



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC to Host Listening Sessions for Local Food Systems Infrastructure Program

JACKSON, Miss. – Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson announced that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) will host three outreach listening sessions to obtain feedback from the public and key stakeholders on middle-of-the-supply-chain infrastructure needs for the federal Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI).

“This is an exciting time for Mississippi agriculture,” said Commissioner Gipson. “The pandemic reminded us of the importance of having a strong, resilient food supply chain and the ability to feed ourselves. I am happy to announce that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce has an opportunity to help strengthen our state’s food supply chain which will increase marketing opportunities for our farmers and increase consumers’ access to local foods.”

Recently, MDAC entered into a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to administer the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program for the State of Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to assist states in building resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain and strengthening local food systems by creating new revenue streams for producers. The goal of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program is to create additional and better processing options for local producers across the state’s food supply chain.

Through the RFSI Program, MDAC will receive funding from USDA that will be subawarded to eligible entities in the form of infrastructure grants to middle-of-the-supply businesses. Funds will support projects that expand capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally produced food. Eligible foods include specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products. Meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, and dietary supplements are excluded.

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is currently developing a State Plan that outlines the priorities and needs of the state as well as plans for administering a competitive grant process to award the infrastructure grants.

“In order to ensure that we identify the needs and set priorities that are most beneficial to producers, we are seeking feedback from the public. I will be leading three stakeholder outreach listening sessions in various parts of the state so we can hear directly from the public,” continued Commissioner Gipson. “I am looking forward to hearing from our producers and other key stakeholders as we move forward in developing and administering this program, and I am excited about the positive impacts and future opportunities that can result from expanding and strengthening our food supply system.”

The public is invited to attend one of three listening sessions:

- Thursday, July 6, at 10:00 a.m. at the Marks Community House, 300 Pecan Street, Marks, MS 38646
- Tuesday, July 11, at 10:00 a.m. at the Forestry Building at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum, 1150 Lakeland Drive, Jackson, MS 39216
- Tuesday, July 18, at 10:00 a.m. at the Forrest County Extension Office, 952 Sullivan Drive Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Attendees are asked to pre-register for the listening sessions. Find additional listening session details and outreach listening session registration information at www.mdac.ms.gov/rfsi. Public comments can also be submitted a www.mdac.ms.gov/rfsi through July 30, 2023.

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