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Comments of the Georgia Farm Bureau to the House Study Committee on Bioeconomic Development September 24, 2007

The purpose of Georgia Farm Bureau is to provide leadership and assistance to the agricultural sector and to be a spokesman for the farmer in the legislative arena. Georgia Farm Bureau is the largest farm organization in the state with about 437,000 members.

Georgia Farm Bureau appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important issue. We applaud the efforts of this committee to study the matter and make recommendations to the General Assembly to guide our state in bioeconomic development.

Virtually all the cotton grown in Georgia, most of the soybeans, and much of the corn is genetically modified for the purpose of greater weed or insect control using fewer pesticides or to allow for more environmentally friendly cultural practices. Livestock producers also utilize biotechnology on their farms. Embryo transplantation in cattle has been performed for decades on numerous Georgia farms, and artificial insemination has become a routine practice. Clearly, farmers are among the earliest adopters of practical applications of biotechnology.

Farmers have adopted this biotechnology because it makes good economic sense. The University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences has been a significant part of this success through the Agricultural Experiment Stations and the Cooperative Extension Service. For agriculture to remain on the cutting edge of bioeconomic development at the farm level, it is imperative that these institutions be properly funded and maintained so the technology can be tested and extended to individual farms.

Georgia's geographic size and climate make it an ideal location for the production of the raw materials for making biofuels- ethanol and biodiesel. Our farms and forests can produce huge volumes of feedstocks needed for energy production. In addition, Georgia's livestock and poultry industries can produce feedstocks for fuel production.

In the future, agriculture will become more important as a source of energy. In the most recent issue of UGA *Research* magazine, one researcher states that Georgia could be "the Saudi Arabia of biomass." Before biofuels can be fully tapped as an energy source, research is needed, and we urge funding to that end.

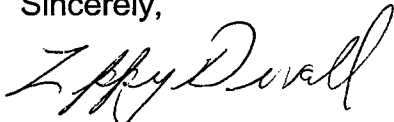
Numerous ethanol and biodiesel production plants are online or are being planned in Georgia. However, consumer availability for the product is a problem. The General Assembly made some positive efforts last year when it passed legislation to offer incentives for retailers to offer E-85 fuel. The Legislature also offered opportunities for sales tax exemptions for equipment used in ethanol producing facilities in Georgia. Georgia Farm Bureau applauds these efforts.

Another problem is that regulatory standards for gasoline in the Southeast sometimes impede the sale of gasoline-ethanol blends (E-10) by failing to accommodate the changes in fuel properties that occur when ethanol is added to finished gasoline. The Georgia Department of Agriculture is aware of this problem, and the Department is currently studying the issue to see how it can be positively resolved while maintaining consumer confidence in the product.

Georgia Farm Bureau supports building the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Georgia, and we have worked with a coalition of like minded organizations to publicly express that support. However, there did not appear to be any coordinating agency in charge of promoting the location of the NBAF in Georgia. With all the state agencies in existence, it would seem prudent that some particular individual representing the state would be in charge of heading such an effort.

We appreciate the opportunity to appear before this committee, and we commend you for your foresight and leadership to consider these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zippy Duvall". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Zippy Duvall, President
Georgia Farm Bureau