

NEWS RELEASE

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SPELL ELECTED PRESIDENT OF REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL TRADE ASSOCIATION

State Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, Dr. Lester Spell, Jr., has been elected President of the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA). This is a prestigious position for Mississippi's agriculture commissioner as he will represent 15 southern states and Puerto Rico at various activities nationally as well as internationally. Essentially, he will be southern agriculture's goodwill ambassador.

SUSTA was founded in 1973 and is funded through the United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service. Member states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

SUSTA's primary function is to promote the export of high-value food and agricultural products from the southern United States to overseas markets. Through the many services the organization provides, such as the Market Access program (MAP) and the Foreign Market Development Program, SUSTA is able to create a link between overseas markets and southern U.S. producers and suppliers. The association promotes agricultural products through activities such as trade shows, trade missions, outreach seminars, newsletters, and a matching funds reimbursement program known as "The Branded Program."

Some of Commissioner Spell's duties as president include being responsible for major decisions involving purchasing and budgets, working with the executive board in order to provide guidance to the member states, and presiding at all SUSTA meetings.