NEW BEEF CO-OP AIDS TO EXPAND PROCESSING, CREATE SC BEEF PRODUCT

BY EVA MOORE • PHOTO COURTESY TOKEENA ANGUS

A group of South Carolina cattle farmers has formed a cooperative association with the goals of increasing beef processing capacity in South Carolina and jointly creating a South Carolina-branded beef product.

The SC Beef Marketing Cooperative was formed with the assistance of the South Carolina Center for Cooperative and Enterprise Development, a collaborative effort between the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Clemson University Cooperative Extension, the South Carolina State Small Business Development Center and Matson Consulting.

South Carolina’s meat processing facilities – all of which are small in scale – are unable to keep up with South Carolina beef producers’ processing needs. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed those weaknesses, with local facilities experiencing long backlogs at the same time consumers were seeking more local meat.

Steven Richards, director of the SC Center for Cooperative and Enterprise Development, completed a study last year suggesting that a $3 million investment in six existing facilities could expand in-state processing capacity by 50 percent and create 50 new jobs.

“The processing capacity continues to be the most critical bottleneck to expanding the local meat supply. The second most important issue is to expand market outlets for local meat: more retail buying points and more offerings in grocery stores and restaurants. This cooperative association aims to work on both issues simultaneously,” said Richards.

Creating a co-op gives the group a leg up in applying for grants, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Value-Added Producer Grant for which they have already applied. If awarded the grant, they plan to commission a feasibility study on expanding small beef processing facilities around the state to improve capacity.

One of the co-op’s eventual goals is to create a high-quality all-South Carolina ground beef product modeled after Kentucky Cattlemen’s Ground Beef.

Expanding beef processing could also help preserve South Carolina’s family farms, says Gwendolyn McPhail, treasurer of the co-op’s board and owner of Black Diamond Sheep and Cattle in Seneca, South Carolina.

“We see a lot of open land in South Carolina that used to have cattle on it – but because there was not competitive pricing, because there was a processing backlog, a lot of smaller cattlemen have simply gone out of business,” McPhail said. “I believe people will see new hope now in raising cattle and join us.”

Kyle Player, executive director of the Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, says the co-op is a promising model.

“This endeavor is a great example of how we can work together to promote entrepreneurship among South Carolina agribusinesses to help boost our state’s rural areas,” Player said.

The co-op is currently soliciting members from across South Carolina. Farmers who wish to join should contact McPhail at wagv4you@gmail.com. See page 6 for biographies of the executive board members.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SC PRODUCERS

I visited Chicago in late May to explore some new opportunities for South Carolina farmers. I serve on the steering committee for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Foreign Agricultural Services – and this year we met at the NASDA American Food Fair. This event is a trade show designed to put producers in front of major buyers. It was held this year in conjunction with the National Restaurant Association Show, providing U.S. food and beverage companies the opportunity to engage with thousands of buyers in restaurants, lodging, and food service. FAS worked to recruit international buyers from all over the world, and one evening we had a dinner with buyers from 13 countries.

I liked what I saw. In the coming months, we’ll be evaluating how to involve some South Carolina producers in next year’s show. Our department helps producers from our state participate in a variety of trade shows throughout the year, including produce shows like New York Produce and Southern Exposure, and trade shows for specialty products like the New York Fancy Food Show. We even offer a cost-share grant to help producers with the cost of attending certain trade shows and educational conferences.

These shows are a much bigger version of some of the shows we put on right here at home. I’ve also ramped up our involvement in SUSTA, the Southeastern United State Trade Association, as part of our renewed focus on international trade opportunities for small and mid-sized South Carolina food businesses.

Getting into the export business has many opportunities but can seem overwhelming to first-time participants. All this is to say: Whether you grow fruits, vegetables, or row crops, or make dog food or barbecue sauce, we’re always looking for ways to help you grow your business and expand to new markets.

It’s good to go and see, but I’m always happy to get home to South Carolina. The corn I’ve seen as I travel the state has started to look better, though the corn went through a hot, dry couple of weeks. A couple of weeks ago I spoke in Aiken to a non-farm group as I closed my remarks, I asked them to pray for rain for our farmers.

