



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Agriculture Commissioner Andy Gipson Addresses Local Food Opportunities and Resources Available to the Public

JACKSON, Miss. – Today, Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson addressed local food opportunities and resources available to the public during a press conference held at the Mississippi Farmers Market. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) currently offers several resources for finding local food and agricultural products. Commissioner Gipson discussed seven ways consumers can find local products:

- Search for local farmers markets near you at msfarmersmarket.com
- Find a local u-pick agritourism farm near you at msagritourism.org
- Farmers can register for free, and consumers can buy locally from farmers at msfarmmarketplace.com
- Subscribe to the in-print and online bimonthly *Mississippi Market Bulletin* at msmarketbulletin.org
- Shop the best of everything Grown, Raised, Crafted and Made at genuinems.com
- Buy livestock on the hoof, and custom process or buy retail from any one of our several USDA processors.
- Join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm location by purchasing an interest in farm produce and products, egg shares and herd shares.

“Due to various supply chain disruptions and labor shortages around the nation, our agency recognizes the concerns facing Mississippians to provide for their families,” said Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson. “However, I want to assure our citizens that there is no reason to worry about any potential food shortages.”

Commissioner Gipson acknowledged the challenging times farmers are facing with elevated input and transportation costs. Farmers are experiencing increasing costs of fuel, fertilizer and other input costs. Rising food prices do not translate into increased profits for farmers.

“Less than two percent of the American population are farmers,” continued Gipson. “That means that less than two percent of our nation is responsible for providing food, fiber and shelter to the remaining 98 percent. That’s a tall order, and we should do all we can to support our farmers. Even with record-high gas

prices, the fertilizer shortage and inflation, our Mississippi farmers and ranchers have not quit. They continue to provide in order to sustain our livelihoods during these difficult times.”

Commissioner Gipson encouraged the public to shop local farmers markets. Farmers markets provide an opportunity for consumers to purchase local produce and other food products including meat, dairy, and eggs. He invited the public to shop at the Mississippi Farmers Market, as well the more than 70 additional farmers markets located in Mississippi. The Mississippi Farmers Market is open on Thursdays seasonally from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. The public can visit www.msfarmersmarket.com to find a local farmers market.

An additional option to buy direct from farmers is through one of the over 100 agritourism operations in the state. Agritourism is a business on a working farm, or other agricultural enterprise that offers an educational and fun experience for visitors while generating supplemental income for the owner. Many of the operations in Mississippi include u-pick farms. These unique farms allow visitors to pick the fruits and vegetables they want. This is a great way to purchase produce that can be frozen and preserved for future. To find an agritourism operation near you, visit our website msagritourism.org and download the Mississippi Agritourism mobile app.

Another major resource of local food supply is the Mississippi Farm Marketplace, an online portal developed by MDAC to connect farmers and consumers looking to purchase direct from growers. This initiative for an accessible consumer-to-producer marketing tool was a direct result of the negative impacts COVID-19 had on food supply chains and produce availability. The Mississippi Farm Marketplace website allows farmers to list their available commodities for sale direct to the public, as well as labor needs on their farms through the job listings. All commodity listings are categorized and registered with availability start and end dates to ensure seasonal products are advertised accurately. The Mississippi Farm Marketplace is free to the public and easily accessible via computer or smart phone. Find fresh produce or advertise your agricultural commodities by registering at msfarmmarketplace.com.

The *Mississippi Market Bulletin* is the state’s #1 agricultural newspaper that provides the latest agriculture news and updates, while also directly connecting buyers and sellers from around the state. For a yearly subscription fee of only \$10.00, Mississippi subscribers can list up to two advertisements per issue for any agriculture related item, along with their location and contact info. This in turn allows readers to know exactly what products are available in their area. Currently, the *Mississippi Market Bulletin* services over 35,000 paying subscribers across the United States and runs an average of 2,500 ad listings per issue for various agriculture commodities around the state. To learn more about the *Mississippi Market Bulletin*, visit msmarketbulletin.org.

Consumers can find the best of everything Grown, Raised, Crafted and Made in the Magnolia State through MDAC’s flagship program Genuine MS®. The Genuine MS® program is a branding initiative to promote and bring attention to the incredible range of Mississippi products. At genuinems.com, the public can find locally produced products from 255 members located around the state and includes farms, ranches, agritourism operations and small businesses. The Genuine MS® Store, located inside the Mississippi Farmers Market in Jackson, Miss., features a selection of over 200 Genuine MS® products. The store is open every Thursday and Friday from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Genuine MS® is also currently developing an online store system and inventory with pre-packaged gift options available for shipping. For more information on this advantageous program, visit genuinems.com and follow Genuine MS® on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Through efforts of the State of Mississippi, local meat processing has expanded with two new USDA-inspected livestock slaughtering and processing facilities coming on-line in the southern part of the state, and two existing USDA-inspected facilities having completed expansions within the past nine months. This has increased processing capacity in the state and will help to alleviate the long wait times that many farmers have been facing. In the coming months, an additional USDA-inspected facility is scheduled to open, and an expansion of one of the existing facilities is expected to be complete. The construction of the

new facilities and the expansions of current facilities are tripling Mississippi's USDA meat processing capacity and allowing farmers more options to sell their meat products. Consumers can buy livestock on the hoof, and custom process or buy retail from any one of our several USDA processors.

Commissioner Gipson encouraged consumers to join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm location by purchasing an interest in farm produce and products, egg share, or herd shares. In many cases, consumers will pay a subscribe fee to receive a certain number of boxes of product each week for a given number of weeks or during a season. Several CSA farms are listed on www.genuinems.com and msfarmmarketplace.com.

"I realize these are difficult times," said Gipson. "A lot of people have concerns about food availability and prices. So, I want to reassure all Mississippians that there are options available to them. The positive in all of this is that rather than worrying about it, there are a number of options for consumers to buy direct from farmers; therefore, we can do something about it."

Local Food Sources:

Farmers Markets - msfarmersmarket.com

Agritourism/U-pick Operations – msagritourism.org

Genuine MS® – genuinems.com

Mississippi Farm Marketplace – msfarmmarketplace.com

Mississippi Market Bulletin – msmarketbulletin.org

Visit mdac.ms.gov to learn more about the various opportunities and resources available to the public through the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

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Photo attached.



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