


Figure 7.8

Licensing, Bonding, Auditing

Consumer Services also licenses, bonds, and audits dealers and handlers of agricultural products to ensure that the producer receives payment for his crop. Also, warehouses that store cotton or grain and issue warehouse receipts for those commodities are licensed, bonded, and audited. Three guaranty funds are administered by Consumer Services to provide payment to the grain producer, licensed dealer and handler of grain, or the holder of a warehouse receipt should a licensed grain dealer or a licensed warehouse become bankrupt or commit fraud. During the fiscal year, Consumer Services personnel performed 214 audits on 106 licensed dealers and handlers and 27 licensed warehouses.

Agricultural Services Business Results

The Agricultural Services Division includes those services that the SCDA renders to the agricultural sector. Ag Services includes three segments: **Marketing, State Farmers Markets, and Grading and Inspections.**

In addition, the Agricultural Services Division handles several special projects including the Waste Pesticide Recovery Program and the Renewable Energy Grants and Loans Program. The Waste Pesticide Recovery Program will collect and dispose of old, unwanted, out of date and unusable pesticides. The Department implemented the Renewable Energy Grants and Loans program at the behest of the General Assembly to address energy independence and develop alternative energy sources for South Carolina.

The Agricultural Services Division works closely with the South Carolina Department of Commerce on food and agriculture projects. Staff provides agribusiness development services to the industry and assists state and local economic development allies.

Marketing

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture is charged with the responsibility of maintaining and developing broad based marketing programs to increase consumer awareness and product demand for South Carolina agricultural commodities at local, national and international levels. The SCDA also encourages expansion and development of existing industries that utilize South Carolina agricultural commodities, both fresh and processed, thereby increasing the marketability of locally grown products.



Figure 7.9

The General Assembly continued its support of the SCDA by increasing the budget to expand the South Carolina branding and marketing effort. (See **Figure 7.9, Certified SC Grown logo.**) Market research reveals that South Carolina consumers are interested in locally grown and produced products.

The marketing effort develops materials for advertising and promotion. These materials and advertising efforts have been placed in the general public to help consumers understand the value of locally grown products and to help consumers find where these locally grown products are available. Millions of consumers have been reached through media outlets that include television, radio, print, outdoor, and special events.

The branding and marketing effort includes the SC Certified program and now has more than 400 producer members. The agency also produced and delivered Certified SC signs and materials to 115 certified roadside markets and over 60 community based markets.

Marketing staff have developed agreements with the major retail food chains to promote South Carolina products using the Certified



Certified SC Grown Display in Wal-Mart, Lexington, SC

SC promotional materials in stores. The following chains have agreed to participate: Wal-Mart, Bi-Lo, W. Lee Flowers, Food Lion, Piggly Wiggly, Whole Foods, Reid's, Harris Teeter, Fresh Market, Earth Fare, IGA, Food City, and Lowe's.



Figure 7.10

The SCDA launched a new restaurant program, "Fresh on the Menu," in the Charleston area at the Charleston Food and Wine Festival. Over 100,000 consumers attended the event. More than 60 Charleston restaurants are participating in the program to feature SC locally grown and certified products on their menus. (See **Figure 7.10, Fresh on the Menu logo.**)

Certified SC was the main theme of the SCDA's State Fair exhibit. Over 500,000 visitors attended the Fair.

SCDA personnel exhibited and participated in other shows outside of the state to open marketing channels for South Carolina products. Those include:

- Produce Marketing Association Food Show, Houston, Texas – 17,000 buyers and visitors
- Southeast Produce Council Food Show, Orlando, Florida – 1,000 retailers, wholesalers, food service companies in attendance
- Eastern Produce Council, East Orange, New Jersey – 120 buyers from the greater New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania region representing more than 13 million consumers
 - U. S. Food Export Showcase, Chicago, Illinois – 13,000 attendees
 - Amercas Food & Beverage Show and Conference, Miami, Florida – 4,000 attendees
 - Sysco Food Show, Myrtle Beach – 5,000 attendees
 - International Deli Dairy Bakery Association, New Orleans, Louisiana – 6000 attendees
 - Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, Moultrie, Georgia – 150,000 attendees

The export effort included participation and training programs with the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) in New Orleans. SCDA personnel assisted SUSTA in planning and implementing the China Initiative in Shanghai, China – 22,253 attendees. SCDA personnel also participated in the Chinese Reverse Trade Mission entertaining eight Chinese buyers as they visited with 10 South Carolina companies.



