



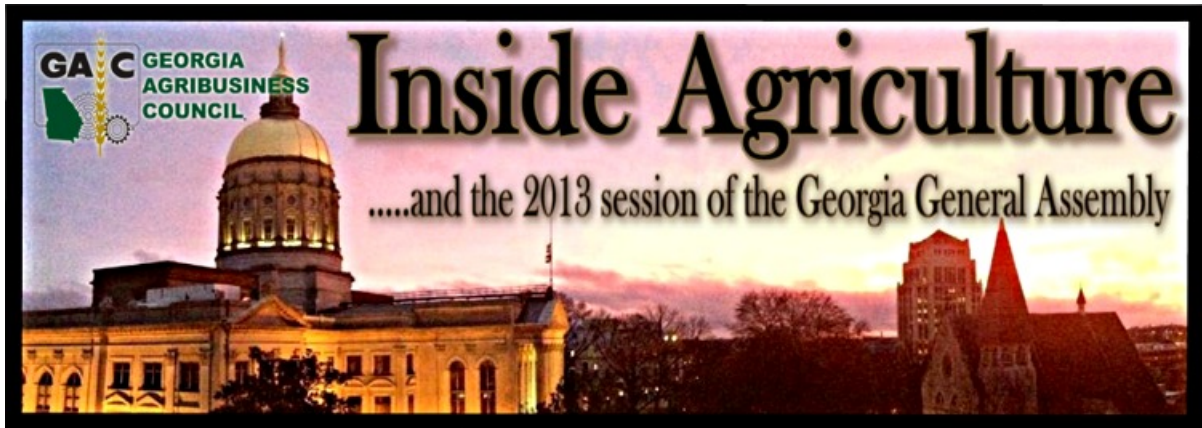
OUR MISSION:  
"TO ADVANCE THE  
BUSINESS OF  
AGRICULTURE  
THROUGH ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT,  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
STEWARDSHIP AND  
EDUCATION TO  
IMPROVE THE  
QUALITY OF LIFE FOR  
ALL GEORGIANS."

# GEORGIA AGRIBUSINESS COUNCIL

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Volume 22, No. 11

Published by the Georgia Agribusiness Council, Inc.

March 29, 2013

## DONE!



Lawmakers powered through this legislative session with determination and **we are pleased with what passed...as well as what didn't.** From the morning start on January 14 until the late night finish on March 28, lawmakers worked effectively and efficiently. We are pleased with the results of this legislative session and we have focused on issues that stand tallest among the diverse industry interests. **Many thanks to GAC members for being vocal during the process.** As the final gavel fell Thursday night/Friday morning, we exited the Gold Dome pleased with the advances made for agriculture again this session. **Many thanks to our friends at Southeast AgNet for covering GAC activities this legislative session - [click here to listen to our comments.](#)**

**After eleven busy weeks of advocating for the ag industry, we have boiled the session down to 12 bills to feature in this Sine Die edition.** While the legislative session is complete, there is still much work to do with the new laws and continuing our work to clarify the benefits of the tax reform legislation that passed last year. Before we get to the highlights, we hope you'll **check out this video with GAC member and House freshman Rep. Sam Watson** as he reflects on his first legislative session - good stuff!

★★★★★

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Production Alliance

Rep. Sam Watson - First Year in the Ge...



**Here's a look at bills of interest from the 2013 legislative session.** This was not only a good session for ag - it was a good experience in helping us better understand the interests and postures of many new Members of the Georgia General Assembly. We're grateful to have many legislative friends to our industry issues, but we also recognize there is much work to do to better educate others about the challenges agriculture faces - especially on the environmental front. Here we go:

#### TAXES/FEEES:

#### **HB 304 - Freeport exemption; applicability to fertilizer production processes; clarify**

This was a priority issue for GAC this session and we are very pleased it



received strong support from start to finish. It simply elaborates on the Freeport tax exemptions already in state law by **clarifying**

**that raw materials used for blending into custom fertilizer mixtures are exempt from property taxes.**

This bill became necessary when we learned of two counties



Chairman Tom McCall

this past year that did not recognize the exemption in state law, so we sought this necessary clarity. It passed all committees and both the Legislative Chambers without a dissenting vote including a 46-0 vote in the Senate on Monday. We very much appreciate **House Ag Chairman Tom McCall** for authoring the bill and **Senate Ag Chairman John Wilkinson** for handling it on the Senate

floor. It awaits the Governor's signature.

