

2024

COMMODITY GROUP REPORT

PRODUCER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI RESEARCH
AND EXTENSION CENTER





Dear Valued Partner,

The mission of the Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center (CMREC) is to develop research and Extension programming to serve the needs of central Mississippi communities by improving the economic and personal well-being of agricultural producers, landowners, allied industry, and rural and urban citizens. To fulfill this mission, it is critical that we connect with our stakeholders to identify needs and work together to develop impactful solutions.

During February of each year, area producers and other stakeholders come together with MSU research and Extension faculty and community partners for the Central Mississippi Producer Advisory Council (PAC) Meeting. This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss important agricultural needs, university research, and Extension programming designed to strengthen agronomic crops, horticultural crops, livestock and timber production, as well as the stewardship of other natural resources. The following pages contain the report from the 2024 PAC Meeting, which was held on February 20, 2024 in Raymond, MS. A total of 132 individuals were in attendance and six commodity groups were represented. This report contains summaries from each commodity group's breakout meetings.

If you were able to attend the 2024 meeting, I want to thank you for your time and participation. If you were not able to attend, I hope that you will find this report helpful in keeping you updated. I look forward to your participation at the next PAC Meeting on February 18, 2025.

We are grateful for the continued support of our partners Hinds Community College and Alcorn State University Extension, as well as our generous sponsors Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and Southern AgCredit. We are also grateful for the support of our university administrators in the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM), Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES), and the Mississippi State University Extension Service (MSUES) for their leadership and continued support of our work. Last but certainly not least, we could not conduct the research and Extension programming that addresses the needs of our producers without our esteemed University faculty and staff from CMREC, Extension Southwest Region, and various other departments in DAFVM, MAFES, and Extension. Thank you!

On behalf of the faculty and staff of CMREC, thank you for your continued support and participation as we take care of what matters for producers in Central Mississippi.

Hail State!

R. Curt Lacy, Ph.D.
Professor and Head
Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center

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SESSION NOTES

AGRONOMIC CROPS

University Chair:	Mr. Kyle Lewis
University Co-Chair:	Dr. Trent Irby
Producer Chair:	Mr. Kendall Garraway
Total Attendees:	13

2024 Priority Needs

1. Deer damage in row crops getting worse
2. Uniform crop emergence for seeding rate
3. Best management strategies for low input row crop ground

SESSION NOTES

APICULTURE

University Chair:	Dr. Jeff Harris
University Co-Chair:	Dr. Priya Basu
Producer Chair:	Mr. Don Geddie
Total Attendees:	15

Meeting Minutes

Dr. Harris began the session by giving a brief slide show to describe the status of the beekeeping industry in Mississippi after a very tough drought year. He also updated the group of plans by APHIS to control Chinese Tallow trees with biocontrol agents. Additionally, he described how MSU Extension tried to meet some of the needs of the beekeeping community by (1) conducting two workshops involving our commercial queen producers in which problems with queen quality were discussed, (2) publishing 3 new MSU Cares publications relating to beekeeping, (3) revising 3 publications related to beekeeping, and (4) conducting research involving varroa mites and viruses (Dr. Esmaeil Amiri and Dr. Jeff Harris) and research involving various aspects of honey bee nutrition (Dr. Priya Basu).

Dr. Harris then asked all attendees to sequentially introduce themselves to the group. Each person told of where they live, how long they had been a beekeeper, and whatever else he or she wished to share with the group. This was a fun and relaxing way to begin the meeting.

After introductions, the first task completed was the selection of a new Producer Chair for the 2025 meeting. Mrs. Mary Jane Boutwell volunteered and was approved by all to be the next Producer Chair.

Don Geddie took over the role of leading the meeting. Dr. Priya Basu assisted him by writing and editing the bullet points that were generated by the group onto the large paper flip pad. Dr. Harris took notes as the discussion progressed.

Stan and Cheryl Yeagley made the first suggested bullet point. They wanted to see more information and workshops that helped teach beekeepers about natural beekeeping. They told of how Dr. Harris had mentioned this type of beekeeping to them many years ago. They followed up and reached out to the major proponent (Dr. Tom Seeley; Cornell University) of this type of beekeeping, and they learned the style of beekeeping. They claimed that natural beekeeping has helped them to manage varroa mites without the use of insecticides in their colonies. They feel that this information needs to be more broadly delivered by MSU Extension.

