



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC Hosts Food Safety Training for USDA Fruit and Vegetable Auditors

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture of Commerce (MDAC) Fruit and Vegetables Division hosted a three-day food safety training session February 27-29 for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) fruit and vegetable auditors at the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum as part of a cooperative agreement between MDAC and USDA.

MDAC's Fruit and Vegetable Division welcomed USDA leadership; in-person attendees from the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Missouri; and 15 virtual participants from USDA or other states. This training allowed the USDA State Auditors to receive firsthand knowledge of any upcoming changes regarding audits and procedures, along with the opportunity to network and share ideas with other state auditors to get firsthand information about how each state's program is growing and changing.

"Having a safe food supply is critical to our food security. The important work of our fruit and vegetable auditors is key to ensuring the food we eat and feed our families is safe, touching the lives of every consumer," said Commissioner Gipson.

Mississippi fruit and vegetable auditors ensure the state's farmers are providing their best products to suppliers, in the state, region and the nation by conducting inspections known as Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/ GHP) audits. Auditors stay informed about food safety requirements and regulations as part of MDAC's cooperative agreements with the USDA to relay the most current and reliable information to producers. USDA Auditor Continuing Education Trainings, such as the training session conducted by MDAC and USDA, keep Mississippi and other state auditors educated on current industry standards.

"The fruit and vegetable industry continues to advance by changing growing, harvesting, and packing techniques," said Kevin Riffin, Director of Fruits and Vegetables Inspection Division and Produce Safety Division. "Due to the changes industry wide, MDAC and other USDA partner inspection programs must continually train and advance our inspection practices to properly provide our growers and packers with the most up to date audits and inspections that industry requires."

The Fruit and Vegetable Division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce conducts fruit and vegetable inspections as well as third-party food safety audits known as Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/ GHP) audits. All inspections and food safety audits are provided statewide to farms, packers, and wholesalers. Visit <https://www.mdac.ms.gov/bureaus-departments/regulatory-services/fruits-and-vegetables/> to learn more about the Fruit and Vegetable Division.

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Photos attached.



Commissioner Andy Gipson addresses USDA auditors at MDAC's food safety and Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/ GHP) training.



Members of the MDAC Fruit and Vegetables Division.

Pictured (L-R): Vivian Purvis, USDA Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Supervisor; Tammy Allen, Inspector; Brandon Thornton, Produce Safety Regulatory Supervisor; and Kevin Riggan, Director of Fruits and Vegetables Inspection Division and Produce Safety Division.

Not Pictured: Davis Edwards, Produce Safety Division Outreach Coordinator.