



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Agriculture Commissioner Announces \$5.8 Million Available to Strengthen Local Food Supply Chain

MDAC Announces Details of Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

JACKSON, Miss. – Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson announced the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) has entered into a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to administer the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program for the State of Mississippi. Through the RFSI Program, MDAC will make available more than \$5.8 million in funding from USDA to build resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain and strengthen local food systems.

“Having a strong, resilient food supply chain is crucial for our food security. This partnership with USDA will provide the State of Mississippi a strategic opportunity to strengthen our state’s food supply chain and increase marketing opportunities for our farmers while increasing consumers’ access to local foods,” said Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson.

The purpose of the RFSI 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.

“This partnership between USDA and Mississippi is allowing critical funding to reach areas of the supply chain that need it most,” said USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs Under Secretary Jenny Lester Moffitt. “The projects funded through this program will create new opportunities for the region’s small and midsize producers to thrive, expand access to nutritious food options, and increase supply chain resiliency.”

MDAC will fund projects that expand capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products; construct and expand infrastructure facilities; modernize equipment; purchase refrigerated trucks; and implement new technology systems. Eligible foods under the USDA grant guidelines 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 under the USDA grant guidelines.

RFSI funds will be awarded as Infrastructure Grants or Equipment-Only Grants. Infrastructure Grants will be awarded at the minimum of \$100,000 and a maximum of \$3,000,000. Equipment-Only Grants will be awarded at a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$100,000. Infrastructure Grants require a 50% match contribution to match federal funds. Historically underserved farmers and ranchers and other qualifying socially disadvantaged businesses are required to contribute a reduced 25% match. Equipment-Only Grants do not require a match.

Entities eligible to apply include agricultural producers or processors; institutions such as schools, universities or hospitals; and for-profit entities, nonprofit entities, local governments and tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities. Priority will be given to projects that benefit underserved farmers and ranchers; new and beginning farmers or ranchers; veteran producers; and processors owned by socially disadvantaged individuals. All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and applicants' facilities must be physically located within Mississippi.

MDAC will conduct four meetings and one webinar to educate the public on this program opportunity. Meetings will be held January 23 in Cleveland, January 25 in Verona, January 30 in Jackson and February 1 in Hattiesburg. The webinar will be held February 2. Interested applicants can register at <https://www.mdac.ms.gov/rfsi/>.

“This is an exciting time for agriculture in Mississippi. The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program provides a new opportunity for our food supply chain that has not been available in the past. I strongly encourage everyone eligible to submit an application before the March 15 deadline,” said Commissioner Gipson.

The deadline to apply for RFSI's Infrastructure Grant or Equipment-Only Grant is March 15, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. CST. All completed applications must be electronically submitted to rfsi@mdac.ms.gov. Visit <https://www.mdac.ms.gov/rfsi/> to view the Request for Applications, download applications and obtain additional information about the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program.

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