

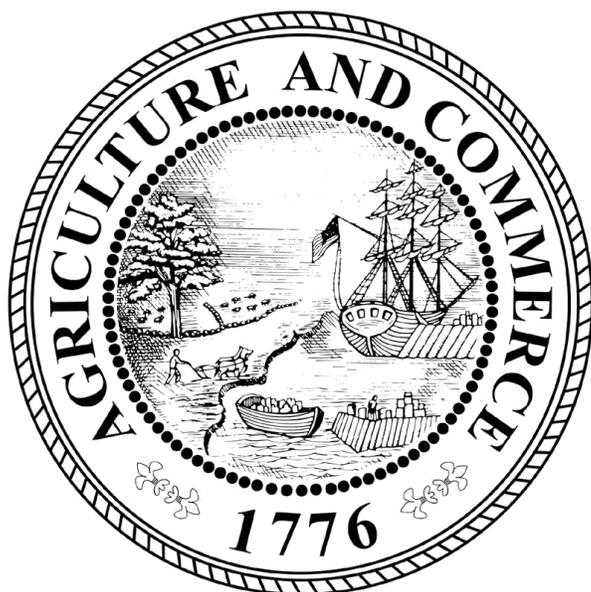
State of Georgia

# Strategic Plan

2011



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
STRATEGIC PLANNING

*August 4, 2011*

Gary W. Black  
Commissioner



## GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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August 4, 2011

From Rabun Gap to Bainbridge, Waycross to Blue Ridge, agriculture is a part of every life in Georgia. While certainly evident that all Georgians do not live on farms, agriculture affects each and every citizen of this State. Understanding the importance of agriculture, the Georgia General Assembly established the nation's first state Department of agriculture in 1874. The Georgia Department of Agriculture thus began its history of safe guarding and promoting Georgia's largest industry.

Through its history, the Department has evolved over time, and it is our obligation to update and to reflect the changes in the agriculture sector.

Like a suit jacket with the bottom button hole held by the top button, there is nothing inherently wrong with the button hole, the button, the thread holding the button, or the jacket itself, but the use of the whole is not as functional and efficient as possible. The process can have all the correct players and cogs, but when out of order it becomes inoperable and inefficient.

Like the suit jacket, the Department must fine-tune itself from time to time to ensure that each button hole and corresponding button of the Department is in the correct place to ensure the potential.

Through this Strategic Planning process, it is my vision for the Georgia Department of Agriculture to become the exceptional and premier agency of the state. With that, I would like to personally thank all those that have devoted their time, energy, and resources to this process. Together we can bring this Department into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Black  
Commissioner



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## I. Methodology

The Georgia Department of Agriculture under the direction of Commissioner Gary W. Black initiated this strategic planning with the goal of refocusing the Department to better meet the needs of this economy, the needs of the consumers and producers, and the regulatory obligations of the Department.

### The Committees

In accomplishing this goal, a 41 member steering committee was established with representatives from across the state. The steering committee was composed of subject matter experts representing their respective industries viewpoint and “Good Georgians”. The “Good Georgians” were members of the steering committee representing the average Georgia consumer. (For a list of the members on the steering committee please see appendix).

Proceeding from the steering committee, technical groups were formed based on the various industries the Department works with. There were 21 different technical groups representing the following scopes:

International Trade	Information Technology
Web and Social Media	Animal Protection
Urban Agriculture	Agriculture Chemicals
Poultry	Farmers Markets
Agritourism	Public Relations
Homeland Security	Structural Pest Control
Grocery and Retail Inspection	Commodity Promotion
External Cooperation	Equine Health
Feed, Seed, and Fertilizer	Fuel and Measures
Red Meat and Seafood Inspection	Animal Health
Food Processing	

Each technical group consisted of at least 5 members per group. Each group had a steering committee liaison, a Department employee, a “Good Georgian”, and additional outside members involved with the specific technical group’s scope. The Department staff’s role on the technical group was to provide data, processes and other information required to assist the committee members in making their recommendations. (For a list of the members on the technical groups please see appendix).





Both the steering committee and the technical groups were given full access to the Department in order to gather a clear picture of the current status of the Department and to provide accurate and applicable recommendations which are gathered in this report.

### **The Scope**

The members of both the steering committee and the technical groups were charged with the following questions to focus their discussions: where the Department is currently, where the Department needs to be, and how the Department needs to get there.

Throughout the planning process, the members were also charged with avoiding certain mindsets that could limit the effectiveness and frankness of the discussions. Such limiting comments included, but were not limited to:

“We have never done it that way”

“That won’t work”

“We can’t do that”

### **Timeline**

The steering committee first met on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Agriculture Building in Atlanta, Georgia. Following the steering committee meeting, the technical groups were charged to schedule meetings over the following four months, developing recommendations for their individual technical groups.

During those months, the technical groups met 42 times and logged an approximate 100 hours in phone conversations. In addition to the 41 members of the steering committee, 134 citizens participated in the technical group meetings, providing business acumen and expertise regarding each group’s specific focus.

Through these meetings, each technical group produced recommendation reports gathered in the appendix of this report, which were based on a realistic, incremental plan the Commissioner can implement within the current confines of budget, statute, personnel, and/or responsibility of the Department of Agriculture.





## II. The Georgia Department of Agriculture Past and Present

Founded in 1874, the Georgia Department of Agriculture has the distinction of being the nation's oldest such agency. The Agriculture building, located in downtown Atlanta, was erected in 1952 specifically for the use of this Department. Unfortunately, the Georgia Building Authority has no record of the location of the Agency prior to this date. The Department operates primarily as a regulatory and enforcement agency, with the major goal of protecting the consuming public and promoting the farming sector.

Activities of the agency are directed by Commissioner of Agriculture Gary W. Black, a Constitutional officer, elected for a four-year term in the same general election as the Governor and other executive officers.

The Department has 635 employees and is organized in functional units, with each division specializing in different aspects of regulatory and enforcement responsibilities.

### **Administration Division**

The Administration Division provides essential support services for internal operations. These support services are handled through the offices of Accounting, Budget, Information Technology, Public Affairs and Personnel.

### **Consumer Services**

The Consumer Services Office operates the Department's 1-800 call center. This office handles approximately 200 incoming calls on an average day. Callers may receive the answer to their question from someone within the office or be referred to the appropriate office within our Department for resolution or to another agency if appropriate. Consumer Services also prepares exhibits for schools and fairs.

### **Market Bulletin**

The Georgia Department of Agriculture publishes the ***Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin***: a bi-monthly newspaper with articles of interest to farmers and consumers as well as recipes, gardening tips, a calendar of events, classified advertisements and public notices. Subscriptions are \$10 to Georgia residents.

### **Public Affairs**

Our Public Affairs Office serves as the "press office" and "public relations office" for the Department. It responds to requests from the media as well as from the public, issues press releases, arranges all press conferences and interviews, prepares and edits publications, takes photographs for the Department and handles just about anything having to do with the media or public relations.





## Operations Division

The Operations Division holds the responsibility of overseeing each of the agency's five divisions. This division is charged with establishment of the Agency's standard of operations and ensuring our commitment to enforcing state laws regarding food handling, packaging, and labeling, as well as maintaining standards of accuracy in fuel delivery, cleanliness in meat processing plants and standards of freshness and fairness in grocery transactions.

### 1. Animal Industry

Assuring that the livestock and poultry sectors remain healthy and productive is one of the top priorities of the Animal Industry Division. The Animal Industry Division consists of veterinarians, field inspectors, laboratory technicians, program managers and support staff, all diligently working to ensure the continued protection of animal and public health, food safety, animal welfare and successful livestock production.

The Animal Industry Division is responsible for monitoring, detecting, and controlling over 100 animal diseases (Georgia R.A.D.S.) that can have a significant impact on the agricultural economy and trade, or that can be contagious to both animals and people. The Division maintains extensive surveillance programs for foreign animal diseases, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza and exotic Newcastle disease in poultry, and foot-and-mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (i.e. mad cow disease) in cattle.

The Division also regulates the transportation of animals, disposal of animal carcasses, and the rendering of animal tissues into animal feeds, all of which are vital components of an overall animal health program.

The Meat Inspection Section is the largest compartment of the Animal Industry Division. The section licenses 163 facilities in Georgia and protects consumers from food borne diseases. Meat Inspectors assure consumers will receive wholesome, safe, and truthfully labeled meat and meat and poultry products by assuring compliance with food safety standards. Meat Inspection veterinarians oversee the humane slaughter of livestock and provide medical judgments for the proper disposition of meat products presented for human consumption. The section also has a primary role in food security and would serve as first responders to an intentional threat on our meat supply.

Agriculture and Food Defense is a relatively new function for the Animal Industry Division and, through Emergency Support Function #11, the Division is responsible for directing and coordinating resources for the mitigation, prevention, response, and recovery efforts necessary to assist animals and animal industries in the event of a natural disaster, animal health emergency, or agroterror incident.

The Division oversees the humane treatment of equine, licenses and inspects stables, and helps control infectious and contagious diseases of equine. Equine inspectors also train volunteer organizations and local governments on the safe and proper techniques in equine rescue.





The Animal Protection Section was created in 1986 to regulate companion animal industry. This Section enforces the humane care of animals and regulates anyone who produces, sells, boards, grooms, offers for adoption, or exchanges pet animals, including birds. The Animal Protection Section additionally monitors the spread of disease in the companion animal industry.

Providing timely and accurate market information is critical for sound business decisions by the commercial poultry industry and livestock producers. Market news reports created by this division reflect price trends and help facilitate exports of Georgia livestock and poultry products worldwide. The Georgia poultry dock prices are the world-renowned resource for the most current economic trends in the global poultry industry. All major fast food operators use the reports to make decisions on purchasing poultry products.

The State Veterinarian's Office approves the distribution and sale of all animal vaccines and permits the importation of veterinary biologicals into the state. Requests include permits for vaccine efficacy field trials, autogenous vaccine production and use, and the importation of biological materials to universities and federal laboratories, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Division is involved in environmental stewardship on livestock farms and, in cooperation with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, trains nutrient management planners and monitors concentrated animal feeding operations.

## **2. Plant Industry**

This division encompasses Pesticide Certification and Enforcement, Structural Pest Control, Nursery and Plant Protection, Apiary Industry, Boll Weevil Eradication, Entomology and Chemical Labs, Seed Labs, Organic Agriculture, Plant, Food, Feed and Grain, and Plant Industry Inspection Forces.

### **Laboratories**

The Laboratories Division of the Georgia Department of Agriculture is divided into four laboratory units in two state locations. The Food Microbiology and Dairy Laboratories and the Food Chemistry and Pesticide Residue Laboratories are located in the Agriculture Building in Atlanta. The Feed and Fertilizer Laboratories and the Pesticide Formulation, Soil Termiticide, Treated Wood, Use/Misuse, and Groundwater Laboratories are located in Tifton.

### **Pesticides**

The Pesticide Division enforces state and federal laws pertaining to the use and application of pesticides. Under the Georgia Pesticide Use and Application Act this section monitors the use of pesticides in a variety of pest management situations including commercial farming, lawn care/landscaping, forestry, public health, right-of-way, etc. It also licenses private and commercial pesticide applicators and pesticide contractors. Under the Georgia Pesticide





Control Act the division licenses restricted use pesticide dealers and registers all pesticides for sale and distribution in Georgia. Additionally, the Pesticide Division licenses wood treatment facilities, inspects irrigation systems for chemigation, coordinates a pesticide container recycling program and waste pesticide collection program.

