

February 10, 2015

The Honorable Robert Bentley
Governor of Alabama
State Capitol Building
600 Dexter Ave.
Montgomery, Alabama 36130



Dear Governor Bentley:

With your support and encouragement, a motivated group of leaders in **agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, and forest products industries** has given great effort to this comprehensive long-range plan to grow the largest segment of Alabama's economy. It is our sincere belief that through a collaboration of the public and private sectors we can achieve the goals contained in our strategic plan.

Based on a 2013 Auburn University/Alabama Cooperative Extension System economic impact study commissioned by the Alabama Agribusiness Council, agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, and forest products industries contribute **\$70.4 billion to our state's gross domestic product** or about 40% of Alabama's economic output and **employ nearly 600,000 Alabamians**.

With annual growth since 2005 exceeding 5% in agriculture alone, a tremendous future lies ahead for agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, and forest products industries. Our intent is **to ensure continued growth through the next decade**, building on successes through innovation, research, education, careful resource management, and market-driven economic policies.

It is our sincere belief that a coordinated program that includes education, market development, research, infrastructure expansion, ease of capital formation, resource management, and regulatory reform will provide the necessary underpinning for a **surge in prosperity for farmers, foresters, small business owners, and workers** in associated businesses throughout our great state.

On behalf of the members of our Alabama Agriculture & Forestry Strategic Plan Steering Committee and many others who worked and contributed to this effort, we proudly and sincerely submit this report with the hope of engaging and inspiring the leaders of Alabama to join us in putting this plan into action for a more prosperous future.

Respectfully submitted,

John McMillan
Commissioner

Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries