



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson Hosts Annual SASDA Meeting

BILOXI, Miss. — Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson hosted members of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) in Biloxi for the organization's annual conference this week. This meeting brought together commissioners and secretaries of state departments of agriculture from the southern region to discuss key issues impacting farmers, ranchers and the agriculture industry. Participants heard updates from numerous government and industry stakeholders, including an update from USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey.

In addition to discussing key agriculture policies, the commissioners and secretaries had the opportunity to tour the Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center in Ocean Springs. The conference concluded with Gipson, who has been serving as SASDA President, passing the gavel to Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller, the newly elected President of SASDA.

During the annual meeting of the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA) held during the conference, Gipson was elected to serve as SUSTA's Vice-President. SUSTA is made up of the departments of agriculture in 15 southern states and is chartered to facilitate exports of U.S. food and high value agricultural products by small to medium-sized companies in the region. SUSTA works closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in administering federal export promotion programs, especially the Market Access Program (MAP) along with investments by the States and individual companies.

"I am so pleased that my colleagues have invested their trust not just in me, but in Mississippi agriculture by selecting me to serve in this leadership role for Southern ag exports," said Gipson. "One thing that was reinforced during my listening tour around the State was that exports are so important to agriculture, our State's number one industry," he added.

SASDA is one of the four regional organizations in the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). SASDA is comprised of the commissioners, secretaries and directors of agriculture from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and the Virgin Islands.

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Photo Attached.



Commissioners and secretaries of state departments of agriculture met in Biloxi this week for the annual meeting of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) hosted by Agriculture Commissioner Andy Gipson. Pictured (front) Commissioner Andy Gipson, Mississippi; Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh, Virginia; Commissioner Sid Miller, Texas; Commissioner Mike Strain, Louisiana; Secretary Wes Ward; Arkansas; (back) Commissioner Carlos Robles, Virgin Islands; Commissioner Steve Troxler, North Carolina; Commissioner John McMillan, Alabama; Commissioner Hugh Weathers, South Carolina; Commissioner Kent Leonhardt, West Virginia; and Commissioner Ryan Quarles, Kentucky.