### **Structural Pest Control**

The Structural Pest Control section regulates structural pest control companies, providing inspection services of treated structures for consumers. Additionally this section provides consumer advice and information sheets on various structural pests. Along with licensing pest control companies, they test pest control operators and technicians.

### **Plant Food Feed & Grain**

The Plant Food, Feed and Grain Division is responsible for the enforcement and administration of the feed, fertilizer, lime, soil amendment and horticultural growing media laws of Georgia, and is in charge of the official grain inspection program in the state.

### **Plant Protection**

The purpose of the Plant Protection Division is to promote the highest quality and integrity of plants and plant products produced by the Georgia Green Industry while ensuring consumer protection. In addition, the section facilitates and encourages the export of numerous Georgia Grown™ plant commodities to many states and nations around the world through regular inspections and phytosanitary certification programs. And finally, this section's goal is to protect Georgia's agriculture and natural resources from introduction, establishment, and spread of plant pests and noxious weeds through detection and management programs.

### **Seed Labs**

The Seed Division administers the Georgia Seed Law and Rules by regulating truthful labeling and minimum seed quality standards for seed offered, exposed or transported for sale to protect consumers and prevent major crop failure. The division is responsible for operation of the state seed laboratories in Atlanta and Tifton, licensing of seed dealers, investigating seed arbitration complaints, and supervision of inspectors for seed regulation at dealer locations.

## **3. Consumer Protection**

The Consumer Protection Division administers state laws, rules and regulations for retail and wholesale grocery stores, retail seafood stores and places in the business of food processing and plants which are currently required to obtain a license from the Commissioner under any other provision of law: bakeries, confectionaries, fruit, nuts and vegetables stores and places of business, and similar establishments, mobile or permanent, engaged in sale of food primarily for consumption off the premises. This does not include "food services establishments" (Restaurants and Institutions).





## **Dairy**

The responsibility of the dairy section is to enforce federally mandated programs of inspection and sampling of dairy farms and dairy processing plants and single service manufacturers. This sections responsibility includes grade “A” fluid products, ice cream, cheese, and butter. The Dairy section enforces the Grade “A” Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, the Georgia Dairy Act, and the dairy rules and regulations of the department.

## **Retail Food**

The retail food section is responsible for enforcing state laws, rules and regulations by conducting sanitation inspection of retail food stores, salvage food operations, mobile meat trucks, food storage warehouses, and rolling stores to ensure good manufacturing practices. Various tests are performed during inspection including fat tests to check fat content in ground beef, candling shell eggs for wholesomeness, and black light for signs of rodent infestation. This section also checks scanners and scales to ensure accuracy of pricing and weight and the shelves of retail and wholesale stores for out of date food products.

This section also receives consumer inquiries concerning sanitary conditions relative to food and food borne illness. It also review blue prints of retail operations prior to their construction as well as reviewing sandwich and retail store labels to ensure compliance with the laws, rules and regulations as set forth by state and federal mandate.

## **Processing Plants**

This section is responsible for the inspection of wholesale bakeries, bottled water and flavored drink processors, seafood processors, wholesale fish dealers and sanitation in establishments where food is handled and manufactured. It reviews food labels of processing facilities to ensure compliance with laws, rules and regulations. The section inspectors collect water, food, and pesticide samples from food establishments to ensure a safe and wholesome food supply and compliance with Departmental regulations. While the processing of meat and poultry products is not an area of its responsibility, the processing and distribution of seafood products in Georgia is covered by this division. The inspectors have received required training to inspect and certify Shellfish Plants under the National Shellfish Sanitation Program. This Division also conducts HACCP and Food Contract inspections through Partnership Agreements and Cooperative Programs with the U.S. Food & Drug Administration.

## **State-Federal Poultry Graders**

The State/Federal Poultry and Egg Grading Service is provided through a Cooperative State Trust Fund Agreement between the Georgia Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Marketing Service.

## **4. Fuel and Measures Division**





Through regulatory inspections, the Fuel and Measures Division protects consumers by verifying the accuracy of weights and measures used in commercial transactions, the quality and quantity of motor fuels and the enforcement of grain, cotton and tobacco laws.

Programs administered this division include the regulatory field inspection, the state fuel oil laboratory and the state weights laboratory.

Fuel and measures licenses and registrations include certified public weigher, propane and scale mechanic licenses, grain moisture meter registrations and operator's licenses, and service station and antifreeze registrations.

Fuel and measures' field operations include testing accuracy and certification of commercial weighing devices, retail gas pumps, propane dispensers and wholesale petroleum meters

## **5. Marketing Division**

The increasing diversity of Georgia's farm products is opening new opportunities for expanding sales of the state's commodities. In order to help growers take advantage of these potential markets, the Marketing Division promotes demand for and sales of the state's agricultural commodities in the United States and abroad. These efforts are supported by the Department's network of State Farmers' Markets, Commodity Promotion Programs and International Trade/Domestic Marketing Office.

### **Bonding**

The Bonding Section is responsible for handling all records and matters relating to agricultural surety bonds. Various Georgia laws require that certain businesses or individuals purchasing agricultural products (fruits, vegetables, eggs and pecans) from or selling for Georgia producers or storing certain agricultural products maintain adequate surety bond coverage. The purpose of this coverage is to provide limited financial protection for our Georgia producers or the individuals storing the product.

### **Commodities Promotion**

We administer twelve (12) state Agricultural Commodity Commissions. These are farmer funded, self-help programs. The assessments support programs in the areas of research, education and promotion on behalf of the respective commodity. Commodity Commissions include: Apples, Blueberries, Corn, Cotton, Eggs, Equine, Milk, Peach, Pecans, Soybeans, Tobacco, and Vegetables

### **International Trade**

The Office of International Trade has been combined with the Offices of the Area Marketing Coordinators and the Home Economist to form the Office of International Trade and Domestic Marketing. These offices have been combined for the specific purpose of marketing Georgia's agriculture products both domestically and abroad. With the collaborative effort of the staff, the Georgia Department of Agriculture is now better





equipped to serve the state's agribusinesses through developing and implementing new programs to increase our outreach and create awareness of the wealth of Georgia's products.

### **State Farmers Markets**

Our Markets Section administers twelve State Farmers Markets which form the network for sales of fruits and vegetables throughout Georgia and the Southeast. These facilities maintain a viable market for Georgia farmers and farm products in the communities where they are located. State Farmers Markets are responsible for over one billion in sales each year.

MARKETS: Atlanta, Augusta, Macon, Savannah, Thomasville, Cairo , Cordele , Moultrie , Tifton, Valdosta

### **Atlanta Farmers' Market**

At 150 acres, the Atlanta Market is considered one of the largest of its kind in the world. It features a garden center, wholesale and retail activities, and is a major marketing hub and distribution point for fresh produce in the Southeast and throughout the country. The Atlanta Market also has a restaurant, welcome center and USDA Federal-State office.





### III. Executive Summary

#### 1. Training

The committee recognizes the importance of timely specialized and general training in all areas of the Department and recommends that the Department develop an enhanced training and audit component in each of the divisions to verify the consistency of its employees and inspectors.

There are lots of opportunities to enhance the training of inspectors, staff, applicators, public, etc., and the Department should look for these opportunities as part of its training initiatives (customer service, noncompliance, etc.)

Additionally, the inspectors need specialized training and education that will allow them to adequately and successfully work in a variety of situations under their purview. This education should allow them to use the knowledge they have gained along with common sense to properly evaluate situations to achieve the objectives within their respective divisions. This type of specialized training must be ongoing so as to include new technology, innovative thinking, and inform the inspectors of current topics of concern.

The inspectors should also be standardized in their training and inspection techniques to accomplish uniformity of inspection across the board, ensuring the same type and quality of inspections across the State of Georgia.

#### 2. Educational Focus

The committee recognizes the importance of education and outreach, and proposes that the Department include a philosophy shift to include education and outreach in its inspections and operations throughout the state. This increased focused on education and outreach will have the effect of enhancing the Department's regulatory function and awareness in the state.

In addition to regulatory compliance, the Department should focus on education and outreach to regulated clients and citizens in the state through the use of inspectors and general staff. This focus will better enable citizens to knowledgably and properly comply with federal and state laws and regulations.

This education and outreach should be targeted toward all entities involved in areas linked to the Department including but not limited to the agriculture industries, farmers, processors, legislators, consumers, law enforcement, prosecutors, and the general public

An educational piece should also be incorporated into the inspection protocol. This will allow the Department to act in a proactive manner rather than reactive.

In order to accurately educate its target audiences, the Department should utilize all avenues of dissemination available including the Department website, social media, public events, and shows. The Department should also use the Tifton Laboratory expansion to offer educational, compliance assistance and outreach opportunities to help the regulated community understand the regulatory requirements.





### **3. Locally Grown and Farmers Market Promotion**

Locally grown food has become very popular and in turn has encouraged the growth of many local farmers markets. The Department needs to embrace and encourage this trend by partnering with local communities to support the growing demand for locally grown produce, community farmers markets, and the cottage food industry.

### **4. Regular Meetings of Steering Committee and Technical Groups**

This steering committee and related technical groups should continue to hold regular meetings to assist the Department in future plans and decisions. In order to emulate the changes in the agriculture sector, the Department needs current input from stakeholders and industry representatives in the way of continued biannual meetings of both the steering committee and the technical groups.

### **5. External Cooperation**

#### **State Agencies and Institutions**

Recognizing the importance of collaboration within state agencies and institutions, the committee recommends that the Department maintain good working relationships with its state agency partners, such as, but not limited to Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority, the Georgia University System, Georgia Economic Development Authority, Georgia Ports Authority and other state agencies/institutions that work with the Department.

#### **Industry Cooperation**

The committee additionally finds it is important to develop and foster a relationship of trust, collaboration and understanding between the industries and the Department to accomplish the goal of promoting the various industries, telling the story of the importance of agriculture to the citizens of Georgia and the critical role the Department plays in protecting the industry and consumers. This cooperation should include developing a proactive business plan to reach beyond regulations to include opportunities to promote and protect the industry.

### **6. Department Needs and Resources**

#### **Staffing**

With an understanding of the current budget environment and financial constraints, the committee recommends the Department review its number of inspectors and employees to determine if each division is adequately and fully trained, staffed and challenged; and, that staffing levels are adequate to achieve the Department's mission. If not, Department must review and prioritize the functions based on risk and return. Additionally, the committee





recommends that the Department give consideration to how each division's service will be sustained on a long term basis.

### **Salary**

In addition to staffing needs, the committee recommends the Department review the salary level of its employees and develop a plan to make them comparable to other regulatory agencies so resources and funds are not spent to develop agriculture professionals who eventually resign to pursue other job opportunities elsewhere solely due to salary concerns.

### **Equipment**

The Department should also develop an inventory its equipment and develop a business plan to properly update and maintain existing equipment.

## **7. Customer Service**

The new customer service approach is a great initiative and the committee recommends that it should be continued throughout each division of the Department. This initiative will go a long way to help the Department reach the goal of being the premier agency in Georgia thus helping with interagency/legislature interaction.

The customer service initiative should include but not be limited to the training of inspectors, making information accessible, and look for ways to enhance self-reporting and self-policing. (Note: The DOA has enforcement responsibility and should not be interpreted as "too close to industry.")

## **8. Review of Fee Structure**

The committee recommends the Department conduct a comprehensive review of its fees and fee structure. The committee also recommends and endorses the Department examining the possibility of retaining those fees within the Department instead of returning them to the state treasury. This would help those programs with stakeholder interest to provide the proper level of support and regulation.