Don Geddie relayed that Dr. Harris had spoken to his beekeeping group about natural beekeeping on several occasions. He also agreed that more information and workshops on the topic

SESSION NOTES

APICULTURE *continued*

would be especially useful to small-scale and hobbyist beekeepers. This item was added to the bullet list.

Paul Watson wanted to find a way to make the flowers of watermelons and cantaloupes to be more attractive to his honey bees. He lamented that he saw no honey bees attempting to gather food from his melons in the previous growing season. He wondered if plant breeders could enhance the sweetness of the nectar in these flowers so that the honey bees would be more likely to visit (and help pollinate the melon crops). Dr. Harris and a couple of the other producers explained that it is not unusual for honey bees to ignore some flowering plants when a more abundant and richer floral source might be blooming. For example, honey bees are visiting Chinese privet or Chinese tallow tree when the watermelons and cantaloupes are blooming. The honey bees try to monopolize the richer and more abundant food sources before considering patches of smaller and less attractive blooms. Mr. Watson still wanted MSU Extension to investigate ways of making his plants more attractive to pollinators. Enhancing crop quality for bee attraction because the second bullet point.

Next, an attendee asked about nutrition from peach pollen. Dr. Basu explained about variation in nutritional value among different source such as almonds, peaches, apples, and blueberries. Pollens from different crops can vary in total protein content as well as in the composition of important micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, sterols, etc.). She explained that honey bees can get a balanced nutritional diet by collecting pollen from many different source plants. She also told of how farmers can enhance the nutrition for honey bees by planting a wildflower mixture on the orchard or field margins of areas where crops are grown, and these wildflowers will offer a nutritional balance to the bees, especially when they are forced to pollinate crops like blueberries or cranberries that may be nutritionally inferior to crops like apples and almonds. So, the group agreed that a bullet point could be the MSU Extension can help develop and communicate strategies that growers can use to improve bee forage plants in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings.

Don Geddie asked if the other producers had experienced situations in which new beekeepers were initially extremely enthusiastic about learning beekeeping, but over time, many newbie beekeepers simply become disinterested, sputtered and quit the hobby. His question was whether this was something witnessed by the rest of the group, and if so, what were the causes? Some speculated that the technical knowledge for successful beekeeping was overwhelming. Others suggested that it may be the high start-up costs that turns newbies away. During this conversation, many of the producers touted how important a firsthand approach to teaching newbies is so important. Many beekeepers learn more by following an example in the bee yard than they ever do at a seminar presentation. After some discussion, a bullet point was

SESSION NOTES

APICULTURE *continued*

added to the effect of MSU Extension developing educational programs to help with the retention of newbie beekeepers into the hobby or business.

Finally, Stan Yeagley wanted to make sure that the focus of the PAC meetings remained firmly on the small-scale beekeeper and not the commercial side of beekeeping. Dr. Harris explained that he has to address the needs for all beekeeping clients. However, he admitted that commercial beekeepers rarely attend the PAC meetings. Hence, the primary audience at PAC meetings are the small-scale beekeepers. Dr. Harris seeks out the needs of the commercial beekeeping meetings by other meetings – those only attended by the commercial guys (such as the workshops on queen rearing that were mentioned in the first paragraph of these notes). So, the absence of commercial folks at PAC meetings, keeps the needs of the small-scale and hobbyist beekeepers in the front and center of conversations.

The group then spent some time to revise the bullet points to simpler phrases for projecting to the lunch crowd. Afterwards, the meeting was adjourned.

2024 Priority Needs

1. Natural beekeeping practices taught and delivered by MSU Extension
2. How to enhance crop quality (for attracting honey bees)
3. More research on how to improve forage availability for bees
4. How to motivate new beekeepers and help sustain their interest in the hobby
5. Emphasize the needs of small-scale beekeepers (over those of commercial beekeepers) at PAC meetings.

SESSION NOTES

BEEF, FORAGE, & EQUINE

University Chair:	Mr. Shelby Bearden
University Co-Chair:	Dr. Brett Rushing
Producer Chair:	Mr. Jeff Wilson
Total Attendees:	28

Meeting Minutes

Jeff Wilson introduced as current president of the council. Several University faculty and staff provided updates.

