



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

ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

# **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2026**

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

## **MDAC Hosts Roundtable with USDA Officials to Strengthen Ag Economy**

**JACKSON, Miss.** – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) hosted a roundtable discussion with agricultural leaders and stakeholders to discuss current initiatives and opportunities for collaboration to strengthen the agricultural economy.

Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson hosted the discussion with Bruce LeVell, Director of Public and Private Engagement in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Public Engagement.

The roundtable brought together Mississippi farmers, researchers, lawmakers, medical and agricultural stakeholders to discuss innovations that promote a healthier, more efficient and profitable agricultural economy through public-private partnerships that support small farmers and rural communities.

“The roundtable discussion with Director LeVell underscored the urgency of the challenges facing American agriculture and the importance of working together to deliver practical solutions,” said Commissioner Gipson. “From strengthening our food supply chain and expanding market opportunities to supporting producers through economic and environmental pressures, collaboration between state and federal leaders has never been more critical. I appreciate the candid dialogue and shared commitment demonstrated by USDA, and I look forward to continuing this partnership to ensure our farmers, ranchers and rural communities have the resources and support they need to succeed.”

Those in attendance for the roundtable included Mike McCormick, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation; Chris McDonald, USDA Farm Service Agency; Senator Andy Berry; Representative Vince Mangold; Dr. Tracy Cook, Alcorn State University; Dr. Girish Panicker, Alcorn State University; Ralph Arrington, Alcorn State University; Dr. Wes Schilling, Mississippi State University; Ben Burkett, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Darnella Burkett Winston, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Morris Hodges; Leigh Bailey, Salad Days; Jamie Redmond, Salad Days; Dr. Udaya Shivangi; June Hannah; Dr. Katherine Pannel, Mississippi State Medical Association; Dr. Josh Weaver, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Lesley Davis, Mississippi Advocacy Group; Kevin Brown, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation; Hayes Patrick, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce; Purvie Green, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce; Michael Lasseter, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce; and Paige Manning, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

Participants also discussed potential future collaborations and partnerships aimed at strengthening Mississippi's agricultural economy and supporting rural communities across the state. Roundtable discussions also centered on the next generation of farming and workforce development, the need for more regional food focus and value-added opportunities.

"Agriculture has always been about preparing for the future, and that future rests in the hands of the next generation," added Gipson. "Today's young farmers are embracing new technologies, new ideas and new opportunities while continuing the values that have sustained agriculture for generations. By supporting them now, we are strengthening our food supply, our economy and our rural communities for decades to come."

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**Photos included.**



**The roundtable brought together Mississippi farmers, researchers, lawmakers, medical and agricultural stakeholders to discuss innovations that promote a healthier, more efficient and profitable agricultural economy through public-private partnerships that support small farmers and rural communities. Pictured left to right (front row): Dr. Girish Panicker, Alcorn State University; Dr. Josh Weaver, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Andy Gipson, Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce; Bruce LeVell, Director of Public and Private Engagement in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Public Engagement; Ben Burkett, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Lesley Davis, Mississippi Advocacy Group; Darnella Burkett Winston, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives; Dr. Udaya Shivangi; (second row): Dr. Katherine Pannel, Mississippi State Medical Association; Senator Andy Berry; Chris McDonald, USDA Farm Service Agency; Jamie Redmond, Salad Days; Leigh Bailey, Salad Days; Dr. Wes Schilling, Mississippi State University; Hayes Patrick, MDAC; (third row): Representative Vince Mangold; Purvie Green, MDAC; Morris Hodges; Mike McCormick, Mississippi Farm**

**Bureau Federation; Kevin Brown, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation; Ralph Arrington, Alcorn State University; June Hannah; Jamie Peavy.**



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