Sunbelt Ag Expo, Moultrie, GA

The Small Farms Program continued to provide training to farmers interested in participating in the senior farmer's market nutrition program and the WIC program. The SCDA trained and certified 265 farmers for the program. Personnel also assisted 75 local community farmers markets around the state. The EBT pilot program established by a Kellogg and Ford Foundation grant continued into this fiscal year. This program provides a means for food stamp recipients to use EBT cards to purchase locally grown produce at community based farmers markets.



Amercas Food & Beverage Show & Conference, Miami

Staff assisted the agriculture industry by assisting with field days, producer meetings, commodity board and association meetings, farm city week promotions, ag study tours and other conferences.

Grading and Inspections

The **Grading and Inspection** and **Market News Service** programs provide quality grade standards and up-to-date market news through cooperative agreements with USDA.

Fruit, vegetable, and peanut grading and inspection services are provided at shipping points, receiving locations, and terminal markets to specify grade, count, weight, and other factors important to quality determination. Official certificates of grade are issued by inspectors to verify grade factors. The SCDA issued 5,979 certificates in this fiscal year.

The Grading and Inspection Service works with producers, brokers, receivers, food processors, and export marketers to inspect and certify the quality as it moves through normal marketing channels. The SCDA implemented a Food Safety Audit program that provides incentives for 30 firms to receive first time audits. The Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices Food Verification Program is a FDA/USDA developed program taught by SCDA trained personnel.

Poultry and egg grading services are provided for shell eggs, egg products, poultry, rabbits, school lunch programs, and meals ready to eat (MRE) at packing and processing facilities throughout the state to insure that products meet grade and quality standards. Products are also inspected and certified at export warehouses for international shipments. This area graded 34,874,490 dozen eggs, 23,979,131 pounds of poultry, 16,775,756 pounds of MRE's, and 13,489,437 pounds of egg products. It also conducted 29 shell egg surveillance inspections and 13 third party audits.

Market News Service analyzes and distributes price, volume and other market information from shippers, wholesalers, brokers, and market vendors to all segments of the produce and livestock industries. The information is distributed through printed reports, telephone recordings, daily radio programs, newspapers as well as audio recordings on the SCDA Web site. A grower can now sit at his desk on the farm and listen to the daily market news via Internet.

State Farmers Markets

The SCDA operates State Farmers Markets in Columbia, Greenville and Florence. The markets provide facilities for farmers to conduct direct sales of fresh produce to both consumers and major food distributors. Supermarket chains, independent groceries, restaurants, and industrial food handlers are served by the vendors at the markets. The service area of the markets extends beyond the boundaries of the state, supplying produce throughout the eastern United States and into Canada.

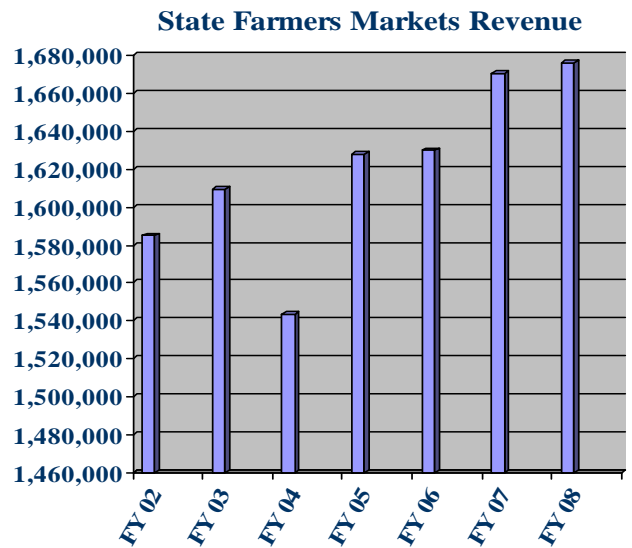


Figure 7.11

The **Columbia State Farmers Market** is considered to be the second largest farmers market in the Southeast in volume of produce, next only to Atlanta. Sales at the Columbia Market are estimated at over \$250 million a year and the annual economic impact on the rural areas of South Carolina is in excess of \$100 million.

