



# *South Carolina Department of Agriculture*

## **Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - October 7, 2015**

### **Statement from Commissioner Hugh Weathers about Rain Damage**

**COLUMBIA, SC** – Over the past few days here in South Carolina, I've watched, worried and prayed for friends and families who have been terribly impacted by this natural disaster that has distressed our great state. As we pick up the pieces, our residents and farmers must be taken care of. Our priority is to protect life and property in harm's way – and try to resume some sense of normalcy as we press on.

I toured the state by air on Monday and Tuesday and witnessed the shocking impact of the rainfall on our farms in the path of this storm – thousands of farm acres under water, farm buildings standing as islands in the water, and farm roads washed away. I thank General Livingston of the National Guard and the Forestry Commission for providing the aircraft for me to do that.

Seeing the devastation was the first step in the long process of assessing the impact on agriculture in South Carolina. After completing the tour, I joined staff from S.C. Department of Agriculture (SCDA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Clemson Extension Service to begin initial damage assessments. At this point, conservative early estimates are that direct crop losses from the recent flood may exceed \$300 million.

The storm has had a significant statewide effect, and it appears that low lying farmland adjacent to rivers systems and creeks was most severely impacted. The crops affected include peanuts, cotton, fall vegetables, soybeans, and some timber. Poultry farmers are working to repair access roads to get feed trucks to their flocks. Livestock and poultry assessments continue in impacted areas. Timber harvest will resume when the logging roads are passable. Long-term, this disaster will cause an income loss for local farmers and the rural counties of South Carolina.

2015 has been an exceptionally challenging year for farmers in our state. We have dealt with a severe drought during the growing season and now excessive rainfall at harvest. Efforts will continue to gauge losses through the completion of harvest season.

We're going to work on behalf of our farmers with the federal and state resources and assistance our farmers have access to. Right now, the most important thing for farmers to do is learn the details of their crop insurance policies and immediately contact their crop insurance agent prior to making any additional investments in their crop.

For assistance and questions, farmers should contact the local USDA FSA office serving their counties or Kenn Jameson with the state USDA FSA office at 803-806-3820 ext. 107 or [kenn.jameson@sc.uscda.gov](mailto:kenn.jameson@sc.uscda.gov). Additionally, you may contact SCDA in Columbia at 803-734-2210.

Photo Attachment A: Farm in Darlington County

Photo Attachment B: Farm on the Black River with water spilling over Hwy. 301

Photo Attachment C: Poultry Farm in Clarendon County

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