Libby Durst

- AI School (spring session already full); March 19-21 in Starkville, MS
- BCIA sale March 2 in Raymond, MS

Brett Rushing

- Grazing management impacts on soil health
- Integrated crop-livestock research
- Variety trials at CP and BL

Rocky Lemus

- Small Ruminant Conference on Feb 23-24 in Starkville, MS
- Forage and Grazing Management Conference on April 11-12 in Raymond, MS
- Forage Management Workshop on April 19 in Coffeeville, MS
- Liquid fertilizers/liquid lime research update
- Drought management as it pertains to soil fertility

Shelby Bearden

- Southern Producers Replacement Sale on August 24 in Hattiesburg, MS
- Dixie Open Sale 1,200 head
- BQA Programs through Extension personnel (several hours needed to deliver program)

Frank Holmes

- South Mississippi gain on forage test at Tylertown, MS update
- Tested over 4,000 herd sires since its inception

Scott Willard

- Filling positions on campus

SESSION NOTES

BEEF, FORAGE, & EQUINE *continued*

- Updates on BLBES infrastructure and faculty
- CMREC updates and meeting needs for southwest MS
- Equipment and infrastructure updates at branch stations

Curt Lacy

- Support and resources at BLBES/all branch stations under CMREC
- Expand cow herd at BLBES

Christy Bratcher

- Introduction as Animal and Dairy Sciences Department Head
- Filling positions at on/off campus locations
- 10% increase in undergraduate enrollment

Producer program updates:

Lincoln County

- Poultry litter application in pastures/hay production systems
 - B. Rushing – based on soil testing, using nutrients based on P values (not N)
- Price differences based on region; slaughter facilities proximity to growers
 - B. Karisch – published on-farm finishing research from Poplarville
 - H. Trussel – mobile processing unit for grass finished beef
 - R. Simmons – change of mindset in beef cattle production; pasture finished

F. Holmes – breakdown in communication between order buyers, sale barns; need someone to work between order buyers, sale barns, and growers to help with marketing opportunities.

D. Martin – need smaller producers to communicate and work together to put small groups of cattle into uniform groups to increase premium sales

- B. Karisch – recognized feeder calf board sales in various counties; successes and failures

Jefferson County – poultry litter/commercial fertilizer in ryegrass

- R. Lemus – apply based on P/K levels; not N. Organic vs. inorganic nutrients. Emphasized soil testing and timing

SESSION NOTES

BEEF, FORAGE, & EQUINE *continued*

Ty Jones – new position that focuses on ag policy for MS Farm Bureau; covers beef cattle for south half and small ruminants for entire state

Hinds County – beginning farmer opportunities

D. Howard – embryo technology facilities/collection sites

J. Wilson – Central Mississippi Cattlemen's Meeting scheduled on Feb 22, 2025 in Canton, MS

2024 Priority Needs

1. More marketing opportunities
2. Beginning farmer opportunities
3. Drought tolerant forages
4. Poultry litter usage

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE

University Chair:	Dr. Curtis VanderSchaaf
University Co-Chair:	Dr. Adam Rohnke
Producer Chair:	Mr. Jack Stephens
Total Attendees:	22

Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Dr. VanderSchaaf.

Forestry Extension Updates – Dr. VanderSchaaf

1. Discussion and overview of growth and yield models and development of timber decision support system to aid landowners and professionals in timber management.
2. An update on the “shakeup” of forest carbon markets and how that will impact MS land owners. Given that NCX's annual carbon program no longer exists, in short, the remaining programs will be most beneficial to those with targeted approaches to landowners with bottomland hardwoods stands as compared to landowners with pine production forests. Also highlighted his work with presentations and articles tied to regional south eastern US efforts with Pennsylvania State University and other institutions. He has provided trainings and CEU's in MS and sister states.
3. Provided updates on current and likely future trends in the forestry industry related to the U.S. housing market, overall economy, and international investment particularly related to the southeast and Mississippi. In summary: future plantation strategies will have to change (reduce planting density) to reduce losses directly to landowners and avoid issues with pulpwood-dominated thinnings given the projected lack of markets for roundwood pulpwood, the uptick in residual use from sawmills instead of roundwood by paper mills, and the more common use of recycled paper.
4. Provided a brief update on the current halt to the logger training program with Hinds Community College and the hope that the program will return soon once the position is filled. Demonstrated the need and demand for newly trained loggers will increase in the next 5 to 10 years.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

