



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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MDAC and MDMR Manage \$1.6M Grant from USDA for Seafood Processors, Facilities & Vessels

JACKSON, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) will manage a \$1,606,446 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support seafood processors, processing facilities and processing vessels through the Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety Block Grant Program.

This program, funded by the Pandemic Assistance provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, will assist in defraying the expenses of preparing for, preventing exposure to and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic for seafood processing facilities and processing vessels.

Partnered with an independent consulting firm, MDMR and MDAC will distribute funding for the grant. The firm will assist with the application process and administration of payments to seafood processing facilities and processing vessels for costs incurred between January 27, 2020, and December 31, 2021. The MDMR and MDAC will determine funding amounts based on their local conditions and industry needs. Funds can cover activities associated with the following:

- Workplace safety measures, including, but not limited to, personal protective equipment, sanitizer, hand washing stations, air filters, thermometers, cleaning supplies or similar items.
- Market pivots, such as the transition to virtual/online sales costs (online platform development and fees, online marketing, credit card processing fees), supplies, new signage.
- Retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety (retrofitting harvesters for onboard vessel processing to maximize open-air activities, plexiglass, walk-up windows, heat lamps, fans, tents, propane, weights, tables, chairs).
- Additional transportation costs incurred to maintain social distancing.
- Additional worker housing costs incurred to maintain social distancing or to allow for quarantining of new or exposed employees.
- Medical: unreimbursed costs associated with providing or enabling vaccinations, testing or healthcare treatment of infected employees, including any paid leave.

Each processing facility or vessel must apply separately for funding. Processors may only apply once for each location or vessel and the funding amounts will be determined based on local conditions and industry needs. Funds will be distributed based on eligibility and availability of funding. Reimbursements will be made on a case-by-case basis and may not cover all expenses incurred.

The application period is not yet open. Once available, program details and eligibility requirements will be posted on the MDMR website at www.dmr.ms.gov.

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