



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 5, 2026

Contact: Hannah East, Communications Director
(601) 359-1179 / cell: (662) 816-3230
HannahE@mdac.ms.gov

Genuine MS® Membership Grows through First South Farm Credit Partnership

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) announces that new Genuine MS® memberships increased by nearly a quarter this spring – adding 44 new memberships – thanks to a successful partnership with First South Farm Credit.

First South Farm Credit, a financial cooperative dedicated to supporting agriculture and rural communities, covered the cost of a one-year membership for individuals and businesses that joined the Genuine MS® program, helping more Mississippi producers, artisans and entrepreneurs promote their businesses.

“Because of First South Farm Credit’s investment, these Mississippi farms, small businesses and operations were able to take an important step in branding, marketing and expanding the reach of their products across our great state,” said Andy Gipson, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce. “We are grateful to First South Farm Credit for investing in Mississippi farmers and businesses by creating new opportunities for growth through our state branding program.”

Through the partnership, new members who enrolled in the Genuine MS® program by April 30, 2026, had their first year of membership paid for by First South Farm Credit. The initiative was designed to remove financial barriers and encourage more Mississippi-based businesses to participate in the statewide branding and marketing program.

Genuine MS® is a state branding program administered by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce that promotes products grown, raised, crafted and made in Mississippi. Members benefit from statewide marketing efforts, promotional opportunities and the ability to use the Genuine MS® logo to showcase their products.

“We are excited about Genuine MS®’s growth and being able to help Mississippi farmers grow their businesses, reach more customers and build thriving farming operations in this state,” said John Sport, Vice President of First South Farm Credit. “Supporting Genuine MS® aligns perfectly with our mission

to help Mississippi farmers, and covering first-year membership costs was one way we could invest in their success.”

Lane Milton, Director of the Genuine MS® Program says the partnership has done far more than cover first-year membership dues.

“It has opened doors for new businesses to gain visibility, connect with consumers and become part of a statewide network dedicated to promoting products that are genuinely Mississippi,” said Milton. “This partnership with First South Farm Credit also helps expand access to the Genuine MS® program and strengthens our mission to support Mississippi businesses. Partnerships like this are instrumental in helping programs such as Genuine MS® continue to grow and serve businesses across the state.”

As part of the partnership, Genuine MS® expanded its social media reach by spotlighting new members through various social media posts. During the first-quarter promotion, those efforts generated more than 120,000 social media views.

“Thanks to First South Farm Credit and its generous partnership, we have been able to grow Mississippi’s agriculture and small-business community together,” continued Milton. “It reflects a shared mission between Genuine MS® and First South Farm Credit: to invest in the people, products and industries that keep Mississippi agriculture strong.”

For questions about the Genuine MS® program, contact Lane Milton at (601) 359-1110 or lane@mdac.ms.gov. Farmers, producers and businesses interested in becoming Genuine MS® members may apply for membership. Membership availability is subject to program guidelines and approval. For more information or to apply, visit <https://genuinems.com/>.

###

Graphic attached.



Genuine MS® added 44 new members this spring through a partnership with First South Farm Credit, which covered first-year membership costs for participating farmers and businesses.