On the way home that evening, I drove through a nice storm and then we got 2” of rain that weekend. Apparently, some in that group answered the call. I know a lot of you are praying for rain, and I am, too.
The 7th Annual Sol Flowers Sunflower Festival
June/July
Flowers $10/bundle of 5, T-shirts $5. Sol Flowers is a fundraiser benefiting charities in Upstate SC through the Footlights Community Foundation.
Sol Flowers
150 Bradley Road, Anderson
facebook.com/SolFlowersAndersonSC

Lavender U-Pick Season
June 4 – August 15 • 9 am – 5 pm
Lavender u-pick will be Friday • Sunday by appointment. Please call to reserve a spot today. Entry of $5 per person will be applied to any purchase made of lavender, lavender products, or home decor.
King George Lavender Co.
490 Daisy Lane, Barnwell
803-909-5577 • kinggeorgelavender.com
facebook.com/kglavender

Elf Leaf Farm You-Pick Lavender
June 9 • 9 am – 4 pm
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Elf Leaf Farm
141 N. Campbell Road, Landrum
864-511-8886 • theelves@elfleaffarm.com
elfleaffarm.com

South Carolina Sunflower Festival
June 18 • 10 am – 6 pm
We’re planting acres and acres of sunflowers — there are dozens of gorgeous varieties! Stroll through the fields to look, pick or photograph. Plus, family fun with 10+ attractions, activities and yard games. Meet friendly farm animals at the barn. There’s lots to eat and drink, and lovely toe-tapping live music every afternoon. Learn more on our website.
Denver Downs Farm
1515 Denver Road, Anderson
864-915-4554 • catherine@denverdownsfarm.com
denverdownsfarm.com/sunflower-festival
Tickets: littlecanecreekfarm.ticketspice.com/2022-south-carolina-sunflower-festival

Horse Camp at Idlehurst
June 20 – 24 & July 25 – 29 • 9 am – 1 pm
Students will spend the week learning the basics of horsemanship, care, and riding. Camp registration includes a t-shirt, snacks, and a professional photo.
Idlehurst - Horseback Riding Lessons
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864-534-2521 • theidlehursts@gmail.com
Register: form.jotform.com/210/3075785607/theidlehurst

Landowner Resources Workshop
June 28 • 6:30 – 7:30 pm
Join us to connect with USDA District Conservationists to learn about the EQIP/CSP application process and its implementation. Attendees will also learn about USDA-NRCS funding programs available to enhance their land, how to increase profitability, start an agricultural business, and conservation planning. Register and attend to receive a $10 Subway gift card!
Virtual Contact: South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED)
843-579-9835 • bash@scaced.org
scaced.org

Producing Safety Rule Grower Training
June 29 & 30 • 1 – 5:30 pm
Fruit and vegetable growers and others interested in learning about produce safety, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule and food safety. The PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement that ‘At least one supervisor or responsible party for your farm must have successfully completed food safety training’. Registration is required. Registration Fees: $20 in-state attendees / $100 out-of-state attendees.
Remote via ZOOM Contact: Brooke Horton / South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Produce Safety 803-351-1244 • bhorton@scda.sc.gov
bit.ly/SCpsrRemoteJune2022

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**Leghorn**

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- 80c ea ea ea EA

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LEARN ABOUT AGRICULTURE AND ART DURING 2022 SOUTH CAROLINA AG AND ART TOUR

South Carolina residents can learn where their food and fiber come from, as well as enjoy the sights and sounds of local art and music when the 2022 South Carolina Ag & Art Tour kicks off May 14. To plan your tour, go to agandarttour.com.

The tour takes place rain or shine, and sites may close if there is a threat of severe weather as the safety of visitors, farmers and artisans is the first priority. Participants are discouraged from bringing dogs as the tour sites are working farms and dogs can present food safety and livestock challenges. Service animals are allowed as needed. For more information, go to agandarttour.com.

The self-guided tours take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, and from 1–5 p.m. on Sundays. Tour dates, counties, contact information and tour sites are:

**JUNE 4 – 8**

Charlotte County

Stefany Beals, sbbeals07@gmail.com
- All Thing Acre Petting Zoo
- Blue Pearl Farm
- Hickory Bluff Berry Farm
- Hollywood Healthy Fresh Market
- Jedebug Junction
- Jeremiah Farm and Goat Dairy
- McClellanville Land & Sea Market
- MUSC Urban Farm
- Pluff Mudd Farm
- R and R Acres
- Sea Island Farmers Market
- Sunday Brunch Farmers Market
- The Farm at Middleton Place
- The Goatery at Kiawah River
- The Green Heart Project

