



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and Mississippi Department of Education Recognize and Celebrate Mississippi Farm to School Week

JACKSON, Miss. – Schools across the state are celebrating Mississippi Farm to School Week this week, October 4-8. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools hosted a Mississippi Farm to School Week Pre-Celebration webinar for school foodservice administrators across the state leading up to Farm to School Week. The webinar featured discussions on the importance of farm to school and opportunities and resources available for farm to week celebrations.

“The partnership between the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Department of Education benefits both schools and farmers,” said Commissioner Gipson. “Farmers are provided with an additional marketing opportunity to sell fresh produce, and students have increased access to healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables grown right here in Mississippi. Farm to school also allows the students, our future leaders, to learn where their food comes from and to get a glimpse into the world of agriculture.”

For more than two decades, the Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce have made successful efforts to increase the amount of Mississippi grown fruits and vegetables served in cafeterias across the state through the Department of Defense (DoD) Farm to School Program. The program offers a variety of 16 Mississippi-grown fruits and vegetables, including butterbeans, southern peas, sweet potatoes, yellow squash, zucchini, turnip greens, cantaloupes, watermelons, cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, cabbage, eggplant, strawberries, cucumbers, blueberries and broccoli crowns, to schools.

“Farm to School has been a highly effective partnership between the Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi farmers, and local schools for more than two decades,” said Scott Clements, State Director of the Office of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools. “Through this partnership, we are able to provide students with healthy, fresh Mississippi produce while supporting local farmers. Using farm to school events, schools have an opportunity to teach students about agriculture and the connection to nutritious foods.”

The first full week of October was designated as Mississippi Farm to School Week by the Mississippi Legislature in 2012. Farm to School Week was introduced as an effort to encourage schools to serve locally grown and locally raised agricultural products in their meals and to recognize the substantial economic and health benefits of farm to school programs. Farm to School Week draws attention to the vast number of crops that are grown in Mississippi and serves as an educational tool to teach children where their food comes from beyond the grocery store.

Visit farmtoschoolweek.org to learn more about Mississippi Farm to School and to access available resources including posters, videos, menus and other additional promotional materials.

View a message from Commissioner Gipson and Scott Clements at <https://youtu.be/tpBEgrT2G3k> to learn more about the efforts of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Department of Education.

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