



## Agriculture Commission of South Carolina

Frances H. Price, Chair

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### THE AGRICULTURE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Wando Welch Port  
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464  
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

#### COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Wayne Belger  
Chalmers Carr  
Darren Carter  
Ben Gramling  
Adair McKoy  
Bradley Orr  
Frances Price, Chair  
Mac Sanders  
Stevie Still

#### COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Benjie Andrew  
Michael Gibson  
Lewis Hicks  
Frank Looper  
Mike Shirer  
Earl Thraikill

#### OTHERS PRESENT

Michael Jackson, Director of Federal and State Strategy, South Carolina Ports  
Chris Whitmire, Director of Marketing, SCDA  
Sam Quinney, Director of Agricultural Outreach, SCDA  
Mary C. Cromley, Advisor, Agriculture Commission of South Carolina  
Ellen Lloyd, Administrative Coordinator, SCDA

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

Chair, Frances Price, opened the meeting at approximately 12:24 p.m. She began the meeting with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### II. Guest Reports

SC Department of Agriculture – Chris Whitmire, Director of Marketing, reported on the following:

##### Grants

- Of the \$40 million dollars approved by the South Carolina General Assembly's "Growing Agribusiness Fund" in 2023, approximately \$20 million was approved for 9 projects. One of those awarded funding is the South Carolina Farm Bureau's Anderson Grain Elevator.
- This year, SCDA entered into a cooperative agreement with USDA AMS and the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Program (RFSI). These grants are for both equipment and infrastructure and focus on the middle of the supply chain resilience. The application period closed on March 1st. Funding announcements are anticipated to be late summer, early fall.

##### DHEC transfer to SCDA

- SCDA continues preparations on the DHEC transfer of the retail food safety, milk safety, and manufactured foods programs. SCDA officially takes these programs over on July 1st.
- Work nearing completion at the State Farmer's Market in West Columbia for an office to house some of the approximately 120 new employees.
- Restaurant inspection component most public part of the transition. Public to start seeing new window decals.

- None of the underlying controlling laws will be changing. The responsibility of carrying out and enforcing those laws will transfer from DHEC to SCDA.

#### SCDA Marketing

- Grace Heins was recently hired as the new Certified South Carolina program manager. Mrs. Heins will also be responsible for the Fresh on the Menu, Chef Ambassador and Specialty Food Programs.
- Michael Cranford has been with SCDA for a couple years and has served as the director of the Farm to School program and the Specialty Crop Growers Association. Michael has been promoted to market development manager.

Sam Quinney, SCDA Director of Agricultural Outreach, reported on the following:

- Shared a fact sheet on USDA's releasing of information for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)
- These groups--SCDA, Clemson Extension's Livestock and Forages agents, SC Farm Bureau and the SC Cattlemen's Association—organized a hay drive for the panhandle wildfires in Texas where 85% of cattle production takes place in that state. Approximately 1.3 million acres burned.

### III. Old Business

- Review and approval of the minutes from the February 12, 2024, meeting – Chair Price asked for a motion to approve the February minutes that were mailed to everyone.

***A motion was made and seconded to approve the February minutes as mailed. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

- **Update: Marketing Order #14 for South Carolina Corn** – Mary C. Cromley reported on the following: Details of the ballot count on the returned ballots for the corn marketing order:
  - 199 valid ballots received; 220 total (some not active producers wanting to be removed or did not check box saying active producer, etc.)
  - Out of the 199 valid ballots received, 143 in favor. Those in favor represented 71.85% of those voting and represented approximately 50,500 acres of the total that voted which was approximately 75,800 acres. Fifty thousand, five hundred acres in favor represented approximately 66.88% of the total acres. The following is the formula for determining assent by the affected producers and the referendum on the corn marketing order. The referendum hit two thirds on both conditions and therefore was approved.
    - (1) *If sixty-six and two-thirds percent or more by number of those voting representing fifty-one percent or more of the volume of the affected commodity produced by those voting assent to the proposal.*
    - (2) *If fifty-one percent or more by number of those voting representing sixty-six and two-thirds percent or more of the volume of the affected commodity produced by those voting assent to the proposal.*
  - In addition, 43 more ballots postmarked March 18th were received on May 2, 2024, (45 days after the voting period had ended). Because this was after the ballots results had been certified, the ballots were given to the company doing the certifying and SCDA was assured the additional ballots did not change the results.
  - South Carolina Corn Board - Public notice for South Carolina Corn Board nominees was publicized and mailed out. Several petitions were received for these seats. Two of the four districts -- District 4 (Coastal Plain) and District 2 (Upper Pee Dee) had competitive elections that the ballots are currently out for. When finalized, will do a call or email with the Commission to approve. In conjunction with the South Carolina Soybean Board, Miss Cromley is working to build a remittance portal for first purchasers to be able to send in their assessments online. First purchaser trainings to happen regarding expectations and audits.
- **Approval of First Purchaser Remittance form and Producer Refund form** – Miss Cromley asked board members to review the corn assessment form in their packets. She said this form does need to be approved by the Ag Commission and then sent to first purchasers 45 days in advance of the enactment of the marketing order which is July 1<sup>st</sup>. Forty-five days in advance is Friday, May 17th. Miss Cromley said this is a standard form and not unlike the assessment form that soybean first purchasers use. The Ag Commission would be approving on behalf of the corn board since it will not have enough board members appointed in time to meet the statutory deadline.