Kershaw County

Catherine DeLoach, cdeloach@camdensc.org
- Canebrooke Apiary and Aquaponics
- Historic Camden Foundation
- Goat Daddy's Farm
- Old Maccaskill's Farm
- Quite Content Farm

York County – East

Melanie Cooper, mcooper@yorkcountyarts.org
- Baker Farm
- Center of the Arts
- Cherry Place Farm
- Fort Mill Farmers Market
- Kingdom Gardens
- Old Town Farmers Market
- Olive's Mud Puddle

**Newberry County**

Michelle Long, michelle@newberrycounty.org
- Bowers Farm
- Carolina Pride Pastures
- Hi Brau Beef Co.
- Lever Farms
- West Ridge Farms

**Richland County**

Wendy Broman, foxhidelawayfarm@gmail.com
- Crave Artisan Specialty Market
- Doko Farm
- Eastover Community Garden
- Fabel Farms
- Fox Huldaire Farms
- Lewis + Clark
- Mill Creek Greenhouses
- Pinewoods Lake Park
- Purple Tuteur Farm
- Sal's Ol' Time Feed & Seed
- Stormwater Studios
- The Congaree Milling Company

York County – West

Melanie Cooper, mcooper@yorkcountyarts.org
- Betuwix Studios
- Black's Peaches
- BushN'Vine
- Cat's Paw Winery
- Forlizes Farm on Ferndale
- Hourglass Alpacas, LLC
- MeadowView Events
- Melton Farm
- Myer'st Farm and Studio
- Sanders Peaches
- Sanders Feed and Seed

**JUNE 11 – 12**

Lexington County

Vickie Davis, vickie@lakeemurrycountry.com
- Clinton Scase Farm
- Fire Barrel Farm
- Hollow Creek Distillery
- Mercer House Winery
- Locklair Farm
- South Carolina State Farmers Market
- The Market at the Icehouse Amphitheater Pavilion
- The Phillips Market Center

**JUNE 18 – 19**

Fairfield County

Brad Hoffman, gypsywindfarms@gmail.com
- Crazy Chic Heritage Farm, Ltd. Co.
- Fairfield Farmers and Artisans Market
- Gypsy Wind Farms
- Heirloom Fine Art Gallery
- Home Grown on the Farm
- JB Farms
- Slightly North of Charleston
- STORE34
- The Artists CoOp
- The SHE garden

**JUNE 25 – 26**

Chester County

Courtney Lee, ccl@g.clemson.edu
- Chester Regional Agribusiness Center
- Collins Backyard Farm and Aquaponics
- Cotton Hills Farm
- Fishing Creek Creamery
- Hazlewood Farms
- Massey Farms
- Strides of Strength Therapeutic Riding
- The Powell Farm
- Watson Farms
- Wild Bees Bottle Shop
- Wild Hope Farm

See page 1 for an article explaining the newly created SC Beef Marketing Cooperative. The members of the executive board are listed below.

Will Boozer – Will and his family runs a cow-calf operation located in the midstate that focuses on top Brangus bloodlines. His farm provides beef for local families through a local custom butcher and markets cattle to a local butcher who also provides beef for South Carolina consumers.

Hudson Johnson – Hudson has a farm in the Upstate where he raises Akaushi cattle, a red breed from Japan that rivals the more common black Wagyu breed known for its exceptional marbling.

Meghan Ketterman – Meghan and her husband run a small herd of Registered Angus and black baldies in the mountains of South Carolina. She provides beef to local families as well as several popular restaurants that are favorites with tourists in the area. When she's not on the farm, she serves on her local school board.

Jenny Landreth – Jenny and her husband's farm is located in the Piedmont Region, where she focuses on bettering the genetics in beef herds across South Carolina. Her goal is to help increase profitability and efficiency for every cattelmen. She also serves as a consultant on minerals, artificial insemination, herd health, and enjoys showing cattle across the state.

Gwen McPhail – Gwen and her family's farm is located almost on the Georgia line and produces seedstock Angus bulls and heifers. They sell freezer beef to local families as well as several local restaurants. She also serves on the board of The Foothills Agricultural Resource and Marketing Center as well as the Foothills Heritage Farmers Market. She served on the Oconee County Planning Commission for over 10 years, helping get over 1500 acres zoned for agricultural use in the county.

