STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE

ANDY GIPSON

COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Ag Commissioner Announces Steps to Strengthen State's Food Supply Chain and Introduces the Mississippi Farm Marketplace

JACKSON, Miss. —Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson outlined steps being taken by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce to strengthen the state's food supply chain in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The country's food supply chain continues to function in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, labor issues in other states, coupled with shifting demands as restaurants and schools have closed, have strained the supply chain," said Commissioner Gipson.

He continued, "In Mississippi, our food supply is abundant, plentiful and safe; thanks to our hardworking farmers. It is imperative that we take steps that will provide new market opportunities for our farmers, while simultaneously providing consumers with avenues to purchase direct from farmers. These steps are all part of keeping our food supply diverse and secure."

Commissioner Gipson signed an emergency rule today increasing the number of owners an animal may have when utilizing custom slaughter. The 120-day emergency rule will expire; however, the Department will file a regular rule change to make this a permanent rule. "This action to remove the limit of four owners will provide additional options for both farmers and consumers," said Commissioner Gipson.

To further expand farm-to-table efforts, Commissioner Gipson announced the launch of the Mississippi Farm Marketplace. The Mississippi Farm Marketplace is an online marketing portal that gives farmers a place to list commodities they have for sale, while providing consumers a location to easily source local products. The portal can be accessed at MSFarmMarketplace.com, where a variety of commodities can be listed including produce, meats, dairy products, honey, live animals for custom slaughter, eggs, aquaculture, seafood, and horticulture products. In addition, the portal contains a listing of on-farm jobs available.

"I encourage farmers and ranchers that have crops and other commodities that they need to sell to utilize the Mississippi Farm Marketplace. This is a valuable tool to connect with consumers that are looking to buy direct from growers," said Commissioner Gipson. "And, I also want to encourage all Mississippians to go to the website to find local products. This is a great resource to source local products for food banks, restaurants, schools, retailers, wholesalers, and anyone else that is looking to buy local."

Commissioner Gipson discussed the need to expand meat processing capacity in the state as some producers are unable to get meat processed because many processing facilities are at capacity. He invited existing meat processors to submit applications to the Mississippi Land, Water, and Timber Resources Program to upgrade their facilities to federally inspected status, or expand their facilities for additional processing capacity.

The press conference was livestreamed and can be viewed on the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce's Facebook page. Visit https://youtu.be/UdSpP4_0weI to watch a message from Commissioner Gipson on the Mississippi Farm Marketplace.

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Commissioner of Commerce Andy Gipson outlined three initiatives being taken by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce to strengthen the state's food supply chain in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He signed an emergency rule increasing the number of owners an animal may have when utilizing custom slaughter as one of the initiatives.