

# *South Carolina Department of Agriculture*

Hugh Weathers, Commissioner



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 22, 2010**

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## **Farm-to-School program aims for more local foods on cafeteria serving lines**

**PELION, S.C.** – A new push to put more locally produced food on the serving lines in school cafeterias across South Carolina made its debut yesterday.

The Farm-to-School pilot program – a joint effort of the Department of Education and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture – was announced at kick-off ceremonies at Walter P. Rawl & Sons farm on Fairview Road in Pelion. It coincided with Lexington County’s celebration of Farm to School Week, May 17-21.

The new program is a public-private partnership of produce growers, a local distributor and Lexington School Districts One, Two, Three and Four, plus District Five of Lexington and Richland counties. A total of 70 schools will be participating.

Farm-to-School enlists the cooperation of Lexington County growers including Rawl & Sons, Clayton Rawl Farms in Gilbert, Watsonia in Ridge Spring and Coosaw Farms in Fairfax. Senn Brothers, the local produce distributor, will be delivering fresh food directly from the farms to the schools.

Passage of the federal 2008 Farm Bill allows schools to use local preference in buying agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised, according to Todd Bedenbaugh, the SDE’s Director of Health and Nutrition. He commended the school districts’ food service leaders – Pat Carter, Rion Skinner, Susan Cassels, Lora Beth Rucker and Ben Madden – for working with growers in the joint effort.

"Farm-to-School programs can improve nutrition and local economies," State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex said at today’s kick-off. "Agriculture has the potential for creating more jobs in the local and state economy."

Rex and Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers also support the program’s aim to educate students about how agriculture is connected to food and nutrition. Children are encouraged to make healthier food choices by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Healthier foods make healthier students. Starting with fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables in season, we can build stronger bodies and, at the same time, build stronger local economies," Weathers said. "When the school food service buys local produce directly from growers through the local distributor, the entire community wins."

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**(Farm to School continued)**

Also on hand for today's announcement were students from Pelion Elementary School, who harvested radishes at the Rawl farm as part of a school-based agricultural project. In addition, Bedenbaugh and Rex recognized four students who were winners in the Second Annual Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Drawing Contest sponsored by the Office of Health and Nutrition and the School Nutrition Association of South Carolina.

The contest, open to students in schools selected for the state's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, encouraged youngsters to create their vision of "the colorful fruits and vegetables that grace our great State of South Carolina" and to write a short message about what they learned through classroom discussions, research and planning to prepare their drawing entry.

Contest winners were:

1st Place – Trevon Gibson, Kingstree Elementary School, Williamsburg County

2nd Place – Kaitlin Lauren Touzeau, Albert R. Lewis Elementary School, Pickens County

3rd Place – Holly Clayton, Albert R. Lewis Elementary School

Honorable Mention – Constance Fitzpatrick, Ellore Elementary School, Orangeburg Three

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**JUNE – CELEBRATE THE BEEF AND DAIRY INDUSTRIES IN SC****June is Dairy Month**

*Dairy Makes Cents – It's pocket-friendly and nutrient-rich!*

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – June marks the 73rd annual celebration of June Dairy Month the occasion when we honor South Carolina dairy farm families for the wholesome, nutritious milk they provide. The 2010 theme, "Dairy Makes Cents," highlights the nutritional and economical value of dairy foods.

Hugh Weathers, Commissioner of Agriculture who knows a thing or two about dairying said, "Dairy makes cents" for consumers because of its nutritional and economical value." "In today's challenging economy," he added, "it's important to make smart food choices when it comes to both price and nutrition."

The dairy industry advises consumers to choose pocket-friendly and nutrient-rich foods such as milk, cheese, and yogurt and follow this four step nutrition plan to cut costs without sacrificing nutrition.

**Step 1: Fill your cart with nutrient-rich foods**

*Look for a rainbow* – Choose vibrantly colored fruits and vegetables – the brighter color indicates more vitamins and minerals.

*Go for whole grains* – Buy whole grain fortified breads and cereals that are fiber-rich.

*Dash for Dairy* – Low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt provide are calcium rich. On average, an eight ounce serving of milk costs only a quarter and provides a unique package of nine essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A and D and potassium, making it one of the best beverage bargains around.

*Lean on protein* – Choose lean beef, skinless poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, beans and nuts for affordable protein sources.

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**(June Dairy Month continued)**

**Step 2: Plan meals ahead** – Prior planning prevents last minute shopping trips which can be costly.

**Step 3: Make a list** – According to the Food Marketing Institute, Americans spend \$2 for every minute they spend in the grocery store. Sticking to a list can save time and money.

**Step 4: Clip coupons** – Coupons can save consumers up to 15 percent on their grocery bill.

For great recipes and other dairy information, visit [www.southeastdairy.org](http://www.southeastdairy.org).

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**June is Beef Month in SC**

*Summer Grilling – South Carolina's favorite way to enjoy beef.*

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** - June is the month to recognize the dedicated men and women who produce high quality, safe, wholesome, nutritious beef products in South Carolina, So, it's a great time to hail the steaks, beef burgers, roasts and other beef lean beef products.

“Beef producers do not take extra special care of their animals or the food they produce only one month of the year. It's what we do every day of every month – bringing healthy, nutritious food from our pastures to the consumers' plate,” says SC Beef Board Chairman Carl Setzler, beef producer from Newberry. “Our beef checkoff program continues to work to increase consumer demand through things such as food retail promotions, food service partnerships, summer grilling/holiday promotional campaigns and numerous other consumer educational programs.”

Americans generally have a love affair with beef and beef products. During June, the Summer Grilling campaign will feature various promotional programs in many retail outlets as well as restaurant menu themes. The campaign will be built around grilling with Dad, especially honoring that special Fathers Day of June 20<sup>th</sup>.

