

# News Release

For Immediate Release

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For Further Information Contact: [Rickey Gray](#) or [Nancy Newman](#)

## STATE AGRICULTURE ADMINISTRATOR RECEIVES AWARD

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Chris Sparkman, Deputy Commissioner with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce, was presented with the 1997 National Association of State Department of Agriculture's Honor Award in the field of Administration on September 23, 1997, at the Association's annual meeting held in Delaware. Chris works directly under Dr. Lester Spell, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture. He has been with the agency since 1968 when he started as an accountant. Dr. Spell states that Chris is vital to the agency in working with the Mississippi Legislature as well as overseeing the administrative and regulatory divisions of the MDAC. "Chris has been instrumental in the passage of every appropriation and bond bill for this agency, the Fair Commission, the Board of Animal Health, the Bureau of Plant Industry, and the Farmers Market since 1970," Spell stated.

Sparkman is well known throughout the agricultural sector of the state for his wealth of knowledge, depth of experience and contacts with others in the field of agriculture.

During his tenure, Chris has seen tremendous growth in Mississippi's agriculture sector, including landmark growth in the horticulture, poultry, and forest-products industries; the development of new products like kenaf and catfish; and the assignment of regulatory responsibilities designed to protect business and consumers alike from the unscrupulous few.

Spell further stated, "Chris has been with the agency through the most difficult times and through the best of times. I appreciate the fact that Chris had worked under one administration for a number of years and so willingly adapted to working with my new administration."

Spell concluded, "I look forward to Chris's participation in whatever changes that are sure to come in the Department and to Mississippi agriculture in the future. With each of his 28 years, his experience has grown, making Chris an even more valuable asset to the agency, as well as Mississippi agriculture. "

Two recipients, one in the field of administration and one in the field of service, are selected annually from nominees submitted by the fifty departments of agriculture throughout the U.S. An independent panel of judges who are familiar with the work of state agriculture agencies, but who are not employed by the NASDA or any member states, select the recipients of this

award.

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