5. Presented a report on site visits performed, presentations, publications, posters, conference proceedings, and a series of educational on-line videos (e.g., logging equipment 101) he has created for landowners and forestry professionals.
6. Provided an update on relevant issues and several programs including:
 - Ips beetle and southern pine beetle damage
 - Increase in GVW of logging trucks to 88,000 lbs. with a harvest permit.
 - Other federal and Mississippi tax programs
 - Invasive plant control (traditional/biological)
 - Mass timber publications in partnership with Auburn

Forestry Extension Updates – Dr. Don Grebner

1. Introduced the new forestry economist Dr. Sabhyata Lamichhane.
2. Announced Butch Bailey's promotion to Extension Instructor.
3. Announced hiring new Forestry Extension Specialist for NE Region (James Shannon) and interviews for specialist at Coastal R & E.

Mississippi Forestry Association – Dr. John Auel highlighted the upcoming MS Legislative Luncheon and other legislative events.

Simpson County CFA – David Hamm

Mr. Hamm presented a spirited argument for a new approach to the forestry product pricing system (Mills are not required or freely sharing their product pricing for ex. stumpage pricing). There was much debate over this with several in attendance including some agreement on the premise but much disagreement as to the approach of how to fix it. From an Extension perspective, credit was given by D. Hamm on the previous sales reports based upon quarterly landowner surveys produced by Marc Measells. This issue was again addressed in the 2024 Priorities.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

Sustainable Living Program – Dr. Sherry Surrette

Dr. Surrette provided a general update on annual activities with her new program focused on sustainable living and home certification. Working on mission, partnership development, and grant writing. She also reported on her most recent in-service agent training on 2/15/24.

MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks Updates - Adam Butler, Wild Turkey Program Coordinator)

1. Mr. Butler provided a brief update on MDWFP leadership changes over the last two years with Director Lynn Posey being officially appointed in a permanent role in 2023.
2. Brief updates on the Parks division with new leadership and charge from legislature and commission on substantial infrastructure and capital improvements state park system-wide. He focused his updates on 2 parks in SW region of the state including Percy Quin and Natchez state parks.
3. Black Bear Program update included that the population is increasing at a steady rate and an MSU/MDWFP research project is looking at gaining a better understanding of the population dynamics. Most of this work takes place in the Delta and SW region of MS. He addressed several questions related to the increasing numbers and the potential future directions of the program including potential future hunting season once population numbers reach a sustainable harvest level.
4. Private lands program update included the announcement of nearly \$2 million in grant funding to support prescribed fire and related management activities across the state. He provided details as to how apply other process related information to the attendees.
5. Although turkey populations across the nation appear to be trending down he reported they are expecting an excellent upcoming hunting season after several excellent hatches and survival over the last two years. With that, he reiterated that state agencies and turkey researchers are still working to detect what is causing the long-term trend of declining numbers. MDWFP collects data on the number of turkeys (hen, gobblers, and poults) observed by staff and other natural resource professionals.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

6. He announced a shift in approach in CWD sampling by the agency to improve efficiency and coverage by focusing on taxidermists and other sampling methods. CWD reports were relayed to the audience:
 - 8,000 samples were submitted with most of the samples coming from taxidermists.
 - 200 positive samples with 99% coming from North MS in the active CWD Mgt. Zone.
 - 1st positive was confirmed in Clairborne County in early Feb. Commission will be discussing the response at the next commission meeting.

Wildlife and Fisheries Extension Updates - Dr. Adam Rohnke

1. The Wildlife & Fisheries Extension program in the Dept. of Wildlife, Fish and Aquaculture continues to lead nationally in many historical and emerging issues including feral swine management and Chronic Wasting Disease in white-tailed deer, water quality, and much more. Two programmatic areas were highlight by WFA faculty and staff guests Dr. Bronson Strickland and James Calicutt:

Dr. Strickland presented the following:

The MSU Deer Lab lead by Drs. Damaris and Strickland (www.msudeer.msstate.edu) has become one of the prominent research and Extension organizations in the country with many national recognitions over the last few years including adding two endowed faculty chair positions. Key products are Deer University Podcast, Deer TV YouTube channel, and other social media platforms.

