

South Carolina Farm Bureau State Legislative Weekly Update

March 4, 2022



Tax Reform On The Move!

SC Grain Guaranty Fund

Government Restructuring Advances to the Full Senate

Senate Budget Subcommittee Hearings

Home-Based Food Production Operations

Land of Milk and Honey

Farmers of the Week

South Carolina Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty Fund

[Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Wes Climer](#) (Senate District 15 representing York County) is the primary sponsor for the bill that creates the **SC Grain and Cotton Guaranty Fund**. This fund adds cotton to the state's agricultural commodities list to provide self-assessment insurance against potentially unforeseen issues. It also creates the South Carolina Agricultural Commodities Advisory Commission to assist the Department of Agriculture in carrying out the duties and administration of the Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty Fund. The bill will be heard in subcommittee next week.

SCFB is heavily involved in the creation and progress of this legislation and will keep you apprised of its advancement.

Tax Reform Deliberations Continue In Earnest!

The Senate Finance Committee passed [Chairman Harvey Peeler's](#) (Senate District 14 including Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York Counties) tax reduction bill labeled the "[Comprehensive Tax Cut Act of 2022](#)" onto the full Senate calendar for immediate consideration. The legislation lowers the highest tax bracket to 5.7%, establishes the ability to deduct all military income as well as appropriate \$1B from the Contingency Reserve Fund to the Taxpayer Rebate Fund that would **provide tax rebates to all taxpayers.**

[House Bill 4880](#), sponsored by [Gary Simrill](#) (House District 46 – York County) and others, passed the House and was assigned to the Senate for action. The bill creates a two-rate plan that would eliminate the current six bracket tax framework and create two main tax brackets, 6.5% and 3%. This reform would be phased in over a five-year period and tied to continued revenue growth to offset the realized reduction in tax collections.

DHEC Restructuring – S.2

The full Senate Medical Affairs Committee passed Senate Bill 2 out of committee this week. The bill now heads to the Senate floor for deliberations. The bill, sponsored by [Senate Finance Chairman Harvey Peeler](#) and numerous others, focuses on DHEC reform and increasing government efficiency while creating separate health and environmental state agencies, including moving all statewide water into one agency. The bill received overwhelming support with a unanimous vote of 5-0 to move the bill to the full Senate for consideration.

Senate Finance Subcommittee on Natural Resources & Economic Development Hears from State Agencies

Subcommittee Chairman [Nikki Setzler](#) (Senate District 26 including Aiken, Calhoun, Saluda and Lexington Counties) presided over budget hearings where the Forestry Commission, Department of Agriculture, Sea Grant Consortium and SC Conservation Bank provided requests for the upcoming fiscal year. These hearings allow for Senate members to develop the framework of the state's budget as the House soon begins debate on their version.

Home-Based Food Operations

[Senate Bill 506](#), sponsored by [Senator Josh Kimbrell](#) (Senate District 11 representing Spartanburg County), allows for home-based food produced for sale directly to a person provide specific labeling. The bill was heard in the House 3M Committee (Medical, Military and Municipal Affairs) and was amended and approved. The bill advances to the House floor for debate.

Land of Milk and Honey

[Representative Ashley Trantham](#) (House District 28 representing Greenville County) introduced [House Bill 5041](#) this week. The bill prohibits labeling a food product as “milk” unless the product meets the definition of milk as defined in the legislation. The bill was immediately assigned to the House Agriculture Committee for consideration.

[Senate Bill 961](#), or the “honey bill”, which exempts beekeepers who file for and obtain an exemption certificate from the Department of Agriculture to sell their products directly to inspected food processing establishments, was amended in the Senate this week and passed to the House for consideration.

The amendment, proposed by Sen. Josh Kimbrell, states that beekeepers who file for and obtain the exemption certificate from the Department of Agriculture may sell directly to inspected food processing establishments that maintain an RVC for subsequent wholesale or resale sales. Any end user or retailer who buys honey produced after the law passes must keep a record of all honey purchases that will be resold or used in products sold.

SC Farm Bureau staff will continue to advocate for agriculture and monitor these developing initiatives while providing updates to our members.

Farmer of the Week!

**Craig Bell – Sumter County
Bell Honey Company**

Another week, another fantastic farmer joining our team at the State House! We were pleased to welcome **Craig Bell**, owner of Bell Honey Company in Rembert, SC, as our guest **Farmer of the Week** this week to meet legislators and discuss issues important to our industry.

Craig has operated Bell Honey for over 17 years supplying his product to some of the top chefs and restaurants in South Carolina, as well as retail and online sales.

His colonies have grown so that he now tends over a thousand honeybee colonies scattered over the state.

Many are strategically placed to pollinate South Carolina fruits and vegetables, including blackberries, blueberries, watermelons, squash, cucumbers, and strawberries and, of course, to make plenty of honey! Some of his colonies have traveled as far as California, Maine, and Wisconsin, to pollinate our nation's finest crops.

Thank you and congratulations to Craig!

2022 SC YF&R Farm Animals Photo Award Winner

Heather Norment, Chesterfield County



South Carolina Farm Bureau Government Relations

Our Government Relations team serves as the link between our members and government officials at the local, state and national level. We work with local officials, the state Legislature, the Governor's office, departments, agencies, congressional delegation and staff to promote Farm Bureau policy as established by our grassroots **members**.

With one united voice, GR staff and our members will continue to advocate for agriculture.

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