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Georgia Southern and UGA to Host International Agribusiness Conference

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With agricultural products being among the state's top exports, Georgia Southern University's Division of Continuing Education and the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension are teaming up to help farmers and businesspeople learn how to sell more goods overseas and capitalize on the growing export market.

The two institutions will host the 2013 International Agribusiness Conference and Expo on Sept. 25-26 in Savannah, Ga., and will provide participants with information on what markets are open to their products, how to export their goods and what exporting can do for their bottom lines.

"As the global economy continues to grow, Georgia producers are posed to take advantage of increasing demand for food and fiber products," said Kent Wolfe, director of the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development with UGA Cooperative Extension. "Georgia can export poultry and cotton cheaper than Brazil, providing us a competitive advantage in shipping exports to Europe and China."

In 2012, Georgia exported \$37.9 billion worth of goods. The state is the top exporter of U.S. poultry, pecans and wood pulp, and peanut exports are on the rise. About 39 percent of the shipments exported through the Port of Savannah are agricultural products.

"The forest products industry is a major economic engine for Georgia. It contributes nearly \$25 billion in economic activity within the state and is responsible for over \$13 billion in exports," said Alexander Koukoulas, Ph.D., president and CEO of the Georgia Southern University Herty Advanced Materials Development Center in Savannah. "Herty not only supports the pulp and paper industry, but it is in the forefront of the biomass-to-energy industry and has a 75 year history in developing new uses for bio-based materials. Our natural resources in biomass are second-to-none and present a huge opportunity for value creation."

About one in three acres of farmland in the U.S. is planted for the export market, and an increasing number of small and medium sized farmers are looking to augment their incomes with international sales, according to the Georgia Department of Economic Development's International Trade Office.

Participants at the 2013 International Agribusiness Conference and Expo will attend educational forums and workshops, learning from experts in agricultural importing and exporting, as well as the latest practices in processing value-added agricultural products. They will also have a chance to meet with international trade representatives. Georgia Farm Bureau officials have announced that they will be a grand sponsor of this inaugural event.

Deadline for the \$170 early registration is July 30.

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 125 degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu