

News Release

For Immediate Release

Date: August 3, 1998

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SPECIAL BULLETIN FOR MS CORN GROWERS, GRAIN OPERATORS

(Jackson, MS) Commissioner of Agriculture Lester Spell met with federal and state officials today to develop a coordinated response to a potential problem facing corn farmers in Mississippi. The problem is aflatoxin, a fungus that can make an entire harvest worthless if it is found on only a few corn kernels.

“We issued a bulletin last week updating farmers on conditions in Louisiana,” said Spell, “At the time, we had real hopes that Mississippi farmers would be able to avoid the distress of our western neighbors. While the degree of impact is still to be measured, our problem may be greater than we expected.”

Aflatoxin can show up in any corn crop, but is especially widespread under stressful conditions such as drought. Until last week, experts believed that aflatoxin problems were confined to Texas and Louisiana. Now, however, the full impact of the earlier growing season drought in Mississippi is showing and unacceptable levels of aflatoxins are turning up across the state.

“The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) plans to participate in a cooperative effort among federal officials, university officials, cooperative extension agents, the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and private insurers to cope with this problem,” said Spell. “By acting quickly and comprehensively, I believe we can keep this situation from getting out of hand. I expect to announce the specifics of our plan as early as tomorrow.”

Corn farmers in Mississippi are urged to contact their insurance agents if they suspect the possibility of aflatoxin in their crops. Farmers wanting to check their corn crop for the fungus can also take samples to their local grain elevator, which should have testing equipment on-site.