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CONTACTS:

Alison Tyrer
Georgia Department of Economic Development
404-962-4078
atyrer@georgia.org

Mary Kathryn Yearta
Georgia Department of Agriculture
404-656-3689
mary.yearta@agr.georgia.gov

State of Georgia to streamline services for agricultural exports

Agricultural industry to enjoy more resources, international visibility under new agreement

ATLANTA, May 31, 2012 – Farmers in Georgia will benefit from streamlined export assistance thanks to an agreement signed today by Chris Cummiskey, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), and Gary Black, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA).

The agreement, a memorandum of understanding signed by the commissioners during an agriculture-focused trade and business mission in Turkey, will create an interagency strategic partnership between GDA, GDEcD and the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA) to provide a platform for increased efficiency in the assistance state government provides for agriculture. The agreement becomes effective on June 1, 2012.

“Because both of our agencies help agricultural companies take advantage of global opportunities to sell Georgia products in strategic world markets, it only makes sense to combine our efforts,” said GDEcD Commissioner Cummiskey. “Working together and sharing resources, we can boost business visibility and opportunities abroad for Georgia’s biggest industry through our ten international offices.”

“Georgia agriculture is increasingly becoming a larger player in international trade. Many of our commodities are top in the nation for overseas exports,” stated Commissioner Black. “By partnering with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, together, we will provide greater exposure and knowledge for Georgia agricultural products in the world market.”

The Georgia Department of Agriculture will continue to assist Georgia’s agricultural community and will now coordinate key international events in coordination with its sister agency, the Department of

Economic Development. GDA will retain official membership in SUSTA, and the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture will continue to serve as an active member of SUSTA's Board of Directors.

The agreement moves the primary promotion and coordination of the state of Georgia's agricultural exports to the Department of Economic Development, which will add export assistance for this important industry sector to its existing International Trade division. GDEcD will promote SUSTA's export promotion programs and services to companies within the state and will serve as the primary day-to-day contact for inquiries about agricultural exports from Georgia. SUSTA-paid staff currently housed at GDA will report to and be housed at GDEcD.

About GDEcD

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) is the state's sales and marketing arm. The agency attracts new business, encourages the expansion of existing industry and small businesses, and locates new markets for Georgia products. It also markets Georgia to tourists and promotes the state as a location for film, music and digital entertainment projects. For more information, visit www.Georgia.org.

About GDA

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) is the voice of the state's agriculture community. The department's mission is to provide excellence in services and regulatory functions, to protect and promote agriculture and consumer interests, and to ensure an abundance of safe food and fiber for Georgia, America, and the world by using state-of-the-art technology and a professional workforce. For more information, visit, www.agr.georgia.gov.

About SUSTA

The Southern United States Trade Association is a non-profit trade development association composed of the Departments of Agriculture of the 15 southern states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Since 1973, its programs and services have assisted exporters of high-value food and agricultural products. SUSTA is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), its member states and private companies.

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