



GEORGIA'S RURAL CENTER

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RURAL CENTER'S 2018 AG SUMMIT TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGIA'S LARGEST INDUSTRY

MACON – Georgia's Rural Center will host the 2018 Ag Summit Monday, Nov. 26 at the Robert F. Hatcher Conference Center on the campus of Middle Georgia State University in Macon.

The summit will bring together state and national leaders to address issues related to how Georgia's education system can meet the labor and leadership needs of Georgia's largest industry—agriculture—in the future.

"Through the Summit, the Rural Center's goal is to ensure that, as we move forward, we have the educational infrastructure in place to prepare workers and leaders capable of maintaining Georgia's position as a leading producer of agricultural commodities nationally, while also meeting growing demand for agricultural products worldwide," said Dr. David Bridges, interim director of the Rural Center and an organizer of the event.

The emphases of the inaugural summit will be the state's agricultural employment opportunities and needs and how to bridge the knowledge and skills gap common in the current workforce. These are issues Bridges asserts are of paramount importance in this state and beyond.

Agriculture contributes \$74 billion a year to Georgia's economy and employs more than 410,000 people. Additionally, Georgia leads the U.S. in annual production of numerous food, fiber and feed crops. With the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization projecting that, by 2050, the world's population will grow by 34 percent to an all-time high of 9.7 billion people, growers and researchers worldwide are searching for innovative, economically sound ways to feed, clothe and shelter an exploding world population. Georgia's agricultural workers and leaders will play a key role in meeting this demand and must be effectively prepared to do so.

Given the impact of Hurricane Michael on many Georgia producers last month, Bridges foresees recovery efforts will be among the discussion topics during the event as well. Hurricane Michael caused more than \$2.5 billion in damage to the state's agriculture industry, according to University of Georgia Extension estimates, and will certainly leave its mark on the industry for generations to come.

Confirmed summit participants include Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black and American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall. A media room will be available during the summit for conducting, recording or filming interviews.

For more information on the Ag Summit or the Rural Center, visit www.ruralga.org, or call the center at 229-391-4847.

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