



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Paige Manning, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
(601) 359-1163 / cell: (662) 312-5897
Paige@mdac.ms.gov

Hannah East, Marketing Specialist
(601) 359-1179
HannahE@mdac.ms.gov

Ag Commissioner Gipson Advocates for Mississippi Farmers in Washington

JACKSON, Miss. – Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson represented Mississippi at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Winter Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., this week. Commissioner Gipson was in attendance along with Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of Agriculture from across the nation discussing critical issues impacting the nation’s farms, ranches and agriculture industry.

Commissioner Gipson met with key Trump administration agency officials as well as congressional and agriculture industry leaders to discuss solutions to the challenges facing American agriculture. Topics of discussion included the need to pass a long-term Farm Bill, addressing the egg shortage by combating High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), correcting problems with the U.S Drought Monitor system, disaster relief for producers, finding ways to support Make America Healthy Again initiatives, and many other critical policy issues.

“Farmers across the country are suffering from the past few consecutive years of depressed commodity prices, inflated input costs, high interest rates, HPAI outbreaks and droughts, floods and other weather-related impacts. Farmers are resilient people and can overcome a year of any of these challenges, but farmers can’t make a profit and continue to farm when facing numerous challenges like these simultaneously year after year,” said Commissioner Gipson. “Food security is national security, which makes it imperative that we have policies in place that give farmers much needed relief and increase certainty in the marketplace. The high level of uncertainty going into this crop year creates difficulty for farmers getting access to credit to plant a crop this year.”

The recently confirmed U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins addressed the conference announcing an aggressive five-part strategy to combat HPAI and bring down egg prices. The strategy included: 1) Investment of \$1 billion by USDA to fight against HPAI, including funds for the expansion of Wildlife biosecurity Assessments and biosecurity audits at no costs to producers and a cost-share to fix the highest risk biosecurity concerns identified in audits; 2)

Increased relief to farmers through the continuation of indemnification for farmers whose flocks must be depopulated; \$400 million available for these efforts; 3) Exploration of the use of therapeutic treatments and research on potential vaccines for egg laying flocks, while working with trading partners to limit impacts to export trade market; 4) Removal of unnecessary regulatory burdens on egg producers; and 5) Consideration of temporary import-export options for eggs to reduce egg prices for consumers.

“Poultry is the largest sector of Mississippi’s agriculture, making up more than a third of the value of production of all commodities produced in our state so an animal disease outbreak like HPAI could potentially devastate our poultry producers and our ag industry as a whole. I am glad to see a multifaceted approach with potential solutions being brought to the table that includes assistance to producers. I look forward to working with Secretary Rollins over the next four years to strengthen agriculture and our rural communities,” said Commissioner Gipson.

Illegal imports continue to impact the U.S. seafood industry, including that of Mississippi being a coastal state and the nation’s largest producer of catfish. During the conference, Commissioner Gipson joined three additional Commissioners in co-sponsoring a NASDA Action Item to support the protection of our U.S. shrimping and catfish industries from illegal and harmful imports.

“This week, I had the opportunity to be the voice of Mississippi agriculture and make sure that issues facing our farmers and small communities across the state are being addressed. The problems facing our farmers and ranchers are the same problems farmers are facing across the country. While some of these issues are more robust and will take more time to be resolved, there are some issues that we should be able to find long-term solutions for in the short-term, and I intend to do just that. One prime example of that is the inconsistencies of the U.S. Drought Monitor reports resulting in farmers not being able to qualify for disaster relief. It’s not just our farmers in Mississippi being impacted. I had numerous discussions this week on how to address this issue, and I am committed to resolving this issue for our farmers and ranchers,” said Commissioner Gipson.

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Photo attached.



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