



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Agriculture Commissioner Andy Gipson Addresses State Economic Leaders Highlighting Successes and Challenges to Agriculture and Commerce

JACKSON, Miss. – Today, Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson addressed state economic leaders at Mississippi Hobnob hosted by the Mississippi Economic Council. Commissioner Gipson opened his remarks by singing the first verse of “A County Boy Can Survive” by Hank Williams, Jr. He went on to highlight successes and challenges to agriculture and commerce, while providing practical solutions for the future.

Recognizing the importance of agriculture in Mississippi, Commissioner Gipson said, “The backbone of our economy is agriculture, and farmers have been suffering, but they continue to plant and raise the next crop. We need to give our farmers our sincerest thanks. Because of them, we are going to survive,” said Commissioner Gipson.

Commissioner Gipson outlined successes of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) over the past year. In addition, he detailed action taken to address two specific issues that resulted in positive solutions – a new water well system on the State Fairgrounds to ensure critical water needs on the property are continually met and the multi-agency law enforcement cooperation that resulted in a safe Mississippi State Fair. Highlighted MDAC successes included:

- The Mississippi State Fairgrounds hosted a record-breaking Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo with record ticket sales and the highest grossing Sale of Junior Champions.
- The new 750-foot deep water well system on the Mississippi State Fairgrounds was completed in February.
- The Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum, recently named Small Festival Event of the Year by the Mississippi Tourism Association for its annual Pickle Fest, has successfully returned to hosting in-person field trips.
- The first year of the Ag Youth Council, MDAC’s youth leadership program, was successfully implemented.
- Meat processing capacity has expanded with the opening of new local meat processing facilities in the state.
- MDAC hosted its first international trade training in collaboration with the Southern U.S. Trade Association.

- MDAC hosted its first Mississippi Timber Inbound Trade Mission with buyers from five countries participating. The trade mission resulted in \$7 million in timber sales during the week of the event with anticipated future sales in the millions.
- Several new farmers markets have opened with assistance of MDAC, prompted by a renewed interest in farmers market.
- Mississippi grain has successfully been shipped by a newly-owned grain elevator in the Delta. Over 8 million bushels of grain have been shipped by rail while Mississippi River traffic was slowed or halted.
- The Mississippi State Fairgrounds held a successful and safe State Fair with attendance reaching near pre-pandemic levels.

Commissioner Gipson addressed the significant, yet unique, challenges impacting agriculture and commerce including labor shortages, record inflation, international conflict, threatened labor strikes, energy depletion, and historically low water levels of the Mississippi River, while emphasizing the resiliency of American farmers.

“In 2022, farmers endured, as consumers have endured, the highest prices for everything from feed to seed and fertilizers. It has cost twice as much to get a crop in, so thank our farmers when you see them. Agriculture allows us to survive,” said Commissioner Gipson.

Looking to the future, Gipson noted that action can be taken to mitigate the serious supply chain challenges we face. He shared five practical solutions: first, we must strengthen and support our existing local food supply chains, beginning by buying local foods from local farmers; second, starting now we must teach future generations the necessity of growing up and joining the workforce; third, we must intentionally cultivate our next generation of farmers; fourth, as a state we must develop a strategic commercial shipping and transportation plan utilizing our abundance of transportation resources; and fifth we must adopt energy, land use, labor and trade policies from the local to the federal levels that will support agriculture and commerce, not fight against it.

“Whether city planners in Clinton, Miss., or policymakers in Washington, D.C., everyone needs to understand that agriculture is not the enemy. Agriculture is our lifeblood. Agriculture is how we survive, and Mississippi will survive and thrive as we face the challenges ahead,” concluded Commissioner Gipson.

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Photo attached.



Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson addressed state economic leaders at Mississippi Hobnob. He highlighted successes and challenges to agriculture and commerce, while providing practical solutions for the future.