A source of fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables, the Columbia Market is also a major venue for the sale and distribution of horticultural products and draws consumers from a broad geographic area.

Of the seventeen people employed at this market, three are part-time. The market operates 24-hours a day for wholesale operations. The market, closed on Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day, provides facilities for daily sales by farmers; monthly or seasonal leases to farmers, wholesalers and retailers; and long-term leases to farmers, wholesalers, retailers, restaurants, and food processors.



Columbia State Farmers Market

Numerous private sector jobs are supplied at the facility, though many are seasonal in nature. Market revenue is generated by long and short-term leases, gate fees, and daily stall rentals. The Columbia Market generated receipts of \$1,381,230 in FY08. Additional revenue is received from parking for football games. Revenue has been increased by raising rates. Seasonal income is dependent on the size of the state's agricultural production of produce.

Preparations have begun to relocate the market to a site in Lexington County, and it is anticipated that the market will relocate in 2010. The relocation will allow wholesale produce companies to build and own their facilities. It will also provide facilities that meet modern food safety standards.

Approximately 300 South Carolina farmers sell produce at the Columbia market. It is most active during the months of June, July and August when crops such as watermelons, cantaloupes, tomatoes and peaches are in season. The active season extends through December with the sale of Christmas trees and poinsettias.

In 2007, the Columbia State Farmers Market implemented a farmer registration program. This program provides information on where farmers using the Market are located and the variety of produce they grow. It has also helped improve communications with the users of the market.

Also in 2007, the Columbia Market installed new equipment to handle waste generated by the vendors. The new equipment has improved the sanitation of the facility as well as its overall appearance. The cost of handling and disposing of waste has also been reduced.

The **Greenville State Farmers Market** is in its 60th year of operation. It relies on wholesale food distributors as the mainstay of operational income. Retail sales provide the majority of point of service contacts. Farmers from the Piedmont region and the adjoining areas of Georgia and North Carolina bring in seasonal fruit and vegetable crops for delivery and direct sales.



Greenville State Farmers Market

Consumer interest in the market's facilities has increased in recent years to a point that traffic often exceeds capacity.

Horticultural crops have taken a strong portion of upstate agricultural emphasis and are an extremely important element in the product mix at the Greenville facility. Seasonal promotional events bring thousands of consumers to the market.

This market operates 362 days a year, closing only on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. A staff of two full-time and two part-time employees operate the facility. Aggressive efforts have been exerted in the area of cost recovery and resource management in recent months resulting in significant reductions in budgetary outlays.

Strategic challenges identified are: aging facilities and infrastructure; insufficient space; declining ability to meet industry facility standards for food sanitation and safety; along with the need for electronic security measures.



Pee Dee State Farmers Market

The **Pee Dee State Farmers Market**, located in Florence, provides space for daily sales by farmers and long-term leases to wholesale and retail operations. It is a major venue for the sale of horticultural products and draws consumers from a broad geographic area. Spring and fall plant and flower festivals are a main draw for the market and help promote year-round business. Operated by a staff of five, only one is part-time. The market is closed on Sundays and

at night. The only warehouse building at the market is leased to the Harvest Hope Food Bank which operates a regional distribution center from the facility. Harvest Hope serves people in need with surplus food products.

During the spring and summer months the stall space at the market is fully utilized. A waiting list for space is maintained in case space becomes available. Market revenues are stable, but the lack of additional space limits the possibilities of increasing revenues.

A new retail sales building is currently under construction. The building is expected to open in the fall of 2008. This facility will provide an all-weather setting for sales to consumers and should significantly increase overall sales and improve the revenue picture for the market.

Communications and Public Information

The office of **Communications and Public Information** (CPI) is the support arm of the SCDA that plans, develops and directs a comprehensive informational and public awareness program for the agency. This office is essential to the key strategic goal of providing public awareness, promotion, and publicity of South Carolina agricultural products.

CPI provides information to the public through print and electronic means, publishes the *Market Bulletin*, maintains the agency Web sites, oversees the agency media and public relations, produces an agency newsletter, produces publications and print materials for the agency, provides publicity for special promotions and projects, provides support for partners and allies in the industry of agriculture, and serves in the communications arm of emergency preparedness and recovery.

