

THE AGRICULTURE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Buddy Jennings Facility

350 Ballard Court, West Columbia, SC 29172

Monday, February 12, 2024

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Wayne Belger
Darren Carter
Michael Gibson
Ben Gramling
Lewis Hicks
Adair McKoy
Bradley Orr
Frances Price, Chair
Mac Sanders

OTHERS PRESENT

Dr. Gregg Yarrow, Clemson Interim Dean and
Professor of Wildlife Ecology, College of
Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences
Chris Whitmire, Marketing Director, SCDA
Sam Quinney, Director of Ag Outreach, SCDA
Mary C. Cromley, Executive Director, SCSB
Ellen Lloyd,

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Benjie Andrew
Chalmers Carr
Frank Looper
Mike Shirer
Stevie Still
Earl Thraikill

Call to Order/Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Frances Price opened the meeting at approximately 10:01. She asked the pray and the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Price introduced Dr. Greg Yarrow from Clemson. She said he is interim Dean and Professor of Wildlife Ecology, College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences.

Guest Reports

Dr. Greg Yarrow reported on the merger of the College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences with Clemson's Public Service and Agriculture. Dr. Yarrow said the dean for this new merger will sit on the executive leadership team at Clemson where discussion at the university level happens regarding these programs. Complete presentation attached.

Chris Whitmire, Director of Marketing, SCDA – Mr. Whitmire reported on the following:

- Ansley Turnblad no longer with the agency. The new position will be a marketing specialist that is responsible for the Certified SC and Fresh on the Menu programs along with the Specialty Food Association.
- SCDA has hired Fred West on a temporary part-time basis to handle the responsibilities of Director of Market Development since Katie Rees left the agency.
- SCDA preparing for the Southeastern Wildlife Expo in Charleston.
- SCDA will host in March the Certified South Carolina showcase. This will be the third annual Showcase and will be held March 21st at the Columbia Convention Center. This is an opportunity for buyers and producers to meet face to face with an emphasis on specialty food products.

Sam Quinney, Director of Agriculture Outreach reported on the following:

- Columbia State Farmers Market sign is being relocated due to the building construction of the new SC Department of Natural Resources.
- Updates happening at SCDA labs to prepare for DHEC positions that will be moving over. SCDA to gain approximately 113 full time positions in retail food safety, inspection of dairy milk, wholesale bottled water, soft drinks, and ice manufacturing, etc.

Old Business

Review and approval of the minutes from the November 13, 2023, meeting and review and approval of the transcription from the meeting held January 11, 2024, following the last corn marketing order public hearing – Chair Price ask for a motion. ***A motion was made and seconded to approve both the minutes of the November 13, 2023, meeting as typed and the January 11, 2024, transcription as presented of the meeting January 11, 2024. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

Updates on the proposed Marketing Order for South Carolina Corn – Mary C. Cromley reported on the following:

- No objections to the marketing order were filed.
- Draft of final decision provided with highlighted portions that were different from the preliminary decision.
- Discussed referendum period
 - published in papers in Columbia, Charleston, and Greenville
 - copy of corn order to go to every corn farmer in the state as well as every first purchaser or handler of corn in the state.
- Fred West to assist with a good FAQ that can be sent out to all the first purchasers in the state up front with what to expect if the corn check-off passes
- Voting by all the corn growers in South Carolina must happen within 45 days of issuance of the final order.
- Extra ballots to go to all county extension offices as well as physical copies of the marketing order.
- Voting itself cannot take more than 10 days.
- Accounting firm to do the ballot counting and to take away any potential for conflicts of interest to the department.
- Everything related to the checkoff process is online and will continue to be available online for producers to see.
- After, if referendum passes, will move forward with establishing the board.
- Some nominations were received at the hearings, additional nominations will be solicited by mailing to the producers in the state.
- May Ag Commission meeting will include agenda item to review corn board nominations and confirm the board.
- Proposed effective date of corn marketing order is July 1, 2024. Assessment collections will begin that day.
- If all approved, newly established SC Corn Board to meet prior to July 1, 2024, to approve all the forms for the first purchasers to fill out including the refund forms.