## **9. Technology Update**

### **Equipment**

In light of the current Department mission statement, this committee recommends that a comprehensive technology audit of the hardware including but not limited to computer needs, periphery components, and server capability to maximize productivity, efficiency and accessibility.

### **Record Management**

The committee recommends the Department implement a modern data-entry and reporting system needed to meet division information requirements linked with required senior management reports and determine web based applications appropriate for customer and employee input that interface with the database for standard report generation. These





technologies will generate a rich body of data to be used by the Department to improve the execution of its regulatory responsibilities. Such a system would yield automated operational analysis that would enable the Department to utilize scarce resources in the most efficient and effective manner possible through focused and targeted resource allocation and tasking.

### **Online Licensing**

The committee also recommends that the Department provide online licensing, online fee payment, and online license data basing for both industry and public usage to be used as a dual tool for promotion and enforcement. This ability would provide greater accessibility to the Department for the agriculture industry.

## **10. Prioritize Inspections on Risk Factor**

With the current budget environment coupled with the food safety and regulatory obligations of the Department, this committee recommends the Department review the possibility of redirecting its inspectors to focus on high risk industry segments (based on type of business or crop, geography or timing of crops) instead of firms with consistent records of compliance.

The risk based inspection process would reduce inspection frequency in firms that receive third party audits throughout the year that far exceed the minimum state requirements and remain in compliance. Criteria of the third party audits will need to be evaluated (what the audit involves, announced/unannounced, raw/ready-to-eat, etc.) by the Department. This will allow the Department to focus its resources and funds on the facilities that require more education and oversight. Firms will need at least one inspection a year for the Department to be able to issue licenses.

## **11. Fee for Service Options**

The Department must explore fees for service options within the various divisions of the Department and the laboratory. A fee for service programs should be explored, which could generate revenue to offset the inspection cost and general operating costs.





# Appendix





## Appendix 1 – Steering Committee Members

### **Paul Brower (Co-Chair)**

Rick Bell  
Bill Boling  
Brent Booker  
Carla Brown  
Matt Coley  
Mike Coggins  
Kathy Cowan  
Zippy Duvall  
Drew Echols  
Mark Esoda  
Mike Giles  
Will Harris  
Phil Harvey  
Bo Herndon  
Evans Hooks  
Weyman Hunt  
Govind Kannan

### **Nadine Wardenga (Co-Chair)**

Kathy Kusava  
Roger Lane  
Buddy Leger  
Toria Morgan  
Ken Morrow  
Quentin Moses  
Bruce Norton  
Gary Paulk  
Beverly Sparks (Rep. Scott Angle)  
Vince Stanley  
Ronnie Stapp  
Rick Thompson  
Bryan Tolar  
Everett Williams  
Bonnie Wilson  
Mary Kay Woodworth





## Appendix 2 – Technical Group Members

### Commodity Promotion

Marcia Crowley, GDA  
Farrah Newberry  
Beth Bland  
Don McGough  
Don Kohler  
Richey Seaton  
Al Pearson  
Jason Shaw  
Duke Lane  
Bo Herndon, Steering Liaison  
Will Harris, Steering Liaison

### Structural Pest Control

Derrick Lastinger, GDA  
Corey Arnold  
Rick Culbreath  
Perry Tindol  
Greg Holley  
Sean Knox  
Gene Higginbotham  
Steve Phillips  
Chris Goericki  
Neil Parker  
Pat Vanhooser  
Therol Brown  
Dr. Brian Forschler  
Suzanne Williams, Steering Liaison  
Rick Bell, Steering Liaison  
Bruce Norton, Steering Liaison

### Animal Protection

Venessa Green, GDA  
Chris Benson  
Davis Cosey  
Reggie Dickey  
Linda Crumbley  
John Barnes  
Dr. Ed Mahaffey  
Terry Key-Hoosen  
Kathy Cowan, Steering Liaison

### Farmers Markets

Matthew Kulinski, GDA  
Tim Mercier  
Steve Kaplan  
Mike Jardina  
Janey Griffin  
Will Godowns  
Daryl Wilson  
Bonnie Wilson, Steering Liaison

### Fertilizers and Agriculture Chemicals

Tommy Gray, GDA  
Julie Hester, GDA  
Keith Fielder  
Charlie King  
Mike Anderson  
Jamie Carswell  
Spencer Black  
Eddie Ingram  
Mark Esoda, Steering Liaison

### Public Relations

Arty Schronce, GDA  
Teresa Jenkins, GDA  
Joy Carter  
Denny Moore  
Brian Broderick  
Pam Keene  
Lee Beckman  
Rich Thompson, Steering Liaison

### Fuels and Measurements

Rich Lewis, GDA  
James Tudor  
Davis L. Cosey  
Horace Chambers Jr.  
William “Bill” Jones  
Bill Rainey  
Roger Lane, Steering Liaison



**Food Processing Inspection**

Natalie Adan, GDA  
Matt Sparkman  
Alan Conger  
Billy Moore  
Kevin Gough  
Sarah Geisert  
Doug Britton  
Mike Culpepper  
Terry Willis  
Doug Britton  
Nadine Wardinga, Steering Liaison

**Equine Health**

Dr. Carter Black, GDA  
Ann Jones  
Alan Bowen  
Patti Livingston  
Danny Hogan  
Carla Brown, Steering Liaison

**Red Meat and Seafood Inspections**

Dr. Rex Holt, GDA  
Steve Whitmire  
Joe Griffith  
John Redding  
Jimmy McAfee  
Mike Coggins  
Lee Bonecutter, Steering Liaison

**Agriculture Tourism**

Beth Meeks, GDA  
Doug Paul  
Camille Ronay  
Lisa Collins  
Rodney Miller  
Charles Berry  
Jeff Manley  
Robert Jenkins  
Bill Riley  
Kent Wolfe  
Ed Perry  
Nancy Cobb  
Drew Echols, Steering Liaison

**External Cooperation**

Billy Skaggs, GDA  
Dr. James Sutton, GDA  
Dr. Steve Brown  
Brent Dykes  
Robert Farris  
Wanda Barrs  
Phyllis T. Johnson  
Nancy Cobb  
Dr. Scott Angle, Steering Liaison  
Dr. Govind Kannan, Steering Liaison

**Grocery and Retail Inspection**

Oscar Garrison, GDA  
Jim Tudor  
Dick Cotrill  
Ron Edenfield  
Allison Jennings  
Kathy Kuzava, Steering Liaison

**Technology**

Lamar Pearce, GDA  
Jeff Davis IV  
Michael Harold  
Nancy Plesnarski  
Michael Opitz

**Homeland Security**

Trey Joyner, GDA  
Bob Waldorf  
Steve Brinson  
Stewart Hicks  
Paul Williams  
Joel McKie  
Kenny Calhoun

**Poultry**

Connie Little, GDA  
David Lathem  
Jerry Straughn  
Thad Morrison  
Brian Nash  
Dewell Lawrence  
Mike Giles, Steering Liaison





**Fuel & Measures**

Roger Lane, Chairman  
Jim Tudor  
Bill Jones  
Davis Cosey  
Wendell Davis  
Rich Lewis

**International Trade**

Jeff Worn  
Jim Sumner  
Mark Armentrout  
Jerry Lane  
Larry Williams

**Urban Agriculture**

Mike Evans, GDA  
Chris Butts  
Scott Chatham  
Keith Mickler  
Skeetter McCorckle  
Larry Windham  
Joe Burns  
Joyce Stevens  
Ken James  
Ken Morrow, Steering Liaison  
Mary Kay Woodworth, Steering Liaison

**Animal Health**

Phil Harvey – chairman  
Steve Brinson – secretary  
Evans Hooks  
Bobby Miller  
Billy Moore  
Dr. Les Sales  
Dr. Robert Cobb

**Web and Social Media**

Jawanna Sanford, GDA  
Steve Thomas  
Matthew Kramer  
Michelle Treptow  
Justin Tomczak  
Martin Sullivan, GDA  
Jessica Holthaus  
Bryan Tolar, Steering Liaison







## Appendix 4 – Technical Group Recommendation Reports

### 1. External Cooperation

1. Enhance focus of the Department to include education and outreach throughout the state
  - To ensure regulatory compliance, GDA should focus on education and outreach to regulated clients with the use of field staff; people comply better to regulation when they know why
  - Farmers Markets
    - Increased emphasis on local farmers markets
    - Work with local communities on what regulations small farmers markets need to be aware of
2. Work with Georgia Department of Education and other applicable partners on agriculture education and nutrition promotion
  - Possibly work with School Nutrition Programs
    - Outside of teacher payroll – school nutrition is largest budget component
    - Connecting local grown produce / products with schools could lower costs
    - Needs close relationship to educate and inform school nutrition policies
  - Farm to School Program / Feed My School for a Week initiative
    - There are food safety concerns that would need to be addressed; possibly work in conjunction with UGA extension to promote and ensure safety
  - Work with DOE and other agencies/institutions to educate children on the origins of the food they eat (food is not originally from a can)
    - Develop video and other media to education students on food production, harvest, processing, shipping, etc.
3. Cooperation with UGA & FVSU
  - Agrosecurity Center – UGA Extension has lost major portions of funding; invite assistance from FVSU
    - Bolster relationships in order to rebuild cohesive state agrosecurity network
  - Critical Infrastructure list
    - Work with facilities on addressing security concerns
    - Recently worked with Atlanta State Farmers Market application to list
  - There is room for increased involvement with the Invasive Species Center
  - Pesticide applicator training
    - Expand relationship to build extension's training capabilities





4. Participation with programs, initiatives, and committees throughout the state where there has been little to no participation or involvement from GDA
  - Team Agriculture Georgia
  - Food and Agriculture Committee
  - Natural Resource Conservation Workshop
  - Environmental Stewardship Award
5. Relationship with Georgia Environmental Protection Division
  - Reduce possibility of double inspections due to the overlap of regulations
    - Need regulatory collaboration to standardize inspections and avoid double inspection (Composting, Fuel, Animal mortality disposal)
  - Consideration of policy changes regarding other agencies
    - Addressing concerns with disconnect between agencies
  - Data sharing between agencies to avoid redundancies
6. Cooperation with Georgia Department Labor and other state agencies on recent Immigration Bill (HB 87)
  - Guest Worker Program study
  - Workforce solutions team
    - DOL team that addresses workforce needs and solutions
7. Maintain good working relationships with other state agency partners; such as Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority and others.





## 2. Web and Social Media

Since the Commissioner has his own social media sites, there was some discussion about whether that could be joined with the GDA's social media outlets. It was decided that, in the best interest of the GDA, the Commissioner should keep his personal and campaign social media sites separate from the GDA's. The group also said there should be a clear indication about what each page represents so there is no confusion about cross-overs between the GDA and the Commissioner's sites.

**Suggestion:** We should encourage that people retweet and repost information from us, so it leads to a larger audience. To make things more interactive, with the GDA receiving more feedback from constituents, ideas such as: "Where is a good place to eat in the City of Xyz?" or asking trivia questions with small prizes to hand out be done periodically.

**Action:** The GDA FB pages advertise off of each other, driving traffic in between both sites. Our friends and fans are encouraged to share information they "like" and many have reposted our press releases (posted on FB in note form), articles of interest that we've linked to, etc. The GDA also "shares" information from other sources, including articles, related photos, etc. to encourage that cross-advertising among the network of contacts. The GDA posts information about "where the Commissioner is today," and asks about a favorite place or food item from that area. Trivia questions have been asked but there currently are not items to hand out to winners. On Twitter, retweets have not been as popular yet, but are happening; the GDA retweets others and hopefully that will reciprocate with increasing frequency.

