



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Ag Commissioner Gipson, Rankin County and City of Brandon Officials Break Ground on New Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Complex in Conjunction with National Ag Day

BRANDON, Miss. – Yesterday, Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson, along with Rankin County and City of Brandon officials, broke ground on the new Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Market Complex, located off Highway 18 in Brandon. Commissioner Gipson was joined by Pastor Gene Henderson; Supervisor Steve Gaines, President of the Rankin County Board of Supervisors; Noel Daniels, President of Rankin First; and Mayor Butch Lee, City of Brandon.

In conjunction with celebrating National Agriculture Day and recognizing the importance of agriculture to the State of Mississippi, Commissioner Gipson discussed the vision to support local farmers emphasizing the groundbreaking was about having a vision – a vision for the State of Mississippi to become the epicenter of food production, storage and distribution in the southeastern United States. The Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Market Complex is Phase 1 of the Mississippi Strategic Agriculture Facilities Expansion (S.A.F.E.) Plan announced in July 2023. The Complex will be Mississippi’s first-ever local food supply, storage and distribution hub.

“Today is a day we will always remember as a state and as a country when we had the vision to plan ahead for our local food supply. Food security is national security. America’s strength internationally is driven in large measure by our strength to produce not only food for our people here in Mississippi but also for people around the world,” said Commissioner Gipson. “This vision is about growing markets for our local farmers, making new opportunities for our local farmers at the same time as we bring new opportunities for local consumers who want fresh local food.”

Defining vision as ‘the ability to see the invisible,’ Commissioner Gipson challenged attendees to see the vision for the Market Complex by ‘seeing’ the challenges, solutions and opportunities. Commissioner Gipson outlined the challenges of the local food supply chain including the supply chain shortages resulting from the Covid pandemic; fewer number of farmers today; foreign interests in purchasing farmland; weather-related events such as storms and drought; and federal regulation overreach.

Emphasizing farmers being the answer to the challenges, Commissioner Gipson offered solutions including supporting and strengthening local food supply systems, growing markets for local farmers, enhancing existing markets and the innovative creation of new markets for local food through programs such as Genuine MS®.

Commissioner Gipson highlighted four economic development opportunities: expanding workforce development opportunities for 4-H and FFA students; the opportunity for Mississippi to become the epicenter of food production with the predicted shift of food production from the west to the southeast U.S. due to water shortages; the ability for the Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Market Complex to become a destination for consumers to experience Mississippi's agricultural products and for farmers to market their products; and growing international trade opportunities.

Commissioner Gipson thanked partners Rankin County Board of Supervisors, Rankin First, and the City of Brandon for their leadership and support of this project.

“No one can question the commitment of the Rankin County Board of Supervisors to support and promote agriculture and the well-being of the farm families of Rankin County and our region. Commissioner Gipson's desire to bring an agriculture-focused, economic development and tourism project to the heart of Rankin County is a testimony to the leadership of this great county who have made every effort to prepare Rankin County for success. I am excited most of all for the next generations of farm families who will call Rankin County home. The Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Market Complex will afford our families with any number of opportunities not currently available to them. We are grateful for this opportunity to partner with Commissioner Gipson, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and the City of Brandon in this great effort,” said Supervisor Gaines.

The Market Complex will feature not only fresh local products such as poultry, beef, pork, blueberries, sweet potatoes, watermelons, peas and beans, tomatoes, muscadines, rice, peanuts, pecans, dairy, catfish and more – but also frozen and dried products that can be stored and distributed and sold to consumers throughout the year. The Market Complex will also provide real world Training and Workforce Development opportunities for Mississippi's 4-H and FFA youth interested in exploring available agricultural and commerce career paths.

“Rankin First is pleased to participate in the Genuine Mississippi Market Complex project. It will be a wonderful addition to our County and spur additional economic and tourism development. We look forward to welcoming visitors from all over our great State and the United States as they come to this unique one-of-a-kind marketplace complex,” said President Daniels.

The Genuine Mississippi Market Complex will be located on Mississippi Highway 18 near the front door of future economic development for Rankin County. This Market Complex will be unlike any other existing development in the State of Mississippi. It will feature the full farm-to-table experience for retail consumers whether shopping for fresh farm-raised produce in season, high quality meat products such as beef, chicken, pork and catfish, or frozen or dried products for cooking at home. Visitors will also be able to sit down at a table to enjoy a delicious fresh-cooked meal of Genuine MS® products.

“We are encouraged by the continued growth and development of the Hwy 18 corridor in the City of Brandon,” said Mayor Lee. “Commissioner Gipson's vision and dedication to locate the Genuine MS Agricultural Complex closer to Rankin County consumers is greatly appreciated. Along with benefiting

our area farmers, the benefits of convenient access to farm fresh foods positively effects the health and wellness of all residents in Brandon and Rankin County.”

Additionally, the Genuine Mississippi Market Complex will include commercial wholesale food storage and processing components operated by the private sector for distribution to other retail locations including local grocery stores, restaurants and farmers markets. The overall site development will be overseen by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce with input and private investments from the agricultural industry and private sector partners.

Officials expect the first phase of the development to be initiated by the private sector within the year and anticipate completion of the project over the next two to four years. To view the groundbreaking ceremony in its entirety, visit <https://youtu.be/GVRZo-IV-o4>.

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Photos attached.



Yesterday, Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson, along with members with the Rankin County Board of Supervisors, Mayor Butch Lee, City of Brandon Aldermen and Rankin First Economic Development Authority Board members, broke ground on the new Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Market Complex, located off Highway 18 in Brandon.

Renderings of the Genuine Mississippi Agricultural Market Complex:



