



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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SC Department of Agriculture Asks USDA to Adjust Hemp Rule to Help Farmers

COLUMBIA –South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers is asking the U.S. Department of Agriculture to revise its national regulatory framework for hemp to better set up South Carolina’s Hemp Farming Program for success.

USDA released its [interim final rule](#) on hemp on Oct. 31, 2019, and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture is in the process of writing a state plan that complies with the federal rule.

However, SCDA has several concerns about testing requirements in the federal rule, and has formally submitted comments to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue asking that they be reconsidered.

For example, the federal rule mandates that all hemp fields be sampled by SCDA-designated staff and tested by a DEA-registered laboratory within 15 days prior to harvest, a window SCDA feels is too narrow. Farmers are at the mercy of weather conditions, while laboratories are likely to experience back-ups during harvest season, and SCDA has not been given any funding to administer this testing.

“We believe that several provisions in the interim final rule lack the flexibility necessary for our farmers to be profitable and for SCDA to be able to implement a successful hemp program,” Weathers wrote.

Commissioner Weathers’ full comments to USDA are attached.

Launched in 2018, South Carolina’s hemp program has grown each year, with 114 farmers and 43 hemp processors permitted in 2019. SCDA plans to begin accepting applications for the 2020 growing season on Feb. 1, 2020. More information about South Carolina’s Hemp Farming program can be found at agriculture.sc.gov/hemp.

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