



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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Farmers, Buyers and Chefs Can Safely Connect at 2021 Grower Buyer Mash Up

COLUMBIA — South Carolina farmers and food producers can meet potential buyers at the 2021 Grower Buyer Mash Up in West Columbia. The March 22 event is also an opportunity for chefs, food distributors, and retail- and wholesale-level food buyers who want to include local food in their menus or product offerings to network with local producers and learn more about the Certified South Carolina program.

Jointly organized by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) and the Midlands Local Food Collaborative and sponsored by the SC Restaurant and Lodging Association and others, the open-air event will be held March 22, 2021, from noon to 5 p.m. at the South Carolina State Farmers Market, 3483 Charleston Highway in West Columbia.

“Helping farmers find markets for their products is one of our department’s vital roles, and forging those connections has been made more difficult by the pandemic,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers. “The Certified South Carolina Grower Buyer Mash Up is a great opportunity for buyers and producers alike.”

For the first time this year, the Mash Up will include a Chef Showcase. “We will have five chefs paired with local farmers offering samples of their farm-to-table dishes,” explained Jim Johnson, chairman of the Midlands Local Food Collaborative. “We see the importance of creating an opportunity for chefs and farmers to meet and learn from each other.”

“We have attended SCDA’s grower-buyer event from the first year and have met new suppliers each year since,” said Lauren Horning, Local Product Specialist with produce distributor FreshPoint Charlotte and FreshPoint Raleigh. “When seeking out new farmers, it can be difficult to build trust through a call or email, and some farmers can be hard to reach. Meeting many farmers in one day accelerates the relationship-building process. As the conversation continues after the meeting, we focus on building deeper relationships and understanding how to share the farmer’s story with our customers.”

For more information and to register, visit grower-buyer-mash-up.eventbrite.com. Producers wishing to exhibit during the event must sign up by March 15; the deadline for other attendees is March 20.

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