He updated the room on improved detection methods for Chronic Wasting Disease including a proof-of-concept study examining the efficacy of using scrape/rubs site sampling. In sum, it was shown to be another tool that can be used for detection especially in areas where other sampling efforts (e.g., hunter harvest) are falling short. He also presented on white-tail deer buck movement study (see MSU Extension Pub 3927), new cover crop economic study, and an update on WARAFIN label and use for feral hog control in Texas.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

James Callicutt presented on his program highlighting his work both in upland and wetland areas with particular focus on working landscapes, gamebirds, and feral hogs. He highlighted some of the current projects and partnership with the MDWFP on updating key Extension management publications including water fowl, mourning dove and others. He also discussed the upcoming Gamebird Habitat Mgt. Workshop on 2/23 & 2/24 2024.

2. *This update was not given in the meeting due to time constraints but is included here for the record given it was one of the 2023 priority areas.*

The Urban Wildlife Extension program continues to collaborate in partnership with Urban Wildlife Information Network where 52 cities across North America are simultaneously monitoring urban wildlife populations. Their intent is to assess ecological processes in urban spaces to create more scientific based recommendations for urban planning regarding wildlife and reducing human wildlife conflict. Dr. Adam Rohnke reported his staff, students, and trained volunteers are entering year four of monitoring 42 sites across the Jackson Metro area resulting in 77,875 images processed w/ 40K in waiting. From this data the Jackson Metro project has contributed to 17 research projects resulting in 3-peer-reviewed publications, 3 in-review and 5 master's thesis. Additionally, his team is conducting community assessments and conducting focus groups across the Jackson Metro including municipality officials, HOAs and other resident groups on urban wildlife opportunities and challenges that will be used to formulate the Urban Extension Program for next 3-5 years.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

Open Discussion of 2023 priorities - Mr. Jack Stephens

1. *Continue to develop carbon sequestration (pine and hardwood mgt.) and other markets education programming for CFA's forestry professionals, etc.*

It was highlighted that some of the landowners have had a positive experience with the carbon markets but with the recent demise of NCX's one-year annual contract carbon program the attractiveness has become limited for most forestry landowners. The producers requested that this remains a priority for 2024.

2. *Continue to support partnership between MSU Forest Products Lab and Dept. of Architecture particularly to support the effort of hiring a Forest Products Extension Specialist whose focus would largely be on mass timber products.*

Drs. Grebner and Street provided updates that these discussions were still ongoing but as recent as 2/19/24 MSU Extension was exploring ways to support the industry and related future positions. The producers requested that this remains a priority for 2024.

3. *Awareness and programming on the pros/cons/of disturbance management activities for wildlife/forestry related invasive species encroachment post-disturbance.*

A detailed discussion took place on recapping technical advice and education that MSU and other organizations distribute about the pros and cons of active management, such as timber harvesting and prescribed fire. Producers feel only the benefits are always discussed, but the cons such as invasive species establishment and spread are left out. Both more research and educational programming needs to be conducted to accurately reflect what can happen after active management.

4. *Encouraged MSU to solve issue and remove barriers to the Christmas tree cultivar issue previously discussed at previous PAC meetings.*

A brief update was given by Don Kazery on the status of the Christmas tree cultivar including about how visits were made to the producer with the cultivar and progress is headed in the right direction including potential testing and the addressing of legal aspects. Appreciation was expressed for MSU Admin and faculty's help in this area.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

5. *Backfilling of Extension Forestry positions is a must. Recommended broadening the search for candidates to include non-PhD applicants to fill these positions with quality professionals that are focused on landowners and producers.*

This was addressed earlier by Dr. Grebner in Forestry announcing additional hires and more coming.

6. *Refocus energy and potential collaboration with MS Forestry Commission, MDWFP, and MSU Extension urban forestry and wildlife programs and staff.*

This was briefly revisited but other topics consumed much of the time this year.

2024 Producer Chair - Jack Stephens was nominated and elected to serve as the producer chair for 2024.

2024 Priority Needs

1. Retool/novel approach to research & programming on the pros/cons/of disturbance management activities for wildlife/forestry related invasive species encroachment post-disturbance.
2. Relook/revisit updating the procedure and MS timber pricing system to better inform landowner base for decision making.
3. Continue to develop & update programming to recent realities of carbon sequestration (pine and hardwood mgt.) and other markets education programming for CFA's forestry professionals, etc.
4. Continued encouragement to keep the Christmas tree cultivar project moving forward.
5. Continue to support partnership between the MSU Department of Sustainable Bioproducts (formerly the Forest Products Lab) and Department of Architecture, particularly supporting the effort of hiring a Forest Products Extension Specialist related to mass timber products.