Market Bulletin

The 94-year-old *Market Bulletin* is published twice a month for producers and consumers as a resource for buying and selling agricultural and agricultural-related items as well as a resource for valuable information. Because of thorough validation of information, there has been a significant increase in customer satisfaction about the publication. The *Market Bulletin* includes information designed to encourage buying and selling of the state’s locally grown products through the “Certified South Carolina” Program, news for farmers and gardeners, and hundreds of agricultural events, seminars, and workshops.

Almost 19,000 subscribe to the *Market Bulletin*. (See **Figure 7.1**.) Staff continues to aggressively market the *Bulletin* through other publications and partnerships with other organizations. Many thousands of dollars are saved in the printing process because the circulation, copyediting, layout and design are performed in-house. In May 2008, the *Market Bulletin* became an integrated, interactive part of the agency Web site, allowing subscribers to view the publication online and saving staff time with data entry. Advertisers can now enter their own ads through the agency Web site portal and after in-house approval the ad is electronically posted for the next issue.

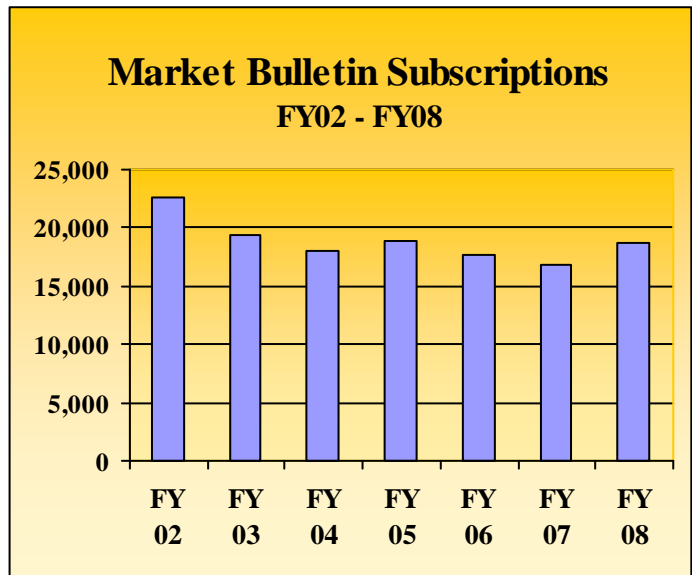


Figure 7.1

About 14,000 ads were published during the last fiscal year. (See **Figure 7.2**.) With the implementation of an electronic subscription process, subscribers can now renew or subscribe online with a credit card. Also, subscribers can subscribe for a print version or an electronic version that can be viewed online with a password. Based on a survey several years ago that reported an average of \$12 million sold in goods through each issue, the total sold in 24 issues could be as high as \$288 million during a fiscal year.

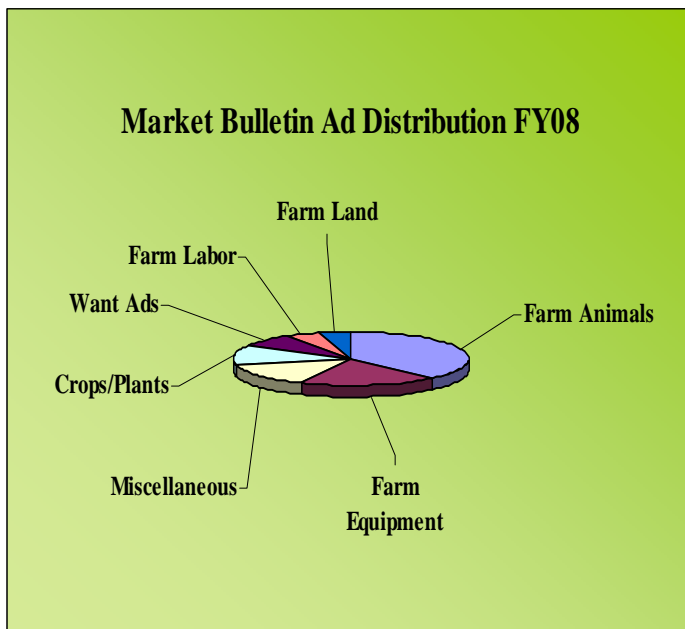


Figure 7.2

Through the *Market Bulletin*, farmers are able to sell their farm equipment which enables them to buy new equipment. Farmers are also provided a vehicle in which they can sell their livestock and crops.

