



## Senate District 15 – Agriculture Update – 2017

As much as our political landscape continues to change each year, the fact that Georgia Agriculture is the largest economic producer in the state has remained a constant in state history. Agriculture is Georgia's largest industry and contributes over \$70 billion annually to our state economy. Currently, one in seven Georgians work in agriculture, forestry or related fields. USDA reports that there are 40,000 farms, which encompass approximately 9.3 million acres of land. As we continue to rank as top producers in chicken, blueberries, peanuts and pecans, the Georgia General Assembly works hard to protect the well being of our AG industry.

This year we passed numerous bills to ensure our farm communities have the tools they need to be successful. As agriculture is one of the most regulated industries, we also passed legislation meant to cut government red tape, further allowing the Department of AG to streamline standard procedures. See below a quick reference of legislation passed for the benefit of Georgia's agricultural efforts.

### **Agriculture Legislation 2017**

[House Bill 50](#): Provides liability protection to producers when visitors are on the farm participating in livestock activities (cattle, goats, sheep, and swine). We are hopeful that this bill will encourage producers to open up their farms for tourism and educational purposes.

[House Bill 49](#): Establishes a 3-year license for livestock dealers and market operators. While the license fees are set to not exceed \$200 for market operators or \$25 for dealers, this will allow more transparency and accountability to livestock transactions, which has been an issue with online dealers.

[House Bill 176](#): Allows the Department of Agriculture to enter agreements with the federal government for the Georgia DOA to inspect and enforce provisions of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act.

[Senate Bill 69](#): Removes the requirement of certified organic operations to register in Georgia. USDA already requires this and provides a list of registered operations to the public online. This bill eliminates the Georgia registry as it is duplicative and burdensome.

[Senate Bill 78](#): Allows the Department of Agriculture to issue a variance or waiver to rules that have been achieved by other means so long as the end result is adhering to the set rule.

As a huge supporter of the Ag community, I am proud of all we do to support the farmers in our state. Our farm communities do so much for Georgia and I will do everything in my power to ensure they have the support they need in order to be successful. As always, it is a true pleasure to serve you and if you ever need anything at all, please let me know. Thank you for allowing me to represent your needs in Atlanta and I look forward to seeing you as I continue to make my way around our district. God bless you and may God continue to bless the great state of Georgia!