

# THE AGRICULTURE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Buddy Jennings Commodity Training Facility

West Columbia, SC 29172

Monday, August 12, 2024

## COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Frances Price, Chair

Mike Shirer

Stevie Still

Wayne Belger

Earl Thraikill

Ben Gramling

Darren Carter

Adair McKoy via phone

Bradley Orr

Chalmers Carr

Mike Gibson

Frank Looper

Ross Sanders

Lewis Hicks

## OTHERS PRESENT

Hugh Weathers, SCDA Commissioner of Agriculture

Clint Leach, SCDA Assistant Commissioner

Alden G. Dalton, SCDA General Counsel

Sam Quinney, SCDA Director of Agricultural Outreach

Mary C. Cromley, Soybean Promotion Marketing Specialist

**Ellen Lloyd**, Administrative Assistant to the Ag Commission

### I. Call to Order/Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair, Frances Price, opened the meeting at 10:07 a.m. She began the meeting with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

### II. Guest Reports

- South Carolina Department of Agriculture - Commissioner Weathers reported on the following:

#### The Transition of the Department of Health and Environmental Control

Responsibilities split out into 3 agencies: Department of Health, Department of Environmental Services, and the Department of Agriculture, Retail Food Safety. SCDA took over the retail food responsibilities July 1<sup>st</sup> along with 125 employees. SCDA held a 2-day on-boarding event and orientation for the new employees. The legislature provided SCDA with the funds needed for new computer equipment and the remodeling that took place for the needed offices among other necessities.

Change. SC Program - a program to address the growing statistics of the cost of bad health in South Carolina and South Carolina's food deserts. The program promotes a change of Health by adopting new good eating habits and making healthy food available food deserts.

New Beef Processing Facilities coming in Spartanburg and Lauren's Countys - 3.5 million dollars of the agribusiness investment fund put toward increasing South Carolina's capacity to process beef.

School Nutrition Program – SCDA unsuccessful in acquiring the handling of South Carolina’s School Nutrition Program. SCDA plans to continuing engaging very aggressively with school district food staff to get more South Carolina grown products into the school system.

Sam Quinney discussed the following:

South Carolina Drought – Flyer provided entitled See More Tool with a QR code to use to report drought. Drought reporting is important because it influences the state map which helps to influence the US Drought Monitor. Pictures are encouraged.

Tropical Storm Debby - Mr. Quinney asked to be sent information regarding damage left to SC agriculture from tropical storm Debby. This would include cotton being twisted from winds, fence damage from down trees, washouts or saturated soil areas from flash floods. Pictures would be much appreciated.

Clint Leach reported on the Farm Bill:

Farm Bill – Mr. Leach discussed his recent visit to Washington DC to meet with South Carolina Congressional delegation staff and Senate Ag Committee on the Farm Bill. He learned that it was decided upon by Senate Ag leadership a number of months ago that instead of focusing on the Farm Bill, that their top priority should be regulating cryptocurrency. Mr. Leach added that the elections are going to have an impact on a potential farm bill. He added that if the White House and the House and the Senate goes Republican, then maybe it brings the Democrats who currently have leadership of the committee to the table to negotiate a bill because they have some priorities they want to keep. And if the White House or the Senate or the House, any one of those three go or stay under Democratic leadership, then a farm bill probably will be extended out another year and dealt with at some point next summer, next fall. Mr. Leach said that close to 80% of the Farm Bill is nutrition programs which impact the underprivileged people and technically 20% is actually for agriculture itself. Mr. Leach said the Commission needs to send a letter to our delegation begging them to move forward with approving a farm bill. Mr. Leach commented that with all the food programs that are not necessarily directly affected by agriculture, the Farm Bill is becoming the Food Bill. He added that the further we get away from having a Farm Bill, the less bipartisan it gets and the harder it gets to pass.

- Farm Bureau - Chair Price said Gary Spires could not be in attendance today. Mr. Spires asked that she convey to the Ag Commission that Farm Bureau’s main focus is the Farm Bill. Chair Price added that Farm Bureau’s Annual Convention at Myrtle Beach will be the first weekend in December.

### III. Old Business

- Minutes, May 15, 2024 - ***A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as typed from May 15, 2024. All were in favor. Motion carried.***
- Policy Manual Committee Report, Review, and Approval – Chair Price thanked Mary C. Cromley and the 3 board members for working with her on putting this policy

manual together. She commented that the policy manual was mailed out to everyone prior to this meeting for their review. Chair Price then opened the policy manual up for discussion. It was decided to add a bullet point on page 8 under Role of Chair that states that inquiries from the public or media should be directed to the Chair as spokesperson and that the Chair's response will be that of the board's decision. Mary C. Cromley had everyone turn to page 10 of the policy manual to the section marked Gifts. She said it was discovered that a gift policy existed in state statute and will be used in this section of the policy manual. ***A motion was made and seconded to accept the policy manual with the bullet point added on page 8 under Role of Chair making the chair the spokesperson to the media/public and replacing the Gifts portion on page 10 with the state statute gift policy. All were in favor. Motion carried.*** Ellen Lloyd to mail out revised finalized policy manuals to everyone.