**Suggestion:** Add information about FB and Twitter to the hardcopy *Market Bulletin* publication. There was also discussion about creating a "special edition" once all technological improvements have been completed, to showcase them to the public.

**Action:** The *Market Bulletin* now publishes all the link information for our social media sites, encouraging people visit the sites for more information. The link information is also posted to the *Market Bulletin* website now. The idea of a "special issue" was discussed with Carlton Moore, editor of the *Market Bulletin*, who felt that was an excellent idea and suggested the article could "come from" the Commissioner, encouraging everyone to check out what's new online.

**Suggestion:** For accepting *Market Bulletin* subscriptions at trade shows, events on the road, etc. the smartphone software "Square Up" was discussed. The software includes a plug-in application for a smartphone, where a credit card can be swiped to accept a set payment between two parties immediately, providing receipts to both the buyer and seller.

**Action:** Officials at GDA were notified about this software for consideration. To date, no GDA staff is currently using the application but it is something to continue thinking about if we continue selling subscriptions at future events.





**Suggestion:** Use our social media outlets as a tool to explain what the GDA and other agriculture-related professions are all about.

**Action:** This was a goal of the Commissioner's from the get-go as well. A YouTube account for the GDA was created ([youtube.com/georgiaagriculture](https://youtube.com/georgiaagriculture)) and one video has been posted thus far. It was advertised on FB.

**Suggestion:** Our new website should be as user-friendly as possible. Keeping in mind that we are both a consumer agency and a regulatory agency, we must create a website that caters to both those groups.

During the final committee meeting, the following ideas were thrown out for consideration relating to the new website, as well as the Department's YouTube video account:

### **Suggestions/things to consider for the new website:**

- Add an RSS feed
- Implement Google Analytics for automatic weekly compilations of activity
- Add the Market Bulletin masthead to the scrolling images on top (advertising one of the primary reasons many people visit the website)
- Currently one film strip will host "Featured Farmer" of the month – what about the Georgia Grown videos and What Do You Do videos – should we rotate them?
- Regulatory agency items versus consumer items: As a regulatory agency, we need to make sure the site carefully caters to those aspects, as well as to the consumer aspect (not only one or the other). Do we do that with this? How easy is it to navigate? Can I find what I need quickly and easily?
- The site could be re-worked over time to be geared toward two pushes of traffic, one for consumers and one for those looking at the regulatory information, making it easier for them to navigate with lots of crossovers in between
- "Sections" and "Divisions" were confusing to group members; we need to word the site NOT based on what we call things here at the Department, but based on what is easiest for the user to understand – maybe make only one link to this page, where everything is listed all together (rather than drop down menus)?
- "Programs" was also confusing. What does that mean? The user shouldn't have to click through things in order to understand what headers are. We may want to have "average" people go through the site before it goes live, asking them to go find certain things on the website, and time how long it takes them to navigate to what they need.
- Perhaps add one direct link on the homepage for licensing, since that gets a lot of activity now?

### **Based on the YouTube account, some additional suggestions for videos:**

- Example: Georgia grown peaches are available in stores, so what should consumers be looking for? How do you find a local product? How can you ask your store to carry it if it doesn't currently?
- In the "What Do You Do?" videos, Bryan Tolar suggested we make them more about the actual topic and really explain what the viewer is seeing, including interviews with farmers, explanations of a product, how it's grown and harvested, where it can be purchased; with open/close remarks from the Commissioner and perhaps a voice-over of video coverage of what we're focusing on (voice-over will eliminate sound distractions from live Flip camera feed)





- One minute videos about products – on the farm being planted, grown, harvested, shipped, sold in the store, purchased by the consumer (quick snapshot to show you where your food comes from); could get funding from commodity commissions for their products as we are advertising them in these

### 3. Urban Agriculture

**General Comments-** The committee feels it is important to note that the ideal relationship between the industry and the DOA reaches beyond plant protection to include cooperation on promotion of the industry, telling the story of the importance of Urban Ag to the citizens of Georgia and the critical role the DOA plays in protecting the industry and consumers of our products.

#### Plant Protection

- Continue supportive role for live plant producers
- Continue training to develop well informed agents
- Identify points of contact within the Department for producers with potential pest problems
- Consider a confidential process for submitting compliance questions or complaints

#### Efficiencies and Accessibility

- Perform a comprehensive technology audit (hardware, internet, etc) to maximize productivity, efficiency and accessibility
- Offer license issuance and renewal online for both live plant and pesticide applicators licenses
- Capture greater and more accurate information in online licensing process
  - Market segment
  - Products produced
  - Production acreage or square footage
  - Shipping areas
  - Professional certifications of business principals
- Provide online license database for both industry and public usage to be used as a dual tool for promotion and enforcement

#### Compliance





- Redirect inspectors to focus on high risk industry segments (based on type of business or crop, geography or timing of crops) instead of firms with consistent records of compliance
- Budget time for inspectors to focus on high risk segments and finding firms not in compliance with licensing or reporting requirements
- Provide greater access to testing and CEU's via online opportunities and utilizing Cooperative Extension locations.
- Support recommendations of the Advisory Committee for Agricultural Chemicals
- Periodically review licensing process and fees with surrounding states to ensure a level playing field for Georgia firms
- Evaluate the merits of GDA sanctioning industry self-compliance where possible—would require training, self inspection and good accountability)
- Consider reinstating “clean days” for Ag chemical disposal—perhaps annually, rotating to different areas of the state





## 4. Agritourism

### OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE GEORGIA AGRICULTURE THROUGH TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### GOALS INCLUDE:

1. Integrate Agritourism marketing at the Atlanta airport and other entry to Georgia locations including the 11 Visitor Information Centers and billboards along the expressways.
2. Continue to provide directional signage for Agritourism venues.
3. Implement Agritourism marketing strategies in cooperation with other state and local agencies, commodity commissions, colleges & universities, and associations.
4. Provide clear rules and regulations that define, support and promote Georgia Agritourism. Work closely with county commissioners and local government officials on issues such as zoning, taxation, insurance, labor costs and conservation use.

#### STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

1. Hire a new employee dedicated to Agritourism. Leverage USDA grant with monies from GDA, and other state government Departments as available.
2. Formally ask Kent Wolfe to perform an Agritourism economic impact study ASAP. (We heard that Kentucky did such a study lately, and Agritourism is rising there approx 30% each year.)
3. Help educate the Governor and legislators about the ECONOMIC benefits of Georgia Agritourism.
4. Find grant and other funding to promote Georgia Agritourism.
5. Advance Agritourism in schools and at Georgia's Ag Day event.
6. Promote Agritourism to the general public via Fall & Spring Agritourism Showcases – a Fri/Sat event at the Atlanta Farmers Market open to the general public.
7. On webpages dedicated to Agritourism, provide information including definitions, and information on conservation use, labor costs, taxes and insurance.





Our steering committee is not ready or willing to disband. We have assigned ourselves tasks that we would like to continue to work on, the newest being developing a catchy slogan for Georgia Agritourism, suggested just this afternoon by one of our members.

We would like to meet in person twice a year to discuss what is happening, our ideas, and how we can make Agritourism a bigger, more organized industry in Georgia. And we would be very pleased to work with new employee(s) of GDA, specializing in Agritourism.

## 5. Homeland Security

### Recommendations:

1. The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) needs to create and staff an Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security Director with authority under the Commissioner to develop and maintain all emergency response and homeland security capabilities, responsibilities and partnerships.
2. GDA needs to develop and maintain plans for all incidents.
  - a. One plan with specific annexes addressing different scenarios.
  - b. This plan needs to also address the different key partners in an event at the local, state, and federal levels.
3. In addition, the GDA Emergency Response Plan should address the long term/large scale needs of the Department and the state during a disaster identifying partners and contractors for partnership and support.
4. GDA needs to maintain current contact information for the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and other partners throughout the state in regards to homeland security and emergency preparedness.
5. GDA field inspectors and law enforcement employees should become involved with the Georgia Suspicious Activity Reporting (GSAR) initiative through the Georgia Information Sharing & Analysis Center (GISAC).
6. GDA needs to investigate and develop notification systems to inform key industry partners of potential disease outbreaks, pest infestations, and natural disasters that relate to their respective industry.
7. GDA should update and develop emergency response teams
  - a. Teams should be developed with members from each of the disciplines of the Department with expert leadership dependent on the incident.
  - b. Additionally, equipment should be allocated to individual teams in order to ensure adequate mobilization.
8. In addition to developing response teams, GDA must ensure these teams are up to date on emergency response training and coordination.
9. GDA should develop exercises based on applicable events/incidents to properly gauge the effectiveness of Department plans and response teams.
10. GDA should develop and update an inventory of equipment within the Department that could be used in an emergency.
  - a. Equipment could be used daily in normal functions as long as it is located within 2 hours of the assigned response region.
11. GDA should research and develop Geospatial Information System (GIS) mapping capabilities.





## 6. Grocery and Retail Inspection

### **Type of Inspections/Frequency of Inspections:**

Current status: The Department's sanitarians conduct inspections based on the risk level of an establishment. The risk level determines both the frequency of the visit and the time spent in each establishment. For example, a convenience store or general store that sells only pre-packaged foods would have a risk 1 tier level; a convenience store that sells hot food or a grocery store with a meat market would have a risk 2 level; a grocery store with a meat market and deli would have a risk 3 level and a grocery store with a seafood, deli, meat and bakery Departments would have a risk 4 level. The Department conducts both routine and sanitation inspections. A routine inspection covers both food safety and economic issues, while a sanitation inspection does not include economic issues. Unfortunately, due to the lack of manpower and the current requirements for an inspection, the Department is not meeting the internal guidelines for frequency of visits.

**Committee recommendations:** *With limited resources, the Department should base the frequency of inspections on the establishment's risk level; however, consideration should be given to a company's history and compliance, whether they invest in 3<sup>rd</sup> party audits, whether a company has a food safety plan and their overall corporate quality assurance.*

*The committee also recommends that no more than one routine inspection should be conducted annually unless problems discovered during an inspections warrant an additional routine inspection. The committee also recognized the importance of standardized and consistent inspections and recommends that the Department needs an enhanced training and audit component to verify the consistency of inspectors.*

*A routine inspection shall include but not limited to:*

- *Sanitation/Risk Factor inspection in all areas of firm*
- *Audit of pest control measures/activity*
- *Audit of required record keeping (HAACP at retail, time only, plan of action, etc.)*
- *Date check: concentration on 5 items with required dating (baby formula, eggs, milk, prepared sandwiches and oysters)*
- *All scales checked*
- *Packages weighted*
- *Scanner verification*

*A sanitation inspection shall include but not limited to:*

- *Sanitation/Risk Factor inspection in all areas of firm*
- *Audit of pest control measures/activity*
- *Audit of required record keeping (HAACP at retail, time only, plan of action, etc.)*





- *Date check: concentration on 5 items with required dating (baby formula, eggs, milk, prepared sandwiches and oysters)*

### **Dating**

Current status: Legislation prohibits the sale of out-of-date milk, baby formula, oysters, eggs and pre-packaged sandwiches. Regulation prohibits food products in package form from being sold or offered for sale at retail or wholesale after the expiration date stated on the label. Each out-of-date item is considered a violation and thus subject to a maximum fine of \$1,000. The food products shall be removed from sale after the pull date on the label and either destroyed or returned to the manufacturer or distributor if the product shows no evidence of spoilage and is not suspected of being a health hazard. Out-of-date food items may be donated to a food bank or similar non-profit organization if the items are wholesome and do not present a health risk.