***A motion was made and seconded to approve the corn assessment form. All were in favor. Motion carried.***

#### **IV. New Business**

- Proposed Change to Marketing Order #1a for South Carolina Soybeans – Miss Cromley presented a letter from the South Carolina Soybean Board along with proposed wording change to SC Soybean Marketing order.
  - Purpose is to capture interest on state-held South Carolina Soybean Board account for the benefit of the South Carolina Soybean Board and to keep these funds from going into the state general fund.
  - The proposed change would add the following language:
    - “d. All income, interest, or otherwise, derived from this fund must be reinvested in the fund.”
  - Ag Commission's approval of change to Marketing Order #1a for South Carolina Soybeans should be the authority necessary for the state to change the account to an interest bearing account.

***A motion was made and seconded to approve the change to the SC Soybean Marketing Order #1A “d. All income, interest, or otherwise, derived from this fund must be reinvested in the fund.” All were in favor. Motion carried.***

- Noncompliant First Purchaser, Cotton – Mary C. Cromley’s remarks:
  - The Ag Commission has been given notice that a cotton gin in the state has not paid its assessments for this year.
  - The gin in question has been given three notices from the South Carolina Cotton Board regarding late assessment.
  - The South Carolina Cotton Board is asking the Ag Commission to get involved in requiring the gin make this payment.
  - Evidence exists that the assessment is being taking out of the cotton that is being ginned at this warehouse or at this gin.
  - No response has been given to emails or phone calls.
- Watermelon Board – Mary C. Cromley’s remarks:
  - SC Watermelon learned recently and discussed during April 17th meeting of the increase in the national watermelon assessment rate.
  - The SC Watermelon Board is the only state with a state watermelon checkoff.
  - Watermelon Board considering asking the Ag Commission to stop assessment collections on watermelons in South Carolina and potentially move that marketing order to a dormant stage but have it re-instated should the national watermelon checkoff go away.
  - Board members felt unfair to have South Carolina producers pay double checkoff.
  - Considering inviting Ag Commission chair or another board member to July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting for this conversation.
- Committee for Proposed Policy Manual review – Chair Price appointed Adair McCoy, Bradley Orr and Darren Carter to assist in putting together the policy manual.
- Commodity Board Seats – Ellen Lloyd and Mary C. Cromley provided board members the nominees for the new corn board for two of the four corn board districts. Miss Cromley explained that districts two and four were currently in a run-off for nominees. The nominees presented for approval were as follows:

District I                      John Long, Newberry, SC (Petition and proof of corn production provided)

- Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027

District III                    Cecil B. McFaddin “Mac” Eaddy, Jr., Manning, SC (Petition and proof of production provided)

- Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027

Marion E. Dubose Iv, Manning, SC (Petition and proof of production provided)

- Term: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026

Miss Cromley said terms are different due to the requirement that they be staggered to allow for approximately one-third of the seats on any board be up for re-appointment at any time.

*A motion was made and seconded to approve John Long of Newberry, Mac Eaddy and Marion Dubose of Manning for the new SC Corn Board. All were in favor. Motion carried.*

**V. Other Business**

**- Proposed Next Meeting Dates:**

- August 12, 2024, Buddy Jennings Training Facility
- November 13, 2024, Off site location TBD

**VI. Adjourn** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:23 p.m.

*Minutes submitted by Ellen Lloyd, Assistant to the Agriculture Commission of South Carolina*

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the May 15, 2024, meeting of the Agriculture Commission of South Carolina.

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Frances H. Price, Chair

Date