In addition, non-farmers find plants, flowers, seeds, and other items of interest to them. The largest segment of ads was for farm animals including cattle, goats, sheep, llamas, hogs, horses, poultry, and rabbits. The second largest number of ads was for farm equipment. Crops and plants which includes fresh produce, garden plants, flowers, and hay and grain provided the third largest number of ads.

Ranked 10th in the list of categories for the number of ads, farm land for sale ads totaled an average of \$7.7 million in each of the 24 issues during the fiscal year. The total ads in that one category alone equaled about \$185 million in FY08. That's an increase of \$10 million in farm land for sale ads during the past year and a \$53 million increase over the past two years. Those figures do not include farm land for rent or lease. The *Market Bulletin* has long been a resource for economic stability, especially in rural communities.

Web site

The SCDA Web site (www.agriculture.sc.gov) has been redesigned and redeployed with a new look and feel consistent with the agency's branding and marketing campaign. The entire Web site uses dynamic pages generated from a database-driven content management system. Secure online editors allow staff to create, edit, and manage the Web site content and navigational menus. A database of farmers markets, roadside markets, Certified SC program members, specialty food producers, etc. are available on the site. Advertisers may now post their own ads online through the new Web site. In the last survey, the agency website was seen worldwide by about a quarter of a million viewers a year. The new site includes an information request form, hay exchange, audio Market News reports, consumer and producer quick links, and an Intranet area (AgNet) for employees to access information vital personally and professionally. With a user ID and password, employees may access this Intranet from anywhere in the world. Employees can easily access agency forms, the current and archived issues of the *Market Bulletin*, agency quarterly newsletters, and other news and information.

The agency responded to a request to create an online statewide master calendar of agricultural events and meetings. Individuals and organizations can now post their own events and meetings in their own time. The concept was designed to prevent overlaps in scheduling of agricultural meetings, workshops, and events. A separate web site designed for the Pee Dee State Farmers Market was viewed worldwide about 3,000 times.

Publications

Communications and Public Information produced a variety of brochures and publications throughout the year. For instance, the Certified SC Grown Harvest *Finder* with month-by-month produce availability was published and distributed to consumers. State farmers markets, cotton industry, specialty foods, and SC agriculture informational brochures, business cards, gas pump inspection stickers, Certified SC Grown bookmarks, product stickers, point-of-purchase cards, etc. were produced to assist in promoting South Carolina's second largest industry – agriculture. Stationery, envelopes, forms and other similar documents, signs for exhibits, etc. were printed in-house, saving over half of the cost of production.

Public, Media, and Internal Communications

Communications and Public Information published an electronic intra-agency newsletter designed to share the good news about the people, places, and things that make the SCDA great. The office also proactively distributed about 120 news releases communicating key messages to media outlets statewide. Those releases produced favorable, free media coverage for the agency and for agriculture in the state. Also, information regarding recalls on food products was issued throughout the fiscal year to alert consumers. Within the new Web site, consumers can now also keep abreast of late-breaking news regarding FDA and USDA consumer recalls and other alerts.

Special Promotions, Projects, and Partnerships

- **Great American Agriculture magazine** – South Carolina was among the Southern states featured in the Great American Agriculture magazine last summer. The SCDA provided copy and photos for 8 pages. In return, the SCDA received 5,000 free coffee-table type magazines which were distributed to SC physicians and veterinarians for the office lobbies by the SC Advocates for Agriculture.
- **Commissioner's School for Agriculture** – The week long Commissioner's School for Agriculture was held at Clemson University, July 14 – 20, 2007. The Reunion Day for those who previously attended the school was March 21, 2007. There were 35 students selected to attend the Commissioner's School, an increase from the previous year's attendance of 29 students. This was the fourth year of the program. The first year's program participants will graduate from college in FY09. A follow-up survey will be performed to find out to which careers and higher education goals program participants are aspiring. The hope is that they are pursuing careers and education in agriculture, forestry and natural resources, and that they will serve as leaders in their professions.
- **SC Food Policy Council** – Staff supports the SC Food Policy Council, which meets on a quarterly basis to develop policy recommendations for the SCDA as well as other entities involved in the food production system in South Carolina. The Policy Council hears pertinent presentations, provides a forum for networking and discussion, and provides an annual report to the Commissioner of Agriculture regarding suggestions and improvements for food production and the agency's programming events. An important secondary effect of the Council has been the opportunity to build relationships with other state agencies and organizations, especially grant partnerships.