Depending on the size of the location, up to one third of an inspector's time is spent on checking dates and removing products from the shelves. Many products that are wholesome and safe to eat are being taken off the shelf due to this regulation.

#### **Committee recommendation:**

*The Department has prided itself on science-based regulations. The committee sees no correlation between out of date food and foodborne illness. According to an article in Bloomberg Businessweek, "both the FDA and the USDA have a pretty laissez-faire attitude when it comes to food shelf-life labeling. That's not because they are not concerned for people's health. Mark Harrison, professor of food science at the University of Georgia, points out that most of these dates are not an indicator of safety, rather of quality."*

*The committee recommends that in order to concentrate an inspector's time on protecting the consumer from foodborne illness, regulations should be changed to eliminate the prohibiting out of date sales **except** for baby formula, eggs, milk, prepared sandwiches and oysters. The Department shall ensure that product is safe, wholesome and unadulterated*

### **Scanners/Scales**

Current status: The Department checks every scanner and scale in a store during a routine inspection, taking up valuable time in the inspection process. In a Wal-Mart store, checking every scanner and scale can take up to two hours, or one-third of an inspector's valuable time. Almost 41,000 scales were tested in 2009, and only a mere 85 - .0021% were out of tolerance. Almost 85,000 items were scanned and only 90 - 0011% were non-compliant. Over 74,000 packaged food items were weighed and only 602 were non-compliant. In each of these cases, the error rate was less than one percent - hardly worth two hours of an inspector's visit!

#### **Committee recommendation:**

*Continue to check the scales and scanners no more than once a year for retailers who are compliant and explore options of once every two years or at a frequency consistent with that of commercial weighing devices outside of food facilities in the state, The time saved will allow an inspector to spend his time on a risk-based inspection.*

### **Food Protection Manager Certification/Person in Charge**

Current status: Knowledge and application of Food Code provisions are vital to preventing foodborne illness and injury. The 1993 FDA Food Code required each establishment to assign a "person in charge" to ensure compliance with the Food Code. During an inspection, the "person in charge" must demonstrate knowledge to an inspector by having one of the following:

- A valid food protection manager certificate
- No priority item violations during the current inspection





- Correct responses to a series of food safety related questions as presented in ¶ 2-102.11(C) of the Food Code.

**Committee recommendation:**

*Data collected by FDA suggest that having a certified food manager on-site has a positive effect on preventing the occurrence of certain foodborne illness risk factors in the industry. The committee recommends that the Department adopt rules for the requirement of certification of food protection managers for all food sales establishments. Exemptions should be made for retailers selling only pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous foods. The certified food manager requirement should be phased in by risk factor to give time to get employees certified. Certification is valid for five years.*

**2009- Food Code:**

Current status: Due to recent e Coli and other outbreaks, FDA's 2009 Model Food Code has included cut leafy greens and mechanically tenderized meat among the foods that require additional time and temperature control for safety.

**Committee recommendation:**

*Adopt language from the 2009 Food Code regarding additional time and temperature control requirements for cut leafy greens and mechanically tenderized beef.*

"Cut leafy greens" means fresh leafy greens whose leaves have been cut, shredded, sliced, chopped, or torn. The term "leafy greens" includes iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, butter lettuce, baby leaf lettuce (i.e., immature lettuce or leafy greens), escarole, endive, spring mix, spinach, cabbage, kale, arugula and chard. The term "leafy greens" does not include herbs such as cilantro or parsley. "Mechanically tenderized" means manipulating meat with deep penetration by processes which may be referred to as "blade tenderizing," "jaccarding," "pinning," "needling," or using blades, pins, needles or any mechanical device.

(2) "Mechanically tenderized" does not include processes by which solutions are INJECTED into meat.





## 7. Feed, Seed, and Fertilizer

- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture can be more than a regulatory agency.** The Seed, Fertilizer and Feed Section should be proactive in helping make compliance with state regulations easier for the regulated community. The regulated community needs assistance in understanding the rules and regulations and the Department can be a great resource for the regulated community. The Commissioner can help the Department become an advocate for growers and others in the regulated community and the Department can regulate federal regulations in lieu of EPA, USDA or other federal agencies. Also, the Department can help streamline the export process and assist companies who want to export products.
- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture can help improve existing regulations.** No new regulations are required, but we do need to improve existing regulations so they can give the Seed, Fertilizer and Feed program better regulatory authority. The regulations should be worded so they are more enforceable and so they can address the violative individuals adequately with meaningful monetary penalties or other enforcement actions. A greater presence in the field at places like the seed treaters is needed. **Examples:** Fertilizer dealers, not manufacturers are fined when fertilizers are tested to be deficient. This penalty should go back to the manufacturer and not the dealer. Bad actors that knowingly violate the regulations cannot be adequately fined in order to encourage better compliance .
- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture should become more focused on education and outreach to enhance its' regulatory function.** The Tifton Laboratory expansion provides the Seed, Fertilizer and Feed Section with a wonderful resource for the regulated community. It should be utilized by offering educational, compliance assistance and outreach opportunities to help the regulated community understand the regulatory requirements. The question “can our programs go beyond regulatory?” was posed. The answer from the group was yes it can and it should. There is an opportunity for the Department to be more for the industry and the lab is a great place to do this with educational programs.
- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture should expand sampling and testing methodologies to help maintain compliance among seed dealers, manufacturers and others.** New testing methods could help promote better compliance from the regulated community. The laboratory could benefit from a peer review process that identifies areas for improvement. The seed law could be changed to help give farmers the ability to submit an





“official” seed sample to the lab. Sampling has been cut over the years and a new emphasis should be placed on seed, fertilizer and feed sampling.

- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture must explore fee for service options with the laboratory.** A fee for service program for out of state seed should be explored. This could generate revenue to offset the costs for running samples. The lab must also consider how to offer better service for these possible fee based programs (time, sample quality assurance, etc.).
- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture should consider how to best address the seed labeling law.** Currently, the law doesn't address country of origin for non-agronomic seeds (ex. vegetable seeds). This should change. Also, mixed varieties (refuge in a bag) are not adequately addressed in the current regulations. Technology is moving faster, so should the Department and the regulation process. Perhaps rule adoptions (policy changes related to the regulations) are the best solution. The regulations need to be proactive so future concerns can be addressed before they become problematic.
- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture should establish standards for businesses to help with quality assurance.** Standard business practices could help businesses that are in need of assistance. These standards are not necessarily tied to the regulation, but could be considered preventative practices that help businesses stay in compliance.
- **The Georgia Department of Agriculture should help establish a sampling program or some regulatory response to help deal with chicken litter as a fertilizer.** More verification/testing on chicken litter is needed. Analysis is important for dealers and farmers and should be considered.

**The Georgia Department of Agriculture should examine the sample turn-around times for feed samples.** Testing often takes 4-6 weeks and is too late to address any problems. Can we do better?





## 8. Red Meat and Seafood Inspection

The committee met and discussed the red meat and seafood inspection division of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. We began by discussing where we are currently with the Department and want to share some of that before proceeding to recommendations.

Where are we?

We concluded that meat inspection is a major concern to the general public and the Department should do more to keep the citizens of Georgia supply of red meat and seafood safe, clean and healthy. Food safety, as well as adequate supply is the first response we get when we ask the public what they expect from their Department of Agriculture.

Locally grown, security concerns, consumer confidence, growing demand, and herbicide/pesticide use are of vital concerns and we need to be aware of each and every label placed on our food to make certain the public can rely upon the contents. Labels should state what is in the container and what it states should be in the container, this is not always true. For instance, on some packaging there may be as much as 25% “glazing” on seafood that is not required to be labeled. Another example, ham must state “water added” not the same for seafood shipped from overseas. Net weight may not consider repackaging which may affect the actual Net Weight.

We find many instances of imported seafood not carrying the correct weight, species or labeled as “Alaskan Salmon” but processed in China.

At home our inspectors have developed an excellent reputation, however we find that there is a very small staff to do the inspecting that needs to be done. The entry level salary is so low that if a vacancy is filled there are companies waiting to offer them better salaries once they are trained. Our equipment is in need of repair, upgrade or replacement. We have an older work force which is great from the standpoint of experience, but many of them are nearing retirement and will be leaving the Department in the next few years.

Processors on the committee gave personal examples of having to wait for inspections or not being able to expand because of not having inspectors available when needed. This impedes expansion and the addition of new processor in the industry.

Where do we need to be?

The meat inspection division needs adequate staff and equipment to perform the job. We want our producers and our processors to provide us with clean, safe and healthy food and we need the legislature to provide resources necessary for the Department of Agriculture to provide needed resources.





How do we get there?

- Vacancies in the inspection division need to be filled immediately.
  - Salaries need to be equal to the private sector and competitors.
  - Incentives need to be available to retain experienced personnel.
- Equipment should be repaired and updated.
- Additional positions need to be created for growth and improvement of the division.
  - Improve the Information and Public Relations efforts; we want the public to be aware that we have the safest, healthiest, and least expensive food supply in the world.
  - Look at reducing, eliminating or privatizing jobs or functions that are least important or could better be done by the private sector.
  - Move marketing of commodities to the commodity itself.
  - Look into reducing or eliminating positions or programs that are not necessary.
  - Require overseas processors to use USDA Inspectors paid for by tariffs.
  - Employ liaison (consultant/part time retired) between Department and Processors.

These may not all apply to the red meat and seafood division, but we believe that everything should be on the table and adequately examined for effectiveness. The one extremely important fact we want to emphasize is that public trust in our food supply is critical and should be protected at all cost. Even to the exclusion of some less critical items.





## 9. Food Processing

### I. Training

- The inspectors need specialized training and education that will allow them to adequately and successfully work in a variety of manufacturing plants. This education should allow them to use the knowledge they have gained along with common sense to properly evaluate situations to achieve the goal of food safety and protecting the consumer.
- This type of specialized training must be ongoing so as to include new technology, innovative thinking, and inform the inspectors of current topics of concern.
- The inspectors should be standardized in their training and inspection techniques to accomplish uniformity of inspection across the board, ensuring each facility is receiving the same type and quality of inspection across the State of Georgia.
- An audit component should be included in the program to verify standardization of inspectors and consistency of enforcement actions.
- The policy & procedure inspection manual must be updated and kept current as a part of the standardized inspection process. This manual should be exclusive to the food processing program and cover a multitude of specialized processing methods employed by the firms located in Georgia.
- Cross training of the Food Processing Specialists to conduct dairy inspections according to the Pasteurized Model Ordinance (PMO).
- The quality of the Department's inspections has changed dramatically but can still improve.

### II. Education

- The Food Processing Program should act as educators not only to the public but also to the Georgia food industry. An educational piece should be incorporated into the inspection protocol. This will allow the program to act in a proactive manner rather than reactive.
- Educating the food industry will not only allow industry involvement and help with cooperation, but also strategically employ a small amount of resources for a larger return value.
- This education should include the Department's website to keep industry aware of issues the inspectors may have found in the past and current trends in food safety (kept generic without company names).

### III. Prioritize Funds & Resources

- Ensure that the Department is utilizing its funds and resources optimally.





