

Moultrie Observer

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Georgia lawmakers decided many years ago to provide sales tax exemptions on inputs for farm operations, however, the system never required someone to swear that they were an actual "qualified agricultural producer." That is why the GATE program was created - it actually makes applicants prove to the Department of Agriculture that they operate a farm in order to obtain the tax exemptions on farm inputs.

The large majority of the inputs available for the sales tax exemptions have been in place for decades. The only things that were added when the GATE program started were farm fuel, parts for farm equipment, and fencing materials. Many of our neighboring states offer sales tax exemptions on these products as well, so we need to be sure they receive equal treatment here at home.

These sales tax exemptions help the farm as well as help maintain the job creation and sustainability of agribusiness in the rural communities that are the backbone of our state. State, county, and municipal governments must manage services with the taxes collected, but they must also support the many businesses that deliver economic viability.

The impact of GATE was considered and debated by legislators long before this program was approved. Any reduction in these sales taxes is an investment in the success of our rural communities.

It is often said, "don't complain about farmers with your mouth full." More importantly, if you have something to say about farmers, you should start by saying thank you... and the GATE program is one way our state and local governments are doing just that.

Bryan Tolar,
president,
Georgia Agribusiness Council

The Moultrie Observer

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EDITOR'S MAILBAG

The work of farmers often misunderstood

Dear editor:

The work of farmers to feed our families is often misunderstood and under-appreciated. A recent letter in the Moultrie Observer referenced supposed local tax losses due to the use of the Georgia Agriculture Tax Exemption (GATE) card by Colquitt County area farmers. This perspective is misguided in many ways, so I wanted to cut through the rhetoric and provide some facts for your readers.

It is important to know the history of sales tax exemptions on farm inputs in order to have the proper perspective on this program and the benefits that it provides not only to farmers but also to the health of rural communities.

Farming is hard. Anyone that has worked on a farm or has family that makes a living on the farm knows this first hand. In many ways, farming is just like other production or processing companies which have long received sales tax exemptions on the tools needed to produce a product so that it can enter the market place where sales