



# SOUTH CAROLINA BUSINESS

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## A Growing Industry

*Celebrating South Carolina Agribusiness*

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- Forestry ranks #1 among the state's manufacturing industries in jobs (90,624) and payroll (\$4.1 billion).
- Timber is South Carolina's #1 cash crop at \$679 million annually.

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# Reversing the trade deficit, S.C. style

BY MICHAEL JOHNSON

The Southeastern United States is the Saudi Arabia of Southern Yellow Pine forest products. The strong, resilient Southern Yellow Pine Tree is a valued commodity for countless end uses. It is also one of the least expensive and most effective carbon sinks in nature, meaning it absorbs more carbon than it releases. The success of this commodity is directly tied to the port system in the Southeastern United States.

There are countless producers of forest products in various industries in both South Carolina and the Southeast Region utilizing the ports of Charleston, Savannah, Norfolk and others. In fact, according to the South Carolina Forestry Commission, forest products are the number one export moved through the Port of Charleston, accounting for more than 30 percent of the goods moved through the port in 2010. Approximately 83 percent of the forest products exported from South



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Carolina are transported by vessel.

While we do import some select forest products from other countries, we are clearly a net exporter in the forest products market. The ability to move our products allows companies in the forest products industry to increase volumes and thereby improve their technology. Export dollars allow the industry to lower domestic costs, employ more people and seize the global stage as it pertains to forest products.

Since 2001, South Carolina's forest product exports have doubled from approximately \$600 million to \$1.3 billion. Customers include Canada, Italy, the Czech Republic, Taiwan, China, Germany, the Caribbean and many more nations. In an interesting global twist, forest product-related companies from these countries are now seeking locations in South Carolina to domicile their own manufacturing facilities.

With the Panama Canal transitioning from the ability to handle ships with up to 5,000 TEUs to ships that can carry up to 13,000 TEUs, South Carolina cannot afford to be left behind. With the opportunity to upgrade the Port of Charleston to handle the larger post-Panamax ships, we are in position to dominate forest products trade for the entire United States. With ports in Georgetown and Charleston and the opportunity to expand our presence with Jasper, South Carolina is positioned to be a global leader in the export of forest products.

South Carolina is one of the few places in the world producing Southern Yellow Pine with the highest of strength ratings. The Palmetto State has arguably the strongest natural landscape for not only our timber but also our port system. The next time you walk by a job site and see Southern Yellow Pine lumber being used in construction, realize there are similar sites all around the world.



Michael Johnson is president and CEO of Cox Industries.

## Precision agriculture provides high-tech solutions

BY STEPHEN HUDSON

When the average person sees a farmer driving a tractor across a field, he or she doesn't see the state-of-the-art technology being employed as the farmer navigates between the rows. The intricately detailed Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) guiding the tractor are part of a new industry within agriculture called precision agriculture.

The goal of precision agriculture is to improve farmers' profits and harvest yields while reducing the negative impacts of farming on the environment that come from over-application of chemicals and the over-usage of irrigation. In the past decade, precision agriculture techniques have become more of a staple in a farmer's toolkit.

The concept behind precision agriculture is that profitability can be increased by managing zones within a field differently than one would manage the field as a whole. GPS allows a farmer to precisely identify the specific locations within the field, and GIS allows a farmer to maintain the data about each location.

With the push of a button, GPS pinpoints an exact

location to within one meter. Touching another button displays a series of GIS maps that show where the soil in a field is moist, where the soil eroded over the winter and where there are factors within the soil that limit crop growth. All of this allows the farmer to reduce irrigation in one area, increase it in another and determine where to treat for insects.

Insects, such as the stink bug, attack cotton, causing \$50 million in yield losses in the Cotton Belt annually and another untold millions in eradication costs. New sensor technology currently being developed at Clemson University's Edisto Research Education Center (REC) in Blackville, S.C. to identify stink bug locations in a cotton field can help farmers minimize damages and their costs.

When stink bugs attack cotton bolls, the plant releases a chemical into the air as a distress signal, and the bug releases a pungent odor. Using technology similar to what is already used by the Department of Homeland Security, researchers are developing an "Electronic Nose" that can sniff out and identify stink bug locations. The sensors can either be handheld equipment to find damaged bolls or can go directly on the sprayer. This new technology identifies which



Farmers can monitor soil conditions and insect damage using GPS and GIS technology.

areas need treatment and only spray the areas the bug is attacking, allowing farmers to use site-specific pesticides.

South Carolina farmers are using cutting-edge tools to increase their yields using precision agriculture. Research goes on every day to improve precision agriculture and develop new technologies that will benefit all of us.

Stephen Hudson is a public information coordinator for the South Carolina Department of Agriculture.