#### **HB 197 - Ad valorem tax; land subject to a forest land conservation use covenant**

This bill by **Rep. Jay Powell** to grant easements on conservation use property and allows for the transfer of these covenant-protected lands among other improvements also reached the Governor's desk. We congratulate the **Georgia Forestry Association** on their management of this legislation and we appreciate the contact made by several GAC members to help keep this bill from picking up damaging amendments that were threatening it during debate. We also thank GAC friend **Richard Royal** for his work in crafting this bill.

**HB 268 - Agricultural products dealers** - This bill sets a permit structure in place at the Georgia Department of Agriculture and establishes new bonding limits for dealers of various crops including grains, fruits, pecans, vegetables, and cotton. Of particular significance, it also **eliminates**



JOHN DEERE



**AgSouth Farm Credit, ACA**

**Dow AgroSciences**

**Monsanto**



**AgTechnologies LLC**

**Bill Jones Farms**

**Brookscow Dairy LLC**

**CoBank, ACB**

**Coggins Farm Supply**

**Color Burst**

**Dewitt Produce Company Inc.**

**Georgia Cattlemen's Association**

**Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Assn.**

**\*Georgia Green Industry Association**

**Georgia Pork Producers Association**

**Georgia Power**

**Georgia State University Applied &**

**Environmental Microbiology**

**Georgia Young Farmers Association**

**Hays, LTI**

**J.E.T. Farms Georgia Inc.**

**NG Turf, Inc.**

**SafEnviron, Inc.**

**Sconyers Gin & Warehouse Co.**

**The Turfgrass Group**

**\*USA Poultry & Egg Export Council**



**Agri-Business Supply Inc.**

**AgSouth Genetics LLC**

**American Peanut Shellers Association**

**APT Advance Trailer & Equipment**

**Berrien Peanut Co.**

**Chula Peanut & Grain Co. Inc.**

**Coley Gin and Fertilizer**

**CSA Farms, Inc.**





Rep. Buddy Harden

### requirements for double bonding of cotton dealers that have warehouses.

The support of this bill has come from a broad range of growers and we appreciate the work of **Rep. Buddy Harden** of engaging GAC and the Southeastern Cotton Ginners Association in this legislation. It is now headed to the desk of Governor Deal.

#### AGRICULTURE:

**SB 91 – "Emerging Crops Fund Act"** - What started off as a piece of legislation to repeal the "Emerging Crops Fund Act" that was enacted thirty years ago but never funded has now been repurposed to **provide the framework for future loan programs** to greater serve the changing needs of agriculture. The effort to coordinate giving this bill new life was made possible through **House Appropriation Chairman Terry England, House Ag Chairman Tom McCall, Rep. Jay Roberts, and Sen. Tyler Harper** – Sen. Harper being the original author of the bill. GAC is pleased to see this step toward new loan programs that gives farmers additional funding opportunities.

#### **HB 298 - Agricultural Commodity Commission for Georgia Grown Products; create** - The Georgia Grown Commodity

Commission bill by **Rep. Robert Dickey** made it to the finish line. The board of this group will be made up of the



following individuals: the Commissioner of Agriculture, President of Georgia Farm Bureau, one non-legislator elected by both the House and Senate Ag Committees, and five producers that represent the broad spectrum of Georgia agriculture selected by those previously mentioned. Producers and elected members of the committee would be selected to serve three-

year terms. **Ag Chairman John Wilkinson** carried the bill in the Senate, where it passed by a vote of 49-0. Ultimately, the goal of the commission will be to maximize the promotion of Georgia agricultural products and awareness throughout the southeast and the country. GAC is proud to be a Georgia Grown member. For more information on the Dept. of Agriculture's Georgia Grown marketing initiative please visit [www.georgiagrown.com](http://www.georgiagrown.com).

