



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

CINDY HYDE-SMITH
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Agriculture Commissioner Hyde-Smith Announces National Farmers Market Week

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Cindy Hyde-Smith joined U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in proclaiming August 2-8, 2015, as National Farmers Market Week in order to celebrate and increase awareness of farmers markets' contributions to American life.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), farmers markets have increased in number in the country by over 60% since 2009 to nearly 8,500 today. In Mississippi, that number has climbed from 54 markets in 2009 to 84 today. "This represents Mississippians' growing interest in where their food comes from. People want to know now, more than ever, how and where their food is grown and the farmer who grew it. Farmers markets provide the perfect platform for consumers to have that face-to-face interaction with the farmers," said Commissioner Hyde-Smith.

Farmers markets are more than just an outlet for fresh produce and friendly farmers. They facilitate the preservation of farmland, the stimulation of local economies, increased access to fresh, nutritious food, and, subsequently, the improvement of community health. For example, growers selling locally create thirteen full time farm-operator jobs per \$1 million in revenue earned. Commissioner Hyde-Smith continued, "Farmers markets benefit their growers by creating opportunities to sell direct to the consumer while receiving retail prices for their products. At the same time, farmers markets work to the advantage of local communities by increasing their access to healthy fruits and vegetables. Communities also win because money spent in the local economy tends to stay in the local economy"

As a way to recognize the growing number of farmers markets across the state, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce administers the Mississippi Farmers Market Certification Program. This program is a marketing initiative designed to identify and promote markets where producers of Mississippi grown fruits, vegetables and plant materials gather to sell their goods direct to consumers. To date, 29 markets are participating in the voluntary program, which also offers promotional and technical assistance to participating markets. For additional information on the Mississippi Farmers Market Certification Program or to find local markets in the state, go to www.msfarmersmarket.com or download the Mississippi Farmers Market mobile app.