



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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From Sweetgrass Baskets to Vegetable Ice Cream, ACRE Entrepreneurs Bring Innovation to Agriculture

COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Department of Agriculture’s Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship ([ACRE](#)), in partnership with Clemson Cooperative Extension, has awarded seven beginning entrepreneurs a share of \$30,000 to help propel their agriculture businesses forward.

Sixteen individuals or pairs participated in this year’s ACRE Curriculum, which guides beginning entrepreneurs through developing a business plan, marketing, finance, operational planning, pitching and other business skills. This year’s curriculum was conducted entirely online due to COVID-19, including the virtual Pitch Day.

The awardees, as selected by a panel of judges:

1. **Sweetgrass Roots** is a learning farm in Colleton County dedicated to preserving folk art crafts like sweetgrass basketry. “Seed to basket” entrepreneur **Kisha Kinard** plans to use ACRE funding for a storage structure.
2. Through **Queen & Comb**, property owners pay a monthly fee to have **Tom Knaust** place honeybee hives on their property, sharing 50-50 in the honey harvest and learning about pollinators. He plans to use ACRE funding to begin marketing his Charleston County business.
3. **Elise Ashby’s Farmers Market Flavors** sells vegetable ice cream in flavors like blueberry-okra and cauliflower-butter pecan. She plans to use ACRE funding to help pay disadvantaged youth to work in her commercial kitchen in Union County.
4. **Ginger Nichols** grows aquaponic lettuces at Spartanburg County’s **Naturally Fresh Farms**. She plans to add additional cold storage to expand her market.
5. At the seven-acre **Lover Farms** in Pickens County, **Brittany Arsiniega** and **Brit Hessler** offer an escape to the farm, hosting events, teaching classes in foraging, and selling merchandise and produce. They’ll use ACRE funding for seed.



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6. At Spartanburg County's **Paulownia Vineyards**, **Elaine Ryan** is planting Bordeaux-style wine grapes – unusual in South Carolina – and pecans. She plans to use ACRE funding to hire a vineyard consultant.
7. **Greg Brown** plans to begin growing ginger and turmeric for the restaurant market at his Hopkins-area **Greenleaf Farms** in Richland County, where he currently grows asparagus and other produce.

“The future of agribusiness in South Carolina depends on new ideas,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “These entrepreneurs will use what they’ve learned in the ACRE Curriculum program to build successful businesses and develop new markets in food and agriculture.”

[SCDA](#) founded ACRE in 2018 to help identify and nurture new ideas and businesses in the Palmetto State’s agribusiness sector.

In spring 2021, advanced agribusiness entrepreneurs will have the chance to compete for their share of \$125,000 in funding. Information is available at acre-sc.com.

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