**SB 97 - Agricultural Commodity Commission for Beef; create** – Two GAC members, **Senate Ag Chairman John Wilkinson** and **Rep. Sam Watson** tag-teamed to deliver this newly created beef commission. The Commission will be made up of 3 beef producers, 1 milk producer, and 1 person involved with the marketing of livestock. Fees paid to the commodity commission will be assessed at no more than \$1 per head of cattle that will go directly toward paying for research projects, educational resources, and marketing material. Congratulations to the **Georgia Cattlemen's Association** for their work on this bill that is now headed to the desk of Governor Deal.

**SB 145 - Agritourism - Senator Bill Heath's** legislation that allows for land held in conservation use covenants for at least a year to be used for farm weddings as well as host not for profit "equestrian performance events" made it to the finish line on the final day. This bill picked up support from state leadership along the way, and GAC is excited about the expanded agritourism opportunities created from these activities. It will soon be signed by Governor Deal.

**HR644 - House Study Committee on Timber Security; create** – The forest industry has a \$25 billion impact on the Georgia economy, and 92% of Georgia's 24 million acres of forests are owned by thousands of private landowners. **Since the current laws regarding timber theft have not been updated in many years, there needs to be legal work to ensure that Georgia law keeps up with this thriving industry.** The study committee will be made up of six members, five appointed by the Speaker of the House including a member of the law enforcement community as well as a member of

Curry Farm Supply Inc.  
Emanuel Peanut & Grain LLC  
[Funston Gin Co. Inc.](#)  
[Georgia Christmas Tree Association](#)  
[Georgia Crop Improvement Association](#)  
Georgia Egg Association  
\*Georgia/Florida Soybean Association  
[Georgia Federal State Inspection Service](#)  
[Georgia Food Bank Association](#)  
Georgia Hi-Cal, Inc.  
[Georgia Milk Producers Assn.](#)  
\*Georgia Seed Association  
Hattaway Farms Partnership  
Israel Farm Supply Inc.  
[J & B Irrigation Inc.](#)  
The J.L. Morgan Company, Inc.  
[Jimmy Sanders, Inc.](#)  
Joe Boddiford Farms  
KAKEGA LLC  
Langston Spreader Service  
McCleskey Cotton Co. LLC  
Osceola Cotton Company, LLC  
Pineland Plantation  
Quality Gin, Inc.  
South Georgia Produce Inc.  
[Southern AGCOM Inc.](#)  
[Southern Crop Production Assn](#)  
The Produce Connection Inc.  
[Triangle Chemical Co.](#)  
[TriEst Ag Group, Inc.](#)  
[White Oak Pastures, Inc.](#)

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forestry community, and the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee. Look for this committee to get rolling this summer.

#### **WATER:**

**SB 213 - "Flint River Drought Protection Act"; clarify legislative intent; revise definitions; expand programs** - Many thanks for GAC member responses to our action alerts on this bill over the last week. GAC and a coalition of other ag, forestry, and business groups worked this bill throughout the week, but time was not on our side. We had the votes to pass it on the House floor, but the log jam of other bills kept us from getting a vote on the final legislative day. By incorporating changes suggested by GAC and others, this bill would have provided a mechanism for supporting ecosystems in the lower Flint River region during severe droughts by augmenting tributary stream flows. That would have helped Georgia farmers keep water policy decisions out of federal courthouses, but it didn't get completed this year. In working to pass this legislation, we learned a lot about the support that exists...and is absent...on ag water policy. Please contact us if you want to know what our discussions were with certain House members. It is also unfortunate that the **environmental activists were hard at work spreading false information about the bill and blasting legislators with emails filled with misleading information** - par for the course for them. With their eye on filing lawsuits, they were happy to see this bill not come up for a vote. We appreciate the work of **Senate Natural Resources Committee Chairman Ross Tolleson, Rep. Buddy Harden, and EPD Director Jud Turner** on this issue.



