



South Carolina DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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Agribusiness Entrepreneurs Learn Business Skills, Win Funding

COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Department of Agriculture’s Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship ([ACRE](#)), in partnership with Clemson Cooperative Extension, has awarded \$5,000 each to five entrepreneurs bringing innovation to food and farming in our state.

[SCDA](#) founded ACRE in 2018 to help identify and nurture new ideas and businesses in the Palmetto State’s agribusiness sector. One of its programs is the ACRE Curriculum, a partnership with Clemson Cooperative Extension that guides beginning entrepreneurs. In its second year, the ACRE Curriculum program offered skills training and networking opportunities for 15 participants.

“We taught them about business planning, finances, marketing, operational planning, how to give a pitch, how to apply for a grant or loan, and other crucial business skills,” said ACRE Executive Director Kyle Player.

Following a live “Pitch Day” on Dec. 17, a panel of judges selected five of the 15 projects for funding:

- Ben Crawford and Rebecca Goldberg of **Woodland Valley Mushrooms** grow gourmet mushrooms in a converted shipping container in the Aiken County area. They plan to acquire and upfit a second container to expand their market.
- Justin Hancock and Jen Sample of **Wando River Farm**, a small produce farm in the Lowcountry with a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program and a few restaurant clients, plan to expand the farm’s production.
- David and Caroline Harper run **CHI design indigo**, a Midlands company making hand-dyed indigo textiles and working to bring back the historic crop to South Carolina. The Harpers are working with three in-state farms to grow indigo, and have plans for further educational outreach.
- Melissa Price of Saluda-based **Patchwork Farm** plans to use ACRE funding to launch an educational agritourism project in which students will be able to adopt a cow on her farm and follow it virtually from their classroom.
- Toshiba Traynham-Jackson is one of three family members behind **Jackson Farms II**, which sells produce in the Upstate. They plan to build a mobile farmers market to serve food deserts in their area, expanding their community outreach as well as their business.

“South Carolina’s agribusiness sector needs innovators and risk-takers who are also well-grounded in business principles,” said South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “ACRE is a key part of our strategy to grow and diversify the state’s farming industry.”

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