



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC Releases Freshly Picked Podcast Featuring Guests from Oktibbeha and Forrest Counties

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) is releasing a special, beekeeping podcast today as part of its Freshly Picked podcast series focused on Mississippi specialty crops. Today’s episode, “From Hive to Honey Jar: Mississippi’s Beekeeping Journey,” features special guests Dr. Jeff Harris, beekeeping extension specialist at Mississippi State University in Starkville, and Austin Smith, owner of Smith’s Honey Farm in Petal.

Beekeeping is a long-lasting tradition in Mississippi with roots that can be traced all the way back to a time when the early Native Americans first obtained honey from stingless bee nests. Within this episode, expert guests Harris and Smith delve into the vast world of beekeeping. Listeners can tune in to this unique episode by visiting www.msfreshlypicked.com or any major podcast platform.

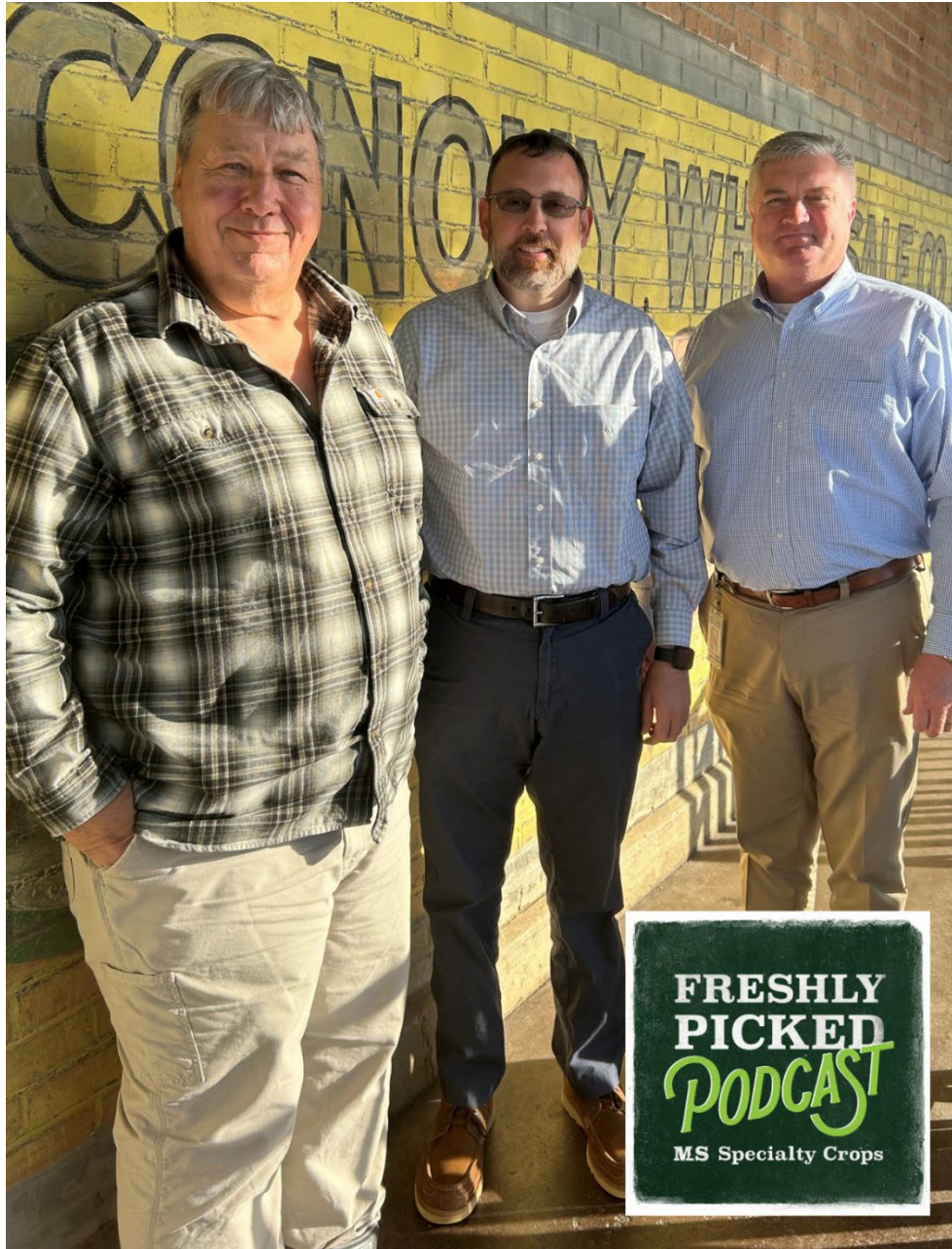
Harris considers himself a research scientist more than a traditional beekeeper and has dedicated years to the study of bee biology. He discusses the importance of learning everything about this industry before starting a bee colony. According to Harris, bees must visit two million flowers to produce one, single pound of honey. So, he stresses the need to consider how many colonies are in the same area and will be competing for the same resources. He also talks about the seasonality of beekeeping, saying, “because they’re whole biology is keyed into flower bloom, March, April and May are the busiest months of the year for bees, and therefore, beekeepers.”

Smith echoed Harris’ comments and goes on to talk about the business side of keeping bees and producing raw honey, beeswax candles and other honey-based products. Smith’s Honey Farm started as a family hobby in 2001, and today, the farm includes several apiary locations across South Mississippi. In addition to selling honey products, Smith raises and sells queens and honeybees as nucleus colonies to customers. He says beekeeping is a labor of love, and recalls how an older beekeeper once told him, “Better be careful... if you get that bee in your blood, it’s hard to get it out!”

The Freshly Picked podcast series, developed by MDAC, will feature 24 episodes and include specialty crop farmers, experts, entrepreneurs and/or chefs as they tell the stories behind their farms, businesses and the unique products they offer. Listeners can find new episodes every Thursday through February 2025 at www.msfreshlypicked.com, Spotify, Apple Podcasts or other major platforms.

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Photo attached.



The latest episode of MDAC’s Freshly Picked podcast, titled “From Hive to Honey Jar: Mississippi’s Beekeeping Journey,” airs today at 9:30 a.m. Pictured L-R: Dr. Jeff Harris, beekeeping extension specialist at Mississippi State University in Starkville; Austin Smith, owner of Smith’s Honey Farm in Petal; and Claude Nash, podcast host and editor of MDAC’s *Mississippi Market Bulletin*.