#### IV. New Business

- Annual Ag Commission/Commodity Board meeting – Sam Quinney said the commodities team at SCDA have been discussing a way to build relations with the Ag Commission and the commodity boards that the Ag Commission oversees. One way the commodity staff came up with is having a 2025 meeting of the Ag Commission and all the commodity boards that fall under the Commodities Marketing Act. There was a discussion as to consolidating speakers at this meeting (i.e. Clemson, Farm Bureau, SCDA, etc.). Mary C Cromley said this meeting would increase the engagement between the Ag Commission and the boards. She suggested that each board provide a very short annual report at this meeting. It was also suggested that this meeting be done in place of one of each boards yearly meetings so as not to increase the travel burden. Each board would have a potentially short business meeting and then participate in the joint meeting. Time periods discussed were July or August. SCDA commodity staff to check with individual commodities on preferred timing of this meeting and report back to the Ag Commission at the November 2024 meeting.
- Corn Checkoff Refund Form Approval – Mary C Cromley said the corn checkoff refund form is in their packets. She said this form is for producers to fill out should they want to request a refund. Miss Cromley said she realized the form does not include the fax number but this will be added. She pointed out one item about the form. She said to receive a refund, producers will have to register themselves in the State Procurement System as a vendor. Miss Cromley said the back page includes instructions on how to register as a vendor in the system and how to submit the form along with a checklist of everything that producers are required to submit with the form. She noted that a line was included about the grain guarantee fund so producers do not get it confused and know that the grain guarantee fund assessment is not refundable. Miss Cromley said the grain guarantee fund can only be opted out of at in the beginning.(at the beginning of the season?) and is not refundable and not by the corn board. Miss Cromley said the corn board has not formerly met to approve this refund application. The SC Corn Board's first meeting is October 15<sup>th</sup>. Therefore these refund and application forms need to be approved and provided now for

producers to be able to request a refund. Miss Cromley said there have been a few requests for refunds already due to this year's poor corn crop. Miss Cromely said this form will be posted online on the Department of Agriculture's website and on the SC Corn Board's website once it is up and running. Miss Cromley added that by law, producers have 60 days from the time of settlement to request a refund and the board has 60 days from the time the assessment is received from the first purchaser to issue that refund. If the first purchaser does not pay the corn board, that refund does not get issued. This was written specifically to encourage first purchasers to pay in a timely manner so that farmers are not waiting on refund checks because their first purchaser did not pay it.

***A motion was made and seconded to approve the refund form and application form with the addition of the fax number for the SC Corn Board. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

- Commodity Board Appointment and Approvals – Ellen Lloyd presented the nominee names from the 3 boards listed below. She said all petitions had been received and all but one producer verification had been received. An Ag Commission board member contacted that producer and the verification was received that day.

South Carolina Beef Council

- District 1                      Brandon Hurley, Gray Court, SC
- District 2                      Blake Wisher, Hickory Grove, SC
- District 3                      Edsel Williams, Brittons Neck, SC
- District 4                      Carl Setzler, Jr, Newberry, SC
- District 5                      Larry Lasseigne, Sumter, SC
- If approved, terms run July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2027

South Carolina Pork Board

- District 1: Rhett Coleman, Dillon, SC
- District 2: Marty Avant, Hemingway, SC  
                    Mark Mcleod, Pinewood, SC

If approved, terms run September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2027

Mary C Cromley added that the SC Corn Board has different terms of service because the Marketing Act requires that the seats be staggered upon the establishment of a board so that approximately one third of the seats come open every three years. All members were asked when they were elected if they preferred a term and no one preferred a certain term. It was decided that the person who had the highest votes in the district have the longest term and second highest votes, the second longest term, etc.

South Carolina Corn Board

- District 2 Bobby “Bo” Norris, Jr, Society Hill, SC
  - Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025
- James “Jimmy” Taylor, Marion, SC

- Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026
- District 4 Dean B. Hutto, Holly Hill, SC
- Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025
- Lawrence “Landrum” Weathers, Bowman, SC –
- Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027

***A motion was made and seconded to approved all nominees presented for the three boards. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

#### V. Other Business

- Letter to move forward with approving the Farm Bill – Chair Price asked that a letter come from the Ag Commission. Ellen Lloyd to work with Commissioner Weathers and Mary C Cromley to put a letter together on behalf of the Ag Commission regarding approving the Farm Bill.
- Next Meeting Date:
  - o November 13, 2024 – It was discussed that the board meet at Buddy Training Facility in November. There was a discussion as to attending the Bull Test at Clemson the end of January 2025 for the next meeting. Ellen Lloyd to look into this possibility.
- Upcoming Mailings for Commodity Board Seats:
  - o Peanut – 1187 (all producers)
  - o Cotton – 974 (one district of producers)
  - o Watermelon – 240 (all producers)
  - o Tobacco – 765 (producers in 2 of the 3 districts)

***A motion was made and seconded to go into Executive Session to discuss something that has come from the SC Soybean Board that the Ag Commission needs to discuss. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

#### Executive Session

***A motion was made and seconded to come out of Executive Session. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

Chair Price said in Executive Session, the Commission discussed the South Carolina Soybean Board’s request to transfer funds under the South Carolina Corn and Soybean Association in a separate account outside of the direction of the Department of Agriculture. She thanked Clint Leach and Alden Dalton for being here and discussing and answering all their questions.

***A motion was made and seconded to direct SCDA staff to pursue the SC Legislature to provide the exemption to allow interest bearing bank accounts for all the South Carolina commodity check-off boards. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

There was discussion after the motion as to whether or not this addresses the question of allowing the SC Soybean Board to take any action. It was discussed that the Department of Ag is going to turn down the request for the SC Soybean Board to transfer funds out of their state held account and that funds could be moved if the SC Soybean Board becomes incorporated and opens an account in their name because law requires that. Miss Cromley

added that the SC Soybean Board did approve incorporating and is planning to file the paperwork.

VI. Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:15 p.m.