Sen. Ross Tolleson

#### **AGRIBUSINESS:**

**HB 266 - Internal Revenue Code; ag tax exemption revisions** - This bill has already been signed into law by Governor Deal and has several important key adjustments to the Georgia Ag Tax Exemption (GATE) program. In particular, it clearly defines 'Energy used in agriculture' as **"fuels used for agricultural purposes, other than fuels subject to prepaid state tax."** This removes gasoline and road use diesel blends from the sales tax exemptions, which stays within the overall scope intended for the ag exemptions. It also more clearly states that the burden of proof for accepting the GATE card is the responsibility of the retailer.



**HB 154 - Worker's compensation; awards and benefits; change certain provisions** - This bill setting workers' compensation insurance payment limits and weekly benefit payouts that are broadly supported by business interests. Establishing fair limits helps insurance providers like **GAC's AgriTrust of Georgia** manage for the future and keep costs low. We appreciate the cooperation of the many insurance and business interests for working together to keep these costs manageable.

**HB101 - Nonprofit organizations; exclude certain events from "food service establishment" definition** - This was a move by **Rep. Bubber Epps** to make it easier for non-profit organizations to raise money by selling food at local events like "Relay for Life" and Dooly County's "Big Pig Jig." Food sold to the public at fairs or festivals are exempt from having to get a permit and this would allow non-profit organizations who sell food at short-term events to enjoy those benefits as well. It awaits the Governor's signature.

#### **GRAPEVINE:**



\* This past week GAC President Bryan Tolar was pleased to speak with the **Advancing Georgia's Leaders in Agriculture & Forestry** program and participate in a panel discussion about ag lobbying that also included our friends at Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Poultry Federation, Georgia Forestry Association, Georgia Green Industry Association and several others. The panel focused on the legislative process and ways that lobbyists work with members of the Georgia General Assembly throughout the process. We would like to thank **Dr. Rochelle Strickland** for allowing us to be a part of the panel as well as all the program participants who were able to interact with us throughout the day. GAC is a proud sponsor of the Advancing Georgia's Leaders in Agriculture & Forestry program. Please visit their website at <http://agl.caes.uga.edu>.

\* On Thursday the **Senate Ag Committee** re-appointed **Harry Thompson** to the **Equine Commodity Commission**.

\* The 52nd annual **Georgia Cattlemen's Association Convention and Trade Show** will be held in conjunction with the 16th annual Beef Expo in Perry, GA from April 3-6. GAC is looking forward to being in attendance. Please click on the link here for more details on registration and the agenda for each day.

[http://www.gabeef.org/gca/annual\\_convention\\_and\\_beef\\_expo.html](http://www.gabeef.org/gca/annual_convention_and_beef_expo.html)



\* We look forward to the **International Food and Agribusiness Management Association (IFAMA) Annual World Forum & Symposium being in Atlanta** in just a few months. GAC is working with **Don Vondriska, IFAMA's Executive Director**, to help engage state agribusiness leaders in this international event. The forum will be held **June 16 - 20, 2013**, and will focus on how to best attract, educate and orient the talent necessary to create sustained food security and economic growth. The IFAMA conference brings together key stakeholders across the value chain of food production and consumption, from farmer to consumer. This is a truly global event, with speakers and participants representing more than 30 countries. [Click here for more information](#). A meeting of the Georgia Chapter of IFAMA will be held June 20 in conjunction with the forum.

\* **The International Agribusiness Conference & Expo will be held September 25 – 26, 2013 in Savannah.** It is a partnership between Georgia Southern University and the University of Georgia. GAC is pleased to help promote this event that will bring together international trade representatives, review the latest in value added agriculture, and teach about importing and exporting. Please make plans to attend – registration is underway! We hope to see you there.

\* **The Field Day at Stripling Irrigation Research Park will be Thursday, August 1.** This is a great opportunity to meet with ag irrigation experts about efficiencies and technologies that can help agriculture production and enhance environmental stewardship.




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