SESSION NOTES

FORESTRY & WILDLIFE *continued*

6. Continue to backfill Extension Forestry positions; broaden the search for candidates to include non-PhD applicants to fill these positions with quality professionals that are focused on landowners and producers.
7. Refocus energy and potential collaboration with MFC, MDWFP, and MSU Extension urban forestry and wildlife programs and staff.

SESSION NOTES

SMALL RUMINANTS

University Chair:	Dr. Leyla de Rios
University Co-Chair:	Ms. Jennifer Williams
Producer Chair:	Mr. Darryl Bird
Total Attendees:	13

Meeting Minutes

Dr. Leyla Rios provided a summary of the 2023 PAC meeting and progress made in the last year, including events for farmers, training, research and Extension activities, and the first buck test in MS.

Jennifer Williams provided news related to 4-H activities with sheep and goats.

New farmers in the group would like to have easier access to publications and information on how to get started in the business of sheep or goats from the Extension web page.

Mr. JT Crownover would like to know more about the profitability of a small ruminant farm developed on 3,000 acres.

Mrs. Kim Vandevender wants to know more about markets of goat meat and USDA-inspected slaughterhouses in MS.

Mr. Darryl Byrd would like to learn how to label and add value to his products.

Mr. Russell is in touch with the people of SMART Reproduction (a private company) because he is interested in embryo transfer (expertise that we do not have at MSU). He is also interested in labeling his products so his products can go from \$2/lbs to \$10/lbs.

Mr. JT Crownover is also interested in networking, developing social media, and the financial side of small ruminant production.

Mr. Russell highlighted the importance of new farmers getting access to funds available from NRCS. Also, he is interested in embryo transfer and including rams in the test that has started with Kiko meat goats in MS in 2023.

Mr. Darryl Byrd would like to have more information on the management of forages, improved forages, and adjusting the labels of drugs to goats.

SESSION NOTES

SMALL RUMINANTS *continued*

Mrs. Kim Vandevender wants to know more about crosses for more meat production.

Dr. Rocky Lemus highlighted the importance of farmers having an established relationship with a veterinarian.

Mr. JT Crownover is also interested in rotation of parasites for parasite control and knowing more about USDA-inspected slaughterhouses in MS.

Dr. Angeliki Polles, a veterinarian that manages all related to scrapie in MS, stated that all animals need to have their scrapie tags before they can be sent to a sale barn. She also needs more information on improved pastures and the meat-selling process.

Dr. Christie Bratcher mentioned the possibility of developing an educational program for beginning farmers.

2024 Priority Needs

1. Small Ruminant Masters Program
2. Business/marketing plans for small ruminants
3. Reproduction programs/guide

SESSION NOTES

VEGETABLES, FRUITS, NUTS & SPECIALTY CROPS

University Chair:	Dr. Rebecca Melanson
University Co-Chair:	Dr. Shaun Broderick
Producer Chair:	Mr. Keith Benson
Total Attendees:	21

Meeting Minutes

Dr. Melanson welcomed attendees to the subgroup meeting, and attendees took turns introducing themselves. Dr. Melanson then reminded attendees of the priorities for 2023 and provided available updates to these priorities:

1. Need assistance for small producers who don't meet Produce Safety Rule requirements to meet similar guidelines for end users (farmer's markets)
2. Need to fill positions in research/Extension Vegetable Horticulture
3. Need to offer educational opportunities for "new" gardeners, including youth and retirees, and provide assistance facilitating events/activities to get more people into agriculture
4. Need for programs/resources for organic vegetable production

Dr. Melanson and Dr. Shaun Broderick (University co-chair) then provided an overview of some of the relevant MSU Extension programs, listed on the MSU Extension Calendar (<https://extension.msstate.edu/calendar>); current and completed research projects; new and updated publications and other resources (e.g., MyIPM App, social media groups or pages, and newsletters); current and funded grants for projects related to the subgroup; and updates on some upcoming activities and events in which MSU Extension is involved. A handout with information on these topics was provided to attendees.

Mr. Keith Benson was reelected as the producer chair for 2025.

Dr. Melanson then charged the attendees, with the producer chair Mr. Keith Benson as lead, to discuss and rank priorities for 2024.

Mr. Benson led the discussion