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For Immediate Release

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SC New and Beginning Farmer Program Now Accepting Applications

Columbia, SC – Columbia – Farmers getting their feet wet in agribusiness have access to comprehensive entrepreneurial education and business training through a public service program offered by Clemson University.

The South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program (SCNBFP) is now accepting applications for the 2017-2018 statewide program.

The South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer program is a public education program focused on enabling new and beginning farmers to be successful, productive, and innovative members of their local agricultural community by providing them with the tools, knowledge and skills necessary to be successful entrepreneurs, sound business managers, exemplary stewards of the natural environment, and successful marketers of the unique products they create. Most importantly, the SCNBFP seeks to develop individuals who have a sense of pride and enjoy a quality of life as a result of their investment and participation in the industry of South Carolina agriculture. The SCNBFP is managed by Clemson University Cooperative Extension, department of Agribusiness, under the direction of Dr. R. David Lamie. The SCNBFP is entering its sixth year and has guided more than 250 emerging farmers through the program.

The 2017-2018 SC New & Beginning Farmer Program will offer two levels of instruction: Level I, *Exploring Farming as a Business* for emerging farmers with less than three years' experience, and Level II, *Taking Your Farm Business to the Next Level* for those who have been farming 3-9 years.

Core agribusiness workshops will be held centrally in Columbia, SC, and are focused on farm business management. Level appropriate topics include business concept/plan development; financial and risk management; legal & regulatory issues; marketing strategies; personal assessment; and an introduction to federal, state, and local agriculture resources.

Core programming will be complemented by regional workshops to be held throughout the state. These workshops will offer important opportunities for local peer and resource networking, as well as provide additional instruction on production topics tailored for each region. Regional workshops are a collaborative effort between Clemson Agribusiness, Clemson Cooperative Extension, the Clemson Sustainable Agriculture Program, the Catawba Farm & Food Coalition, the Richland Soil & Water Conservation District, and the SC Coastal Conservation League.

Guided farm tours, access to on-farm internships, and participation in the SC New & Beginning Farmer Program Alumni Association are also featured program elements.

The SC New & Beginning Farmer Program fills a critical need to train emerging farmers in South Carolina. "With the average age of SC farmers now up to 59 years, we put our state's largest industry at risk if we do not invest efforts into encouraging and training the next generation of successful agripreneurs," stated program director, Dave Lamie. Lamie continues that, "at a time when consumer demand for local, high quality, nutritious farm products is on the rise, there is tremendous opportunity for rural economic development through a thriving local farm and food system."

The SC New & Beginning Farmer Program is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under grant award number 2016-70017-25351.

Any legal resident of South Carolina, at least 18 years of age, who is just beginning to farm or who has actively farmed for less than 10 consecutive years is eligible to apply for the SCNBFP. Additional information, including program details, workshop schedule, fee structure, scholarship opportunities, and an online application can be found at www.scnewfarmer.org. Both Level I and Level II programming is scheduled to begin October, 2017. The deadline to apply is July 15, 2017.

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