Georgeanne Webb – Georgeanne runs a farm with her husband located just outside of Greenville where they raise seedstock registered Charolais bulls and heifers and sell freezer beef to local families. She is president of the SC Charolais Association, and has held several national leadership positions in the industry.

SC BEEF MARKETING COOPERATIVE EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Alfalfa is often referred to as the “Queen of Forages” but perceived lack of persistence and low soil pH levels in the southern United States are keeping this queen from her throne.

To help producers learn how to help alfalfa regain royalty, researchers from Clemson University, Auburn University, the University of Georgia (UGA) and the University of Florida (UF) teamed up to host an Alfalfa in the South Field Day for more than 100 participants from South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. At FoxPipe Farm in Laurens, South Carolina.

"Alfalfa once was a predominant perennial legume species in the southern United States," said Liliane Silva, Clemson Cooperative Extension Service forages specialist housed at the Edisto Research and Education Center in Blackville, South Carolina. "It is not grown as much today, mainly because of lack of knowledge of management requirements and soil pH levels."

Soil pH, or acidity levels, in the southern United States range from 4.5 to 5.0. Optimum pH for alfalfa ranges from 6.5 to 7. Reed Edwards, co-owner of FoxPipe Farm, has been growing alfalfa since 2016. He said it’s important to “get the pH correct from the beginning” and keep soil acidity levels in check.

“I’ve had a lot of challenges getting the soil pH to move,” said Edwards, who also talked about growing lespedeza. “This is a red clay environment, so it’s important we have regular soil tests conducted. Soil tests can save us money.”

In addition to a proper pH level, alfalfa also requires high amounts of potassium.

To help people learn more about forage crops, Silva has a YouTube channel, Forage Drops. Videos offer research-based advice on practices to follow to create healthier forage systems.

**ALFALFA COMPANION CROPS**

When companion crops are grown with alfalfa, management practices should be adjusted to maintain desired proportions of alfalfa crop in the mixture. Ideal companion crops include grasses, such as bermudagrass and fescue.

A presentation on alfalfa-bermudagrass systems was made during the field day. Participants learned that interseeding alfalfa in bermudagrass can improve forage yield and quality. The Alfalfa Bermudagrass Management Guide, written by Silva, Jennifer Tucker of UGA and Kim Mullenix of Auburn University, compiles best management practices for growing the forages together.

Important steps must be followed for producers growing novel fescue with alfalfa. John Andrae, fescue expert and assistant director of the Clemson Experiment Station, said some tall fescues produce ergot alkaloids that can be toxic for livestock. Andrae, noted that “fescue is a fantastic forage,” but producers should check for toxicity before using it.

“When converting a field from toxic to non-toxic, the first step is to verify if it is toxic,” Andrae said. “If a field is found toxic, you will need to get rid of the toxicity before allowing livestock to graze on it or eat from it.”

To verify whether a pasture is toxic, send fescue samples to a commercial laboratory.

Several methods can be used to replace stands of toxic tall fescue. One is the spray-smother-spray method. This involves spraying a toxic pasture in the spring and planting a dense smother crop such as pearl millet. Producers should manage the smother crop as they normally would. After the cover crop is grazed or harvested, the field is sprayed again.

Another method is the spray-wait-spray method – grazing or cutting a field and spraying with a burndown herbicide 6 weeks before the target planting date.

The third method, spray-spray-plant, involves spraying herbicides in the late summer and again four-to-six weeks later followed by planting a new fescue variety just after the second herbicide application.

Regardless of what method is chosen, UGA’s Jennifer Tucker said farmers should get rid of toxic tall fescue as soon as possible as it is the ‘diabetes of grasses,’ or mix the toxic fescue with other non-toxic grasses to decrease toxicity to animals.

**COVER CROPS AND NUTRIENT CYCLING**

Field day topics also included planting cover crops to help improve forage production and distribution. Cover crops protect soil with plants that may or may not be used as an additional cash crop, help increase soil fertility and soil quality, manage soil erosion, improve water retention and infiltration, and help to manage weeds, pests, and diseases, as well as increase biodiversity and native wildlife. In addition, cover crops can be used for forage production and be harvested for hay or grazed.

Leanne Dillard of Auburn talked about how cover crops can improve soil health and provide weed control as well as “allow for year-round grazing.” For growers who plant cover crops, Reid Miller, Clemson area livestock and forages agent, advises scouting for insect pests and diseases to ensure a healthy crop.

