



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**  
ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Ag Commissioner Provides Guidance on Essential Ag-Related Businesses to Industry**

**JACKSON, Miss.** – Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson provided a letter and additional guidance to members of the agriculture and commerce sectors regarding the operation of essential agribusinesses during the statewide “Shelter in Place,” which was established by Executive Order 1466 and signed by Governor Tate Reeves on April 1, 2020.

“As a result of the many questions that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce has received from those in the agriculture and commerce sectors inquiring as to who is considered ‘essential’ and whether employees’ work travel will be impacted during the ‘Shelter in Place’ that goes into effect tomorrow, I have provided a letter and a guidance document to assist our agribusinesses as they continue their essential work. Agriculture and the industries that support agriculture are necessary for the food supply chain. Without agriculture, Mississippi would not have the food, fiber, fuel, and shelter necessary to maintain public health and safety,” said Commissioner Gipson.

Commissioner Gipson continued, “But let me be clear to everyone including those in essential businesses: this virus is dangerous and extremely contagious. If you can stay home, you should. If you can limit your travel, you should. You should take every necessary step to protect yourself, your family and your neighbors. Being designated as essential workforce is not a license to cruise or ignore guidance from the CDC or the Mississippi Department of Health. Be responsible. Take care of business and then ‘shelter in place.’”

Agriculture businesses and workers have the authority under the Governor’s orders to remain open, operate and perform work as necessary to provide their essential services, which includes travel. The letter from the Commissioner may be a useful tool for those in these sectors to download to their phones or print and keep in the vehicle while performing essential business functions. The guidance document outlines certain sections of Governor Reeves’ Executive Order 1463 pertaining to agriculture. It provides a listing of “Essential Business of Operation” for agriculture and gives a partial listing of essential businesses that are related to agriculture and Mississippi’s food and supply chain.

The Department’s Agriculture and Livestock Theft Bureau will be contacting local law enforcement officers to communicate that agriculture and related industries are essential businesses and should be permitted to operate and travel. This information is also being provided to associations and leaders in the agriculture and commerce community to provide to their members and constituents, along with their own guidance and credentials.

The [letter](#) and [guidance](#) document are found on the Department’s website at [mdac.ms.gov/COVID19](http://mdac.ms.gov/COVID19), along with additional resources related to COVID-19 emergency.

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