



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS STATEMENT

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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 Applauds Committee Passage of Agriculture and Seafood Legislation

JACKSON, Miss. – Following yesterday’s important legislative deadline for Committees to report general bills from the opposite chamber, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson released a statement regarding the advancement of four important bills impacting Mississippi’s agriculture and seafood industries.

I want to publicly thank Speaker Jason White, Chairman Bill Pigott and the Mississippi House of Representatives, as well as Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann, Chairman Neil Whaley and the Mississippi Senate for moving these important agriculture and seafood bills through the process on both sides of the Capitol. On behalf of Mississippi’s farmers and producers, I encourage the Legislature to move these bills to final passage all the way to the Governor’s desk.

- HB 913 (Meat Labeling) sponsored by House Agriculture Committee Vice-Chairman Vince Mangold and Representative Bubba Carpenter calls for truth-in-labeling for meat and nonmeat products. This bill protects the integrity of Mississippi’s livestock and meat industry and ensures consumers will be able to make informed purchasing decisions based on accurate labeling.
- HB 1006 (Cultivate Food Products) sponsored by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Bill Pigott and Representative Bubba Carpenter would ban the manufacturing, selling and distribution of items from cultured animal cells in Mississippi. This bill addresses “fake meat,” or lab-grown imitation “meat” products in a way similar to action taken by other states.
- HB 1295 (Agritourism Activity) sponsored by House Agriculture Committee Chairman Bill Pigott and SB 2264 (Agritourism Activity) with sponsors Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Neil Whaley, Senate Agriculture Committee Vice-Chairman Andy Berry, Senator Lydia Chassaniol, Senator Mike McLendon and Senator Chuck Younger will provide added protections for Mississippi agritourism operations across the state through clarification and signage on farms.

- HB 602 (Seafood and Crawfish Country of Origin Labeling) sponsored by House Marine Resources Committee Chairman Brent Anderson and Representative Kevin Felsher calls for the expansion of country of origin labeling for seafood and crawfish. This bill, as passed by the House, would allow consumers to make better informed purchasing decisions regarding Gulf Coast seafood versus foreign imports. The Senate amendments would establish a Seafood Labeling Task Force on the issue for future action. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce supports stronger seafood country of origin labeling and enforcement. We are 100 percent committed to enforcing and strengthening country of origin labeling to protect our Mississippi Gulf Coast's seafood industry and assisting the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources with enforcement going forward.

Finally, Commissioner Gipson expressed appreciation to Senate Public Property Committee Chairman Bart Williams and Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann for sparing state taxpayers the cost of paying for a City of Jackson-owned cell tower by allowing House Bill 994 to die in committee. HB 994 was an ill-advised attempt to authorize the State of Mississippi to pay all costs of demolishing and rebuilding the City of Jackson's cell tower currently on North Street in downtown Jackson, and it would have forced the relocation of the Jackson cell tower onto the State Fairgrounds, giving Jackson a 50-year lease at a cost of \$1.00, or two pennies per year. Commissioner Gipson stated "I appreciate Chairman Williams and Lieutenant Governor Hosemann for listening to our serious concerns about this bill on behalf of Mississippi taxpayers and the State Fairgrounds. Thank you to the Mississippi Senate for stopping this terrible policy from becoming law."

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