- **School Gardens** – The SCDA has hired an intern to research the status of school garden programs and educational opportunities currently in existence in South Carolina. This data will be used to search for grant funding in the future that would allow the SCDA to coordinate and implement school garden programs throughout the state. The objectives of a school garden include helping to develop an appreciation for agriculture products and food production, increasing the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables in the fight against obesity, and promoting physical activity in the garden.
- **Internships** – Students have been or are participating in internship programs through the office of legal affairs. The SCDA supported a USC undergraduate student, school garden interns, and a pro bono intern with the Charleston School of Law. Some students are specifically interested in the legal profession. Others are interested in learning more about agriculture policy.
- **Healthy Carolina Farmers Market** – One of the agency’s interns initiated a partnership between the University of South Carolina Healthy Carolina and the SCDA in opening a community-based farmers market on the main campus in Columbia. The market strives to introduce college students to the benefits of eating fresh fruits and vegetables, while also appreciating the local farmers produce and overall agricultural production in South Carolina, which is the second leading industry in this state.

Other promotions and projects during the last fiscal year include:

- Farmers Market Week Promotion and the Great Certified SC Grown Bake Sale
 - A SC Taste with the Palmetto Food and Agribusiness Council on the State House plaza
 - Promotion of SC Produce at Eastern Produce Council in Teaneck, New Jersey
 - Spring and Fall Plant and Flower Festivals at the State Farmers Markets
 - U.S. Food Export Showcase in Chicago
 - Wal-Mart Certified SC Grown Campaign
 - South Carolina State Fair Exhibit
 - Fresh on the Menu and Go Wild SC Shrimp promotions
 - Peaches in the Park Promotion with the Charleston RiverDogs at the “The Joe”
 - Piggly Wiggly Farmers Market Celebration
 - Census of Agriculture Publicity
 - National Dairy Month
 - Promotion for a Variety of Agricultural Conferences, Seminars, Workshops, Clinics, Festivals, Horse Shows, Ag Study Tours etc.
- **Partnerships**
Alliances and partnerships with other public and private organizations continue to be developed and nourished to utilize all available resources in a cooperative effort. These alliances have proven beneficial to providing information to the citizens of the state at a significant cost reduction in taxpayer dollars. The agency continues to work with the SC Advocates for Agriculture, a non-profit organization assists the SCDA in marketing and promoting South Carolina agricultural products and the overall industry of agriculture within in South Carolina. The office has also provided promotion and publicity for the Ag Commission of South Carolina and various commodity boards.

Emergency Preparedness

A Livestock Emergency section has been included on the agency Web site to provide information for livestock owners on evacuation sites, information on how to evacuate livestock, and links to the South Carolina Emergency Management Division. A link to the National Animal Identification Program was also established to provide information to livestock owners about the nationwide effort to locate and identify livestock in case of a nationwide animal disease emergency. Staff also participated in exercises to prepare for potential emergency events such as catastrophic zoonotic disease outbreaks, nuclear disasters, and hurricanes.

During real hurricane and other emergency events, SC Department of Agriculture staff support three ESF functions in the SC Emergency Operations Center. Laboratory and Consumer Services staff work in ESF 11 (Food and Water). ESF 11 is responsible for identifying, securing and arranging for coordinating the transport of food and water assistance to affected areas in cooperation with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services. Public Information staff work 8-hour shifts in ESF 15 (Public Information) which is responsible for coordinating emergency public warning and information systems. Our equine specialist works in ESF 17 (Animal Protection) which is responsible for coordinating all animal response and relief activities. She provides emergency equine stabling sites within the state. In addition, SCDA staff is also deeply involved in emergency recovery and agroterrorism planning.