Appropriate grazing management can be an ally in keeping a healthy forage stand. Dillard said, by promoting nutrient cycling – replacing nutrients in a pasture from the waste of the livestock that graze it.

Clover is a legume that can be used as a cover crop. Joe Bouton, UGA emeritus professor, talked about how clovers help tall fescue grow and are nutritious.

To help producers learn more about forage crops, Silva has a YouTube channel, Forage Drops. Videos offer research-based advice on practices to follow to create healthier forage systems.
The outlook and fiber production. Higher costs for food labor, contributing to fertilizer, fuel and historically high prices. Producers are facing about establishing and field day to learn more about growing Kiko goats on his farm in Elberton, Georgia. He attended the field day to learn more about growing alfalfa in his pastures.

But producers should not worry, he said. "These are challenging times for forage producers," Prevatt said. "Fertilizer costs have increased to unprecedented highs and input prices, in general, are higher across the board. Producers are going to have to determine their needs vs. their wants." But producers should not worry, he said.

"Work with a budget," Prevatt told producers. "I know inputs today are challenging, but things are going to change."

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, fertilizer prices have skyrocketed since January 2021. The agency has plans for a program to support independent, innovative and sustainable American fertilizer production. Initially, the program was for a $250 million investment in domestic fertilizer production. A short time later, U.S. President Joe Biden announced he was doubling the initial investment to $500 million to lower costs and boost availability for farmers, so they can obtain inputs they need at prices they can afford to maximize yields. Details on the application process will be announced soon.

Calculators and web apps developed by the Clemson Extension Precision Agriculture team can help growers make proper management decisions and develop prescription plans for their crops. These calculators and web apps can be found at bit.ly/CES-Calculators-WebApps.

First round of proposals for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities shows strong interest

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, May 10, 2022 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the first round of funding through the new Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities received over 450 proposals ranging from $5 million to $100 million each. The deadline for these large-scale proposals closed on Friday, May 6, 2022.

The applications USDA received came from over 350 groups, including nonprofit, for-profit and government entities; farmer cooperatives; conservation, energy and environmental groups; state, tribal and local governments; universities (including minority serving institutions); small businesses and large corporations. The applications covered every state in the nation as well as tribal lands, D.C. and Puerto Rico, which demonstrates the tremendous geographic scope of this need.

"The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity has created tremendous interest from a diverse cross-section of groups from across the country," said Vilsack. "As we review the applications received in this first round of funding, we’re looking forward to seeing the details of the projects proposed, and hope we have a similar application response in the second round."

Proposals in the first funding pool include large-scale pilot projects that emphasize the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production and include direct, meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small and/or historically underserved producers.

Prior to the first deadline, a detailed informational webinar on all aspects of the funding opportunity was shared with over 1,000 registrants and was recorded and posted on USDA’s website for many more to view. USDA also hosted six meet and greet webinars with a unique opportunity for partners from all backgrounds to connect and share or seek expertise for the funding opportunity. These participant lists from the meet and greet webinars are also posted on USDA’s website to allow for additional connections.

"The Phase-in Period

Agricultural Economics

Producers are facing historically high prices for fertilizer, fuel and labor, contributing to higher costs for food and fiber production. While the outlook for animals. Clovers also can help build soil fertility, prevent erosion and put nitrogen back into the soil through biological nitrogen fixation.

Bouton is also credited with developing two alfalfa varieties for the South – Bulldog and Alfragraz. Bulldog 805 and Alfragraz 600RR varieties are recommended for the South; for further recommended options, consult your Extension agent.

Stanley Kottayadiel raises 160 head of Boer and Kiko goats on his farm in Elberton, Georgia. He attended the field day to learn more about growing alfalfa in his pastures.

“I want to increase my herd to 500 goats,” Kottayadiel said. "I need an around-the-year food supply for my herd, so I attended this field day to learn more about establishing and harvesting alfalfa.”

MORE INFORMATION

Information on how to apply, frequently asked questions, and additional information, including resources to support your application are available on the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities webpage on usda.gov.

OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, USDA will evaluate these applications for completeness and rank them based on the technical criteria provided in the funding opportunity. Awards for the first round of funding are anticipated later this summer.

Second funding pool deadline

The deadline for the second round of funding is Friday, June 10, 2022, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern. This funding pool includes proposals from $250,000 to $4,999,999 that emphasize the enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or monitoring, reporting and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions.

For more information and the full text of the funding opportunity visit partnerships.climate-smart.com.