“Whether you grill a steak or a burger, we encourage you and others to eat more beef and enjoy the passion of these products especially during the summer grilling time,” said Mr. Setzler. That's reason to tip your hat to beef producers in our state.

For more information about beef checkoff-funded efforts or for some great grilling recipes, contact the SC Beef Board Office, P.O. Box 11280, Columbia, S.C. 29211 or call 803-734-9806.

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**USDA June Surveys to Provide Vital Data on 2010 Farm Production**

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is surveying hundreds of farmers across South Carolina to get a clearer indication of the production and supply of major commodities for 2010.

“With the 2010 growing season now in full swing, we can start to get a fuller picture of how things are shaping up for the agricultural sector. We'll be looking at what crops have been planted, what commodities are in storage and how much livestock is in inventory,” said Eddie Wells, director of the NASS South Carolina Field Office.

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**(NASS June Surveys continued)**

Wells explained that NASS will gather this information through two major mid-year surveys: the June Area Survey and the June Agricultural Survey.

“For the area survey, we visit randomly selected tracts of land and interview the operators of any farm or ranch on that land. We collect information on crop acreage – including biotech crops, as well as grain stocks, livestock inventory, cash rents, land values, and value of sales,” he said.

“For the agricultural survey, which we also call the ‘crop/stocks survey,’ we contact producers by mail, phone or personal visit. We ask them to provide information on their total acreage, acres planted to specific commodities – including biotech varieties, and quantities of grains and oilseeds stored on-farm.” This information will be a critical component of several key national reports, including the annual *Acreage* report and the quarterly *Grain Stocks* report, both to be released on June 30. Survey data also contribute to NASS’s monthly and annual *Crop Production* reports and various other crop and livestock-related publications, all of which are available online at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

“Especially in these uncertain economic times, farmers and the rest of the agricultural industry need timely, accurate data on the current state of U.S. agriculture,” Wells said. “The information collected through our mid-year surveys can help producers, suppliers, traders, buyers, export customers and others to make sound and informed business decisions.”

*Note: Forwarded on behalf of U.S.D.A. National Ag Statistics Service as information for the South Carolina agricultural community.*

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**USDA Urges Producers to Sign Up Now for Conservation Stewardship Program**

***Applications will be accepted through June 11, 2010***

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** – State Conservationist Ann English announced that producers in South Carolina are invited to apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland. The deadline to be considered for the next ranking and funding period is June 11, 2010.

“Voluntary conservation practices by producers are an essential part of our effort to improve soil and water quality,” said English. “Broad and diverse participation in the CSP program will provide producers with many benefits such as enhancing wildlife habitat and helping to mitigate the impact of climate change.”

Congress limited enrollment for CSP nationally at 12.7 million acres per year. Applicants will compete within state-identified ranking pools. CSP is offered in all 50 states, District of Columbia, and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups with announced cut-off application dates for ranking periods.

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**(CSP Sign up Continued)**

Under the interim final rule published July 29, 2009, eligible producers may submit an application to enroll eligible land in CSP on a continuous basis. Producers are encouraged to apply for CSP now to ensure their applications will be considered during the next funding and ranking period. However, they can make their final decision to participate in the program once the CSP final rule is issued. The final rule will establish the policies and procedures for the program.

Potential applicants are encouraged to use the CSP self-screening checklist to determine if the new program is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments. It is available from local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices or on the NRCS Web site at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new\\_csp/csp.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html).

CSP offers payments for adding conservation practices and maintaining and managing existing conservation practices.

For more information about CSP in SC, please visit your local NRCS office, or go to [www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP2010.html](http://www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP2010.html).

*Note: Forwarded on behalf of U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service as information for the South Carolina agricultural community.*

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**SC Beekeepers Summer Meeting**

**CLEMSON, S.C.** – The South Carolina Beekeepers Association will host its summer meeting at Clemson University, Clemson, SC on July 15-17, 2010. The meeting will be held in the Poole Agricultural Center Auditorium.

Meeting registration will begin at noon in the lobby of the Poole Agricultural Center on Thursday, July 15, and the meeting will end at noon on Saturday, July 17. There will be a \$10 registration fee for association members (\$15 family) and a \$15 registration fee for nonmembers.

The meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on Thursday with a 1-day beginner level beekeeping short course which will be taught by Mike Hood and other instructors. Featured speakers for the general sessions and workshops to be held on Friday and Saturday will be Maryann Frazier from Penn State University, Mark Carroll from the Carl Hayden USDA Honey bee lab in Tucson, Arizona, Laurence Cutts from Chipley, Florida, Ohad Afik from the University of Georgia honey bee lab, Athens, Georgia, and Jerry Freeman from Hamburg, Arkansas. Some of the topics to be covered will include: Africanized honey bees in Florida, honey bee health and nutrition, varroa mite and small hive beetle control, the chemical world of honey bees, new beetle traps, pesticide residue analysis, an update on colony collapse disorder in the U.S., beekeeping in Israel, and many other talks on beekeeping. On Friday afternoon, speakers will lead in small-group workshops where beekeepers will have the opportunity to discuss many topics relative to beekeeping.

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**(SC Beekeepers Meeting Continued)**

Friday evening activities will include a barbecued pork/baked chicken dinner (\$7/plate), horseshoe pitching contest, smoker lighting contest, and great fellowship with other beekeepers. A honey and beeswax competition will be held during the meeting.

All beekeepers or anyone interested in beekeeping are invited to attend for a good time of education and fellowship. For meeting information and lodging arrangements, contact Mike Hood, Executive Secretary – SCBA, 864-656-0346, [mhood@clemson.edu](mailto:mhood@clemson.edu) or visit [www.scstatebeekeepers.org](http://www.scstatebeekeepers.org).

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