Chair Price called for a motion to approve moving forward with the marketing order for South Carolina Corn. ***A motion was made and seconded to move forward with the approved corn marketing order. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

New Business

Ellen Lloyd presented the nominations for the expired board seats of the SC Watermelon Board and the SC Tobacco Board. She all but one nominee has provided their producer verification but that she should be receiving it soon.

SC Watermelon Board seats

DISTRICT I Mark Williams, Islandton, SC
DISTRICT II Rusty Kinard, Lodge, SC
 Scotty Sandifer, Blackville, SC

SC Tobacco Board seats

DISTRICT 2 Dupree Atkinson, Mullins, SC
 Ben Teal, Patrick, SC

A motion was made and seconded to approve the nominations for both the Watermelon and Tobacco Boards. All were in favor. Motion carried. Terms will be retroactive January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2026

Other Business

- Reminder: Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(1) of the Ethics Act, each governmental entity must complete an Entity List. Entity Lists must be completed and electronically submitted to the State Ethics Commission by March 30, 2024 – Chair Price reminded board members to go on-line with the SC State Ethics Commission and file their public ethics report. She said the date to have this completed is March 30th to avoid being fined.
- Tentative May meeting to be held at Wando Welch Terminal Port in Mt. Pleasant, SC – Ellen Lloyd said at the suggestion of Commissioner Weather’s she wanted to begin the discussion of this group holding their next meeting at the Wando Welch Port in Mt. Pleasant, SC. She said Clint Leach has offer to set it up and has recommended the date of Wednesday, May 15th. She said there are no other details at this time but asked the board to confirm meeting there in May. The board agreed to this meeting location. Mrs. Lloyd said she would work with Clint and confirm details like could spouses attend, dress attire, etc. She added that lunch will be provided and that the tour would probably be set to begin around 10 o'clock a.m. Chair Price asked Mrs. Lloyd to provide details as soon as possible to board members.
- Legislative Update – Mary C. Cromley reported on the following:
 - Court in Arizona ruled to vacate the label for Dicamba for over the top use on cotton and soybeans. Waiting on guidance from EPA on whether they are going to allow current stocks of this to be used or if they are going to completely stop the use of it.
 - Farm Bill probably will not happen in 2024. Some obstacles are Title one with commodities trying to find new money for increasing reference prices and certain groups want to take money from the nutrition title and from the conservation titles. May see a multi-year extension worst case scenario.

Darren Carter discussed the topic of the proposed idea of a policy manual for this Commission and how it was mentioned at the November meeting the responsibility of having an Ag Commission representative for each commodity board. Mr. Carter said he had interest in being that representative on the SC Beef Council. Miss Cromley said this is something she is looking to include in the proposed policy manual in addition to a procedure on putting a Vice Chair in place on this Commission. There was also discussion about including an attendance policy and other common policies that a group/organization might have. Miss Cromley said the attendance policy has presented some issues because this Commission does not have the authority to dismiss a board member from this Commission if they do not come to meetings. She said currently that responsibility lies with judicial circuits/legislative delegations. Miss Cromley said we are trying to figure out what the procedures for an attendance policy can be put in writing. Other topics discussed for the policy manual were commodity board reports/minutes of meetings to the Ag Commission. Miss Cromley said another change for the commodity boards that needs to happen that the Ag Commission could help with is that right now none of the commodity boards are collecting interest on the assessment money that is in their commodity board state account. She said the SC Agriculture Commodities Marketing Act reads that the Ag Commission can approve any changes to the individual marketing orders, if they are minor in nature and do not change the impact or the effect of the marketing orders. Miss Cromley said she will seek the advice of SCDA's legal counsel, Alden Dalton, on this. She said she will let this group know if that is a change/amendment that the Ag Commission could make at a future meeting to all the commodity board marketing orders. Miss Cromley said this would allow commodity boards to collect and keep the interest on the money that sits in the state accounts. She emphasized that the money being collected is not taxpayer dollars or farmer dollars and any money that is generated from the use of those dollars is meant to be reinvested and used for the checkoff purposes. Miss Cromley said she will be continuing to work on the policy manual and to have something out to board members prior to the May meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:15 a.m.