- Risk based inspection - reducing inspection frequency in firms that receive 3<sup>rd</sup> party audits throughout the year that far exceed the minimum state requirements and remain in compliance. Criteria of the 3<sup>rd</sup> party audits will need to be evaluated (what the audit involves, announced/unannounced, raw/ready-to-eat, etc.) This will allow the Department to focus its resources and funds on the facilities that require more education and oversight. Firms will need at least 1 inspection a year for the Department to be able to issue Certificates of Free Sale.
- Salaries should be comparable to other regulatory agencies so resources and funds are not spent to develop food safety professionals who eventually accept job opportunities elsewhere solely due to salary concerns. Salary increases should be given based on merit, instead of across the board. The employees should be rewarded and respected for their hard work.
- The food processing program needs an epidemiologist on staff. This would allow the Department to take a more active role in foodborne illness outbreaks. The Epidemiologist will conduct surveillance with the community health districts ensuring that illness outbreaks are identified quickly, minimizing the risk of exposure for the citizens of Georgia, and all who consume food processed in the State.
- The Department needs to maintain good working relationships with academia.

#### IV. Cottage Food Industry

- Encourage the growth and development of small farmers, processors, etc. while still incorporating food safety advocacy.
- Locally grown food has become very popular and in turn has encouraged the growth of many local farmers markets. The Department needs to embrace and encourage this trend by allowing these small producers to sell their products. This is an area where the Department can really make a difference.
- Encourage an Association for the farmers' market groups in Georgia which will aid in the dispersal of much needed information to these groups. This will help keep each farmers' market consistent. It will also help individuals who do not know the necessary steps to sell processed food products at these farmers markets.
- The Department could hold a Farmers Market Symposium to address questions and hot topics. This would also allow an opportunity for these individuals to make much needed contacts within the farmers' market community, the Department, and with academia.
- The Department should write an article to be printed in the Market Bulletin providing general information to individuals interested in organizing a farmers' market or selling products at farmers' markets.





## 10. Information Technology

### Mission Statement

Our objective is to identify, deploy, and maintain the cost effective technology and applications that enables each Department to fulfill its objectives to easily share electronic data with other Departments, state agencies, regulated entities and Georgia citizens.

### Vision

Our vision is a world where the Department's employees and stakeholders will have immediate access to the information they need for conducting business, providing timely service, comprehensive decision support, or any other purpose, available to them at any time, any place, and in any format.

### Strategic Goals

- Field Automation
- Internet based Licensing System
- Electronic Data Capture
- Information Management Through a Comprehensive Flexible Database Platform
- Infrastructure Improvement
- Base Level Maintenance
- IT Training both Internally in IT and Externally to Agency Personnel

The below information and recommendation is the result of a high level comprehensive view of the current Information Technology within the Department of Agriculture and our recommendations for going forward directions. The objective is to provide a standard technology platform that can be utilized by all divisions. There is still much work in determining specific software, data communication devices, and re-engineered process to ensure a quality standard across all divisions.

#### I. Current IT Hardware Infrastructure





The Department has deployed Dell servers utilizing a Microsoft network server platform. The goal is to relocate servers to a more controlled secure environment to ensure redundancy and emergency back-up with total system access.

## II. Software Applications

A. We have completed a high level Division assessment of software applications and vendors. From that assessment we have determined that:

1. There is no Agriculture Department wide database, and we recommend issuing an RFI regarding the acquiring of a Department wide database.
2. The suggested RFI requirements are set forth below:

The Georgia Department of Agriculture is seeking a well-qualified vendor who can design, create and maintain an Enterprise Wide application. This application should be using current technologies and relational databases to provide the agency with a flexible, robust and user friendly way to enter and retrieve the various data and information that the agency is responsible for capturing in the execution of its regulatory mandates of inspections and licensing. The system should provide the agency with simple to use interfaces, both internal and external, a customer relations section, reporting services, both canned and ad hoc, and the ability to determine business intelligence needs as necessary. The system will also need to handle all fiscal affairs transaction in conjunction with the different modules for inspection and licensing.

The company should be able to provide first hand training for employees on the application and should support the application, it's upgrades and maintenance without Department assistance.

### a. Current Division Applications

1. Garrison – Consumer Protection Division
  - a. Field Inspection Automation and Management of Food Safety Inspections.
2. Kelly – Pesticides Division
  - a. Plant Industry Division Product Registration
3. Nover – Fuel and Measures Division
  - a. Field Inspection Automation and Management of Fuel, Weights and Package Checking Inspections

### b. Next steps

1. Determine database functionality needed to meet division information requirements linked with required senior management reports.
2. Determine infrastructure needs to support localized software requirements, wireless communications applications, and remote data devices to increase productivity, and provide faster information delivery.
3. Determine web based applications appropriate for customer and employee input that interface with the database for standard report generation.
4. Determine appropriate security personnel required to protect IT infrastructure, and software applications access.
5. Establish emergency processes and procedures.



**III. Internships**

- A. Establish internship program for college & high school students to assist with the following needs:
  - 1. Help Desk Support
  - 2. Division training for following basic applications:
    - a. MS Word
    - b. Excel
    - c. Outlook
    - d. Asset Management
    - e. Other
  - 3. Asset Management reporting requirements

**IV. IT Coordinator for Smaller Divisions**

- A. Helps coordinate Divisions with adoption of technology and integration with their specific requirements.
- B. The IT Coordinator function in each division is proposed to help assess and document ongoing business requirements and Divisional support issues.
- C. This person would be able to help others with support issues to supplement the Help Desk.
- D. The IT Coordinator would report directly to the IT Department.
- E. All administrative access to IT systems must be handled by the IT Department personnel.

**V. IT Requirements and Needs Assessments**

- A. Process Analyst is needed, so that any potential IT request is based upon verified business process requirements.
- B. A Project Management Office should be established and a Project Manager should be appointed for all complex IT implementations.

**VI. Equipment Purchase and Use Policy**

- A. IT equipment, software purchases and software usage must be approved by the IT Director to ensure that all devices and software are compatible system wide. It is important all system components conform with present and future hardware and software applications, as well as data infrastructure requirements.
- B. No personal equipment or devices will be permitted to connect with any state owned equipment with the exception of IT approved home based personal devices to access data networks and information needed during work at home.

**VII. IT/Telecommunications Convergence**

- A. Due to the continuing convergence of IT and Telecommunications, we strongly recommend that all telecommunications, including wireless devices, voice networks, Internet and Extranet communications be placed under the direction of IT.





- B. IT would also be able to serve as a technical adviser to those entities which are regulated to ensure system compatibility and thereby providing the highest level of productivity to both organizations.

#### VIII. IT Five Year Strategic Plan

It is recommended that the IT CIO, working with all divisions, develop and maintain a Five Year Strategic Plan in order to anticipate future needs while ensuring planned growth based on verifiable business needs. This plan would be a supporting document to the overall Agency Strategic Plan. Once the Agency plan is in place and can be consumed and understood, an IT Strategic planning committee could be convened to begin work on the Five Year Strategic Plan.

## 11. Animal Protection

### Process

The Animal Protection Steering Committee has convened twice since Commissioner Gary Black appointed us on Monday, February 28, 2011 – with the first meeting on Saturday, April 2, 2011, and the second meeting on Thursday, May 26, 2011. Both meetings yielded productive conversation and debate from the diversity of interests represented – animal welfare & rescue, animal control, breeders, hunters, veterinarians, and existing Animal Protection personnel.

Reaching a majority consensus on each issue in order to yield a formal recommendation will be an evolutionary and iterative process as we tackle the complexities inherent to Animal Protection and its various stakeholders. We anticipate that our product will be worth the time and effort it takes to reach the points of consensus that collectively will yield formal recommendations.

Conversations expected to lead to an initial set of formal recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- The implementation of a modern data-entry and reporting system based on open standards and open-source technologies that will generate a rich body of data to be used by the Department to improve the execution of its regulatory responsibilities. Such a system would yield automated operational analysis that would enable Animal Protection to utilize scarce resources in the most efficient and effective manner possible through focused and targeted resource allocation and tasking. Depending on requirements, it may be possible to implement such a system at little or no cost to the Department or the taxpayers of Georgia.
- Various strategies for spay/neuter initiatives. A key focus is on making improvements to Georgia's spay/neuter license plate program – specifically regarding how funds are distributed to recipients, and the percentage of monies collected that fund spay/neuter initiatives.
- The need for additional staff to effectively carry out Animal Protection's responsibilities.
- The maximum number of litters allowed that would not require Department regulation.





## 12. Agriculture Chemicals

Yes we do need the Department of Agriculture.

The new customer service approach is a great initiative and should be continued along with the “business attire.” The consensus is that this initiative will go a long way to help the DOA reach the goal of being the premier agency in Georgia thus helping with inter agency/legislature interaction.

It is highly recommended that when making policy decisions the DOA make a priority of protecting the public. There is some concern that this principle is forgotten at times.

### Issues and specific avenues to address issues

#### 1. Non-compliance – unlicensed applicators

- a. Make information more accessible on the web site etc. This will make it easier for the public to get licensing information and also self police.
- b. Work with Homeowner Associations and local municipalities to require DOA applicator license to work. (Do pilot programs.)
- c. Have information in Spanish (This is a function of UGA Extension. The question was asked, should license testing, etc. be available in Spanish. The general consensus was no.)
- d. Look for online efficiencies in regard to training etc.
- e. When time is found from other efficiencies consider more cold stops of applicators by inspectors.’
- f. There are still some legs in the License number on the truck however there needs to be a cost/benefit analysis.
- g. The committee supports an increased level of enforcement for non compliant applicants AFTER a first warning/opportunity to become compliant.

#### 2. Efficiencies – Find ways to be more efficient and redirect money to needy programs. (Note: consider getting stakeholder input during appropriation of new resources – i.e. Get help prioritizing)

- a. Online – utilize electronic billing, registration, training, etc. whenever possible. (Currently, I believe that the Pesticide Division still requires that new labels be





submitted in paper format even though some registrants upload labels to ALSTAR which is a public site accessible to the states. I would be a benefit to the registrants if electronic submissions in this area were acceptable.)

- b. The Technical Committee supports legislation to keep fines in the DOA to help with programs with stakeholder input.
  - c. Take care of Staff in salary and responsibility – resources are lost when retraining, down time, unhappy employees, etc.
  - d. Fees – Keep fees in the Pesticide Department
  - e. Fees – consider going to a two-year registration cycles (helps both the stakeholder and the Department. (This should be vetted with the whole of the regulated community to ensure buy-in.)
  - f. Fees – stagger fees throughout the year, (Unless this is a benefit to the Pesticide Division, I do not see this as a high priority. If the Department sees this as a major benefit, staggering should be done at the registrant level and not by product to minimize any confusion. For two-year registrations, a benefit of splitting with half in odd years and half in even years is that revenue stream would be constant.)
  - g. Utilize credit card payment options
  - h. Reduce redundancies within the Department
- 3. Customer Service Mentality**
- a. Training of inspectors – Continue the good technical training the inspectors (good inspectors have accurate knowledge). But also train the inspectors in good customer relations.
  - b. Make information more accessible (see Efficiencies, Non-compliance)
  - c. Clean Day was a great program for customers. Look for partnerships etc. to keep this going.
  - d. Look for ways to enhance self reporting and self policing. This is more efficient for the “Class A good customer” (less time spent with inspectors). (Note: The DOA has enforcement responsibility and can not be interpreted as “too close to industry.”)
- 4. Partnerships – Look for New or Enhanced partnerships**
- a. Industry – clean day sponsors, information exchange, self reporting opportunities
  - b. Do pilot programs but do not hold salaries subject to the success of the program. (Have ‘can do’ or “can try” mentality.
  - c. Counties, Municipality, etc. utilize in information flow and noncompliance enforcement.
- 5. Training – There are lots of opportunity to enhance the training of inspectors, applicators, public, etc. The DOA should look for these opportunities as part of the other issues (customer service, noncompliance, etc.) as well as for the need for everyone to continue with their education.**
- 6. Advisory Board – There is a need for stakeholder input as programs progress. Recommend reinstating the Pesticide Advisory Board comprised of the current Technical committee on an “as needed” basis. Details can be worked out internally.**





7. **Soil Fumigation – There was some discussion about a separate or sub set license for soil fumigation.**

## 13. Farmers Markets

### Farmers Market Committee Report

The Committee has identified 4 goals for the State Farmers Markets:

1. Promote the availability of fresh produce in Georgia
2. Ensure that produce at all state farmers markets is safe and wholesome
3. Create jobs and economic development in the Agriculture industry
4. Generate revenues to support the operation of the farmers markets

Furthermore, the Committee has recognized several strategies to better achieve the goals listed above. These strategies have been broken down into 3 core areas; Vision, Education, and Planning.

