



South Carolina Department of Agriculture

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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SC Department of Agriculture Launches Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Center *Applications available for funding and mentoring*

COLUMBIA – Are you an agribusiness entrepreneur who would benefit from mentoring, funding and access to investors? The Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE), a new initiative of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA), is looking for you.

Applications for the ACRE Entrepreneurship Program are open to South Carolina residents who have an agribusiness product and/or company related to one or more of the following categories:

- Specialty crops (fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, nursery crops)
- Protein
- Other foods (honey, cheese, milk, eggs, etc.)
- Row crops
- Aquaculture
- Timber
- Mechanical harvesting
- Agribusiness technology

“We’re seeking the most innovative and forward thinkers in South Carolina agribusiness,” said Jack Shuler, ACRE Executive Director. “The Entrepreneurship Program will help position companies and products in the marketplace through collaboration, networking and funding.”

The ACRE Entrepreneurship Program is for agribusiness entrepreneurs who, with the assistance of mentors and/or investors, are ready to take their products or processes to the market.

“Ultimately the ACRE Entrepreneurship Center is about South Carolina’s economic prosperity and specifically, growing the economic impact of the state’s largest industry – agribusiness,” said SC Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “ACRE will link farming, agribusiness, research and entrepreneurship and will help us achieve our 50 by 20 goal.”

South Carolina agribusiness has an annual economic impact of \$42 billion. SCDA hopes to increase that impact to \$50 billion by 2020.

The Entrepreneurship Program application requires a business plan and a prototype or sales history for the applicant's company or product. Applications are due Monday, April 16 and are available at www.Acre-sc.com.

Applicants selected to participate in the Entrepreneurship Program could receive up to \$25,000 for their company or product and/or access to a network of mentors, grant writing consultants and investors.

ACRE will add a second Entrepreneurship Program track in late 2018 for beginning innovators who have an innovative agribusiness idea but don't have experience in business. This track will offer participants a curriculum in business plan and marketing plan development.

For more information on the Entrepreneurship Center and other ACRE initiatives, contact Kyle Player, ACRE Project Coordinator, 803-734-2324 or kplayer@scda.sc.gov.

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