



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Paige Manning, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Phone: (601) 359-1163
paige@mdac.ms.gov

Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson Addresses the Neshoba County Fair

Neshoba County, Miss. -- Agriculture and Commerce Commissioner Andy Gipson addressed the Neshoba County Fair on Thursday at 9:30 a.m., announcing the Genuine MS initiative for Mississippi agriculture. In his remarks, Commissioner Gipson emphasized his personal commitment to leading Mississippi agriculture and growing opportunities for Mississippi's next generation.

Gipson expressed his gratitude to Gov. Phil Bryant for the opportunity to serve all Mississippians. He pledged to fight for Mississippi agriculture and commerce with the same energy he brought to the Mississippi legislature. Speaking on the Genuine MS branding initiative, Gipson said the goal is to promote and tell the great stories of Mississippi Grown, Raised, Crafted and Made products. "The truth is we have a great deal to be proud of in the Magnolia State, and the Genuine MS program allows us to tell our stories at the same time we connect consumers with locally grown produce and other products. And we will use this same platform to expand markets by promoting Mississippi globally, as well."

Since taking office April 2nd, Gipson has traveled the State, visiting with farmers, ranchers and landowners and listening to their issues and opportunities. The 2018 Genuine MS Farm Listening Tour will continue into the harvest season.

"During my travels I've been hearing four common issues from farmers all over Mississippi: the priority of our local rural county roads and bridges; the need for a dedicated agricultural workforce; the desire for expanded markets; and the goal of rolling back burdensome regulations that stifle economic opportunity." He pledged to work with legislative leaders to support a transportation plan resulting in actual improvements to the rural roads and bridges farmers and ranchers rely on. He added, "I certainly believe it can be done without raising taxes."

With regard to workforce development, Gipson announced a new "Genuine MS Agriculture and Commerce Student Internship Program." Through this program sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi students and youth will be given the opportunity to participate through seasonal work internships gaining valuable experience for possible future careers in agriculture and commerce. "By partnering with participating schools, universities, farmers and private agriculture-related businesses, the goal is to connect Mississippi youth with real world experience aligning with their personal goals and interest in agriculture. By doing so we intend to help grow the next crop of agriculture leaders in our State."

Gipson also announced one of his top priorities is to help expand agricultural trade and market opportunities. “We are cautiously optimistic that once we get through these short-term tariff issues, there will be even greater opportunities for Mississippi agriculture worldwide. For example, we recently saw the first Mississippi poultry exports to India, the world’s fastest growing country.” Gipson was recently elected Vice President of the Southern United States Trade Association, or SUSTA, and in this capacity he pledged to actively pursue every reasonable trade opportunity to benefit Mississippi farmers and increase market access for Mississippi crops, livestock and timber. In closing Gipson said “Let’s all get together, pull the same direction for Mississippi agriculture and in the end we can count on a Genuine Mississippi Harvest.”

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