- 1) Vision
  - a) Develop a vision for the markets' future that balances the demand for industrial uses (warehouses, processing, food service) with the nostalgia of direct to consumer sales.
  - b) Partner with local communities to support the growing demand for locally grown produce and community farmers markets.
  - c) Identify creative new uses for their farmers markets that will benefit the agriculture community. A few examples are; demonstration kitchens, publicly available licensed kitchens, shared packing facilities for small growers, and agritourism attractions.
  - d) This steering committee should continue to hold regular meetings to assist the Department of Agriculture in future plans and decisions.
- 2) Education
  - a) Make a strong effort to educate legislators and the general public on the changing nature of farmers markets and the benefits that they provide.





- b) Inform legislators of the revenues generated by the farmers markets and why that revenue should be reinvested into the markets.
- 3) Planning
  - a) Work with outside consultants to perform a building and infrastructure audit of market facilities. These audits should include both building maintenance as well as a real-estate market analysis.
  - b) A plan should then be developed for long term facility requirements and how the Department plans meet these future needs.
  - c) A business audit should be performed with the goal of streamlining the business and accounting processes for the markets.
  - d) The Department of Agriculture should work with the Department of Economic Development and One Georgia to find funding for these audits and improvements.
  - e) Revenues generated by the state farmers markets should be reinvested into the state farmers markets to help the markets achieve their goals.





## 14. Public Relations

### Suggestions, Comments and Actions:

Work more closely with Georgia Master Gardeners. They have a good newsletter and a network that covers the entire state. They can help get messages out such as helping to promote the Market Bulletin.

Action: Pamela Keene introduced Arty to Krissy Slagle. She has been added to our media contact list. The Master Gardener newsletter has already carried the article Arty wrote about saving the Market Bulletin.

Suggestion/Comment: Arty mentioned he had discussed with the Commissioner that he wanted to discontinue our clipping service. This service costs approximately \$1,300 per year. Many articles can be found through our electronic clipping service, or through Google searches or other internet searches. The group concurred.

Action: Arty moved ahead and discontinued the service.

Suggestion/Comment: Reconsider the frequency of press briefings. Instead of once a month, it was suggested that it would be better if these briefings were scheduled quarterly. It was stated that the Department may be asking too much of reporters. The time of day of the briefings should also be reconsidered – from morning to afternoon since reporters normally have briefings with their own staff in the morning, and the afternoon would be a better time for them. Afternoon would also allow reporters outside Atlanta a better chance to make it here without having to get up very early or coming the day before. A conference call dial-in was also suggested so that reporters located in south Georgia can take more easily take part. It was also suggested that the briefings should allow open time for questions. (This was already the case.)

Suggestion/Comment: Public Affairs has the capability to reach thousands of people via social media at little cost. Learning to harness and work with this new media should be explored and utilized. It offers great possibilities without going through traditional media outlets which can filter and edit your message.





Action: The Press Office is moving forward on Facebook and social media endeavors. Jessica Holthaus is the Press Office's point person on social media and serves on the Department's social media strategic planning team. The Press Office updates our Facebook page daily, usually with several announcements, photos or links. Arty, Jessica and intern Katie McCabe are posting to Facebook and Twitter. The Department has 956 Facebook friends and more than 600 others in addition to these who "like" our page. The Press Office is using Facebook and Twitter to get out food recall messages in addition to traditional media. There is even a Twitter account just for food recalls.

Suggestion/Comment: Arty brought up his desire for himself and others in his office to visit farms and farmers markets around the state to take more photographs for the Facebook page and for the Department website as well as for employees to use in Powerpoint demonstrations. It was suggested that instead of traveling and trying to get all the photos on its own, the Department consider pictures provided free for use by ag-related groups (such as those on Flickr from Peanut Commission.) UGA was suggested as a source for photos as well.

Suggestion/Comment: The Department's mission statement sounds "dated" and needs to be rewritten if the Department even decides to have one. The mission statement also had become something of a joke among employees because of the "state-of-the-art technology" clause. Here is the last mission statement the Department had:

*The mission of the Georgia Department of Agriculture is to provide excellence in services and regulatory functions, to protect and promote agriculture and consumer interests, and to ensure an abundance of safe food and fiber for Georgia, America and the world by using state-of-the-art technology and a professional workforce.*

Suggestion/Comment: The group agreed with the new format (adopted earlier this year) to send out announcements from FDA about food recalls.

Suggestion/Comment: Work with Georgia FACES (UGA) and coordinate our activities/press releases with some of the things they do. Arty mentioned that he and his office are in contact with Faith Peppers and Sharon Dowdy and they receive the Department's press releases and articles, and have used them on occasion.

Action: The Press Office now regularly uses items from FACES on Facebook.

Suggestion/Comment: Teresa Jenkins presented her plans for a more active outreach program of speaking to various groups and exhibiting at other affairs and events. Her plans would require additional staffing. She also suggested that such outreach activities be coordinated through the office of Consumer Services to keep track of employees speaking to the public on any given day, to assist with materials needed and to avoid duplication of effort between offices.

Suggestion/Comment: Arty also expressed his desire to have another staff person or persons to assist with all the current responsibilities of the Press Office and to help stay "in front of the issues" and to have a more "pro-active message and presence – to initiate instead of always having to just respond."

Suggestion/Comment: Non-Department members of the team said they were impressed with what the Public Affairs Division is able to accomplish. "I don't see how you do it" was one comment.



**Other Actions and Updates:**

Teresa Jenkins and other staff met with the Governor's Office of Customer Service earlier this year to examine if a "Call Handling Optimization Project" is practical for our 800 line. While this project/program does give a lot of data about where calls go and how fast they are answered, it was not suitable for our 800 line as we do not have a "call center" in the strict sense. Also, it was expensive to set up.

Teresa Jenkins has taught two 3-day courses so far on telephone usage called "The Art of Exceptional Customer Service."

In order to enhance professional development and interaction with other professionals, Commissioner Black granted approval for Arty to become a member of the Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture and Teresa to become a member of Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals.

Melanie Hollingsworth, the Department's new Nutritionist Coordinator, has been working with Arty and Jessica in the Press Office to come up with material for Facebook/Twitter and articles and to create videos and live-feeds.

The daily News Briefs only went to top administrative staff initially, but is now going to all employees of the Department. It has produced a lot of positive comments and will probably go to the new website as a scrolling "news-feed" type of service. The goal is to make the Department's website a center of agricultural information and news.





## 15. Structural Pest Control

### Regulations

#### Where do we need to be?

- Review of the current rules and make rule amendments that offer clear and concise regulations to minimize the need for interpretation by industry and regulatory officials.

#### How do we get there?

- Utilize an initial list of regulatory issues identified by the SPCTG to be reviewed (Ventilation, CEU requirements, Form II, Electronic Service Tickets, Label verses Minimum Standards, Treatment of Schools by Unlicensed Individuals, etc.)
- Continue the SPCTG to work on the specific recommendations and changes for the issues raised
- Solicit additional issues and information from:
  - Pest control associations
  - Pesticide suppliers
  - Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Determine which issues will require legislation or regulations to change and which issues could be addressed by Department or Commission guidance documents and policies
- Provide recommendations to the Department of Agriculture and Structural Pest Control Commission for review and comment

Recommend a plan to revise the approved recommendations

### **Department and Industry Relationship / Enforcement:**





### Where do we need to be?

- Development of a consistent relationship between the Department and Industry that fosters trust, collaboration and understanding

### How do we get there?

- Inspectors are the main and most direct contact with the Industry and significant focus should be placed on these individuals
  - Inspectors should be evaluated based on the Department's compliance assistance priority to ensure an ability understand, exhibit and deliver the Department's objectives.
  - This can be accomplished by utilizing additional training for inspectors focusing on those individuals identified as requiring it
  - Inspector evaluations should be utilized to focus direction on how inspectors are progressing to meet the Department's initiatives and goals
- Implementation of a simple e-mail survey that is sent to every PMP after a company inspection that will facilitate responses on specific directives the Department is attempting to accomplish
  - An example of this approach being utilized for the purpose of ensuring consistency among several inspectors in a similar situation as the Department is noted below:
    - Were there any areas of conflicting information or interpretation that require resolution? (if yes, explain in detail)
    - Was the review informational?
    - Were there compliance issues and did the inspector give a solution?
    - What could we have done better?
  - Department management can then compile the information provided for identification of issues requiring action, additional training needs for inspectors and improve overall consistency in the program
  - Additionally PMP's that are uninformed of the Department's objectives and continue to harbor ill feelings from past issues can begin to become part of the process and experience firsthand the Department's outreach efforts
- Industry members that maintain ill feelings and distrust towards the Department for past issues need to become more involved and understand that the Department has a job to do and be receptive to assistance from the Department
  - The group believes this process is an excellent first step in this process, by involving many operators to identify issues and more importantly offer solutions
  - More industry involvement with the Commission, utilizing outreach from associations and Commission members
- Industry and the Department need to recognize and get the message out that the Department has made and continues to enhance compliance assistance efforts
- **Enforcement:**





Where do we want to be?

- Industry having a clear understanding of the enforcement hearing process and all options available to PMP's

How do we get there?

- Department provide the current enforcement hearing process and options to the industry utilizing:
  - Commission meetings
  - Association publications
  - Training courses

**Consumer Complaints:**

Where do we need to be?

- PCO's having the ability to work with the consumer, providing it is not a serious situation or the consumer does not want to have any involvement with the PCO to address any concerns prior to a formal investigation being initiated

How do we get there?

- Develop criteria within the Department that would allow for PCO involvement with customer inquiries or complaints, when appropriate

**Structural Pest Control Commission Issues:**

Where do we need to be?

- Committed, involved and professional Industry representation on the Commission

How do we get there?

- Discussion took place about imposing term limits on commission members and numerous options were presented, but imposing term limits would require a law change. The Commissioner has the discretion to appoint members to the Structural Pest Control Commission and this process should continue with consideration of the above information on Industry representation
- Development of a sub-committee of PCO's from geographically and economically diverse businesses to serve the purpose of involving more industry members in the legislative process and grooming future Commission members
- **Industry Training and Requirements:**

Where do we want to be?

- It has been expressed by the group that there should be a review as to recertification points for both Certified Operators and Registered Technicians





- This concern comes from the redundancy of some of the training when trying to meet the hours and categories for recertification
- Concerns were expressed that some of the training has become more of a “sales pitch” by vendors than actual rules and regulation information.

How do we get there?

- Have an evaluation from the Structural Pest Control Commission, approved by the Commissioner, to review the current requirements, and see where, if any, hours and categories can be reduced or combined for more impactful and effective training
- Combine IPM with HPC, and PTX with WDO, since they are so intertwined

**Legislative / State Issues:**

Where do we need to be?

- Determine needs for reinstating Pesticide Amnesty Day for Georgians to take advantage of a program to properly dispose of unwanted and unused pesticide products throughout the state. Providing an avenue to reduce the amount of unwanted pesticides in Georgia and ensure proper disposal of these materials to protect Georgia’s environment

How do we get there?

- Develop a workgroup to determine the following
  - Research past processes for Pesticide Amnesty days
  - Research other States Pesticide Amnesty Programs
  - Identify opportunities for program improvement
  - Determine partners for the initiative
  - Determine opportunities and avenues for funding the initiative
  - Present findings for the Commissioner to review and consideration





## 16. Commodity Promotion

1. Cooperate with each other to fight for equitable management at farm markets.
2. Encourage cross promotions among commodity commissions.
  - a. For example, the Apple commission creates a marketing campaign with the Peanut Commission to cross promote apples and peanut butter.
3. Move the Georgia Grown program into the Commodities Promotions Department
  - a. Allow for marketing of Georgia grown products and each commodity industry within Georgia then within the southeast/nation
  - b. Promote Local Grown
  - c. Evaluate Area Marketing Coordinators with ability to do promotions
4. Fix the income/expense problem with the Farmers Markets so that the revenue generated by any of the Farmers Markets comes back to the Department, not the treasury.
5. Create a Speakers Bureau and other marketing programs to promote Georgia grown produce and markets
  - a. Create promotions of each commodity commission *within* each commodity industry to educate each industry of the work and benefits of each commodity commission...not just an annual report
  - b. Create positive, aggressive commercials selling GA AG
6. Create a specific and useful webpage for the Commodity Promotions Department
  - a. Include:
    - i. If available, links to all the Commodity Commission web pages
    - ii. Recipes and information for all commodities included within the GA Commodity Commissions
    - iii. Facebook page or other social media
    - iv. YouTube videos to provide information and cooking demonstrations
7. More personnel and administrative support for the commodity promotions Department
  - a. To aid in compliance and enforcement
  - b. To aid in development of marketing and promotional programs
    - i. Include cooking demonstrations for trade shows as well as television and internet use
  - c. To aid in development of recipes and answer consumer questions





8. Add more auditors for the state of Georgia to allow greater control of each commodity industry and (for lack of a better term) to create fear and a seriousness that is currently not present
9. Streamline accounting for the entire Dept of Agriculture
10. Allow for electronic registration and electronic payments for all payments to the Dept of Agriculture, but particularly for the registration and payment from participants in each commission.

Additional Comments from the Group:

- Critical that the Ag community continue to thrive
- Continue to bring various groups together to support Commodities
- How can the Commissions work together
- We have to pitch our own story
- All Commodity Commissions need to go to the Legislature and pitch for more funding
- Take the blinders off WE ARE GEORGIA AGRICULTURE





## 17. Equine Health

### IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE ATTENTION:

#### IMPOUNDMENT OF EQUINE

The GDA's involvement with the impoundment of equine must receive immediate attention. It is the opinion of the majority of this committee that the DOA should cease impound operations. Instead, the GDA should focus its attention on other areas. The impoundment of equine and the prosecution of cases under Title 4 Chapter 13 needs to be handled in the local communities.

1. GDA should focus on education of local law enforcement and prosecutors so that they may be equipped to handle their own cases.
2. A task force with a state wide prosecutor for HCE violations should be formed, at no cost to the GDA. A volunteer prosecutor would be utilized, handling cases statewide, as well as educating local prosecutor offices on how to handle such cases.
3. A list of volunteer impound facilities should be compiled. As very few counties currently maintain their own equine impound facility, volunteers will be needed to handle local impounds.
4. Forfeiture laws should be reviewed to shorten the time to obtain legal ownership of equine once impounded.
5. Promote castration clinics statewide, and provide education about better breeding practices.
6. Turn the current Mansfield and Decatur impound facilities over to non-profit organizations. Horses impounded by counties could be brought to these facilities. The non-profit organization would be responsible for fundraising and grant seeking to obtain operation funds.





## 18. Fuel and Measures

Item1: A gas pump mechanic certification program.

The division already certifies scale and l.p. meter mechanics. The division would be able to more closely monitor who is installing commercial gas pumps in Georgia and would be able to standardize the practice. At the same time a certified mechanic would be able to place a new or repaired gas pump into service without the station having to wait for Fuel & Measures to conduct an inspection.

Item 2: Training

The committee feels that a more structured training program would enhance the inspections conducted by the division. This item is already being addressed and implemented.

Item 3: Restructuring the Divisions fee structure.

When House Bill 1055 passed in 2010 it gave the Division the authority to charge fees for gas pump inspections. The General assembly then cut the division's operating budget by over two million dollars. As a result a \$20 per pump registration fee was put into place by state regulation to recoup the lost revenue. The committee believes that the division could spread out its fees among all regulatory areas, i.e. scale, l.p. meter, ECT and as a result would be able to lower the gas pump fee.





## 19. Animal Health

### RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Traceability:

- Implemented by USDA in conjunction with GDA
- Plan to work toward that is updated yearly
- Allow the veterinarians or stockyards to place the tags in the animals ears
- Producers given tags to install also
- Work toward tags that are visually readable or possibly EID
- If we are going to compete globally we need a traceability program

ii. Education:

- Educate consumers and farmers
- Customer service to the farmers
- Proactive to the farmers not reactive to problems
- GDA needs to work with the producers at the sale barns and with the FFA , Farm Bureau , Georgia Cattlemen's Association, Young Farmer Programs to help educate farmers
- Consumers need to be educated on the programs that are in place for Food Safety and Consumer Protection
- Constant education of the consumers

iii. Training:





- GDA needs to have resources to combine positions or cross training across jobs
  - Don't do away with the Market News Service maybe cross train them to supplement the Livestock Inspectors
- iv. Transportation:
- Standardize laws between states on transportation issues (weights and axle sizes)
  - Ga DOT needs to let GDA know what changes will affect farmers in transporting agricultural products and GDA will inform everyone on what changes have occurred
- v. Animal Welfare:
- GDA should stay involved and set a standard of what animal welfare should be

#### **GENERAL COMMENT**

Education of consumers and farmers is the biggest role that GDA needs to play in the future





## 20. Poultry

### Georgia Egg Commission

The Georgia Egg Commission plays an important role in promoting the state's commercial egg industry. GDA's oversight of this program is appropriate; however, it is important that the commission maintain its autonomy to make sound producer-based decisions about how to manage its budget, personnel and promotional programs.

Food safety and animal welfare are critically important topics for Georgia's egg producers. The Group recommends that GDA and the Commissioner consider ways to work with industry to deliver the message to consumers and policy makers that Georgia eggs are safe to consume and that Georgia egg producers' have a high standard of animal welfare for the birds in their care.

### Consumer Protection

Compliance with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Egg Safety Rule is critically important to Georgia's commercial egg producers. GDA's Consumer Protection Division has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement to conduct inspections that are required by this rule. The Group recommends that GDA devote sufficient resources to implement a sound state-based inspection program that will demonstrate to FDA that Georgia can handle these inspections in accordance with federal standards and requirements. The Egg Safety Rule is complex and subject to interpretation; therefore, the Group recommends that GDA inspectors be well trained and that an outreach effort by GDA be maintained on an ongoing basis between the Department and commercial egg producers so that there is a clear understanding about the expectations and regulatory requirements placed on industry by this rule.

### Poultry Market News

GDA's Poultry Market News provides valuable marketing and statistical information which is used in the marketplace by Georgia's broiler producers. The Daily Dock Quoted prices distributed by Poultry Market News are vitally important to Georgia broiler producers, as well as buyers and seller in other poultry producing states. The service is recognized nationally and internationally for its accuracy and validity. Recent budget reductions and retirements have reduced the staffing level in this Department to 2 fulltime employees. While the timeliness and quality of the reports have been maintained through these reductions, the Group recommends that GDA give consideration to how the service will be sustained on a long term basis.





### **Livestock and Poultry Field Force**

GDA's Livestock and Poultry Field Forces play a number of important roles for the poultry industry – overseeing and enforcing Georgia's Dead Animal Disposal Act, supporting the Georgia Environmental Division's regulatory responsibilities for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations pursuant to the Clean Water Act, engaging in avian disease surveillance at flea markets and bird sales, and responding to natural disasters and avian disease events which impact the poultry industry. Regarding the mortality disposal method inspections conducted by Livestock and Poultry Field Forces, the group recommends that the necessity and/or frequency of these inspections be evaluated.

While recognizing the realities of the state's budget situation, the Group encourages GDA to consider the resources needed to maintain this Department's ability to respond to the industry's needs in this very diverse and demanding program area. The Group recommends continuing the CAFO MOA with Georgia EPD. The Field Force's role in assisting industry in responding to natural disasters and avian disease incidents is vitally important. The Group recommends that the Department continue its practice of reaching out to industry and other state agencies and GDA resources such as the Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network when planning/preparing for these events.

### **Georgia Poultry Laboratory Network**

The Group had high praise for the level of service and professionalism exhibited by the GPLN leadership and staff. Federal regulatory requirements in food safety and animal health, along with voluntary programs by the poultry industry, are placing an ever increasing demand on GPLN to process lab submissions in a timely manner. GPLN provides significant value to the state's broiler and commercial egg industries by protecting the health of the state's flocks. The impact of recent budget reductions has caused GPLN to streamline operations in order to find efficiencies and in some cases close branch labs to reduce operational costs. With the completion of the main lab's replacement facility around 2013, it will be important that resources be available to utilize this new resource. The Group commented on the strong cooperation which exists between the State Veterinarian and the GPLN Director. This relationship is a very important factor in the delivery of key services to the state's poultry industry. GPLN staff also plays an important role in preparing for and responding to natural disasters and avian disease events. The Group recommends that this resource be supported and coordinated with other GDA resources which have similar purposes.

### **Role of GDA and Commissioner**

A recurring theme in the Group's discussions was a recommendation that the Commissioner be an aggressive advocate for all of agriculture in the areas of public education about traditional agricultural practices, regulatory and legislative deliberations, and international trade opportunities. While these areas are not specifically required by state law, the Group believes that it is an appropriate role for the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture.





## 21. International Trade

The discussion centered on the Department's current International Trade program. The discussion was separated into two sections: the current initiatives and capabilities of the program and the future expansion or contraction.

The International Trade program currently focuses its efforts on finished goods and added value products. The program does not have a focus on commodities from the state.

There is no domestic trade aspect of the program.

The program also does not partner with other agencies to maximize trade opportunities on behalf of the state.

SUSTA is the primary vehicle that the GDA International Trade program utilizes for global trade.

GDA develops Unified Export Strategies to present to annual SUSTA meetings where "activity managers" present and design a proposal for an event

There are both inbound and outbound missions. Outbound missions should be focused on exposure of products while inbound missions should be focused on closing.

### Recommendation

GDA should be more involved in supporting trade program funding at the national level, USDA and Congress, in light of increased budget scrutiny.

The GDA International Trade program should develop a comprehensive trade strategy and a sense of cooperation that encompasses other programs within GDA, other state agencies with a similar focus, and other state partners.

i.e. Economic Development, GA Ports Authority, UGA, etc

The International Trade program should also shift its perception of SUSTA to simply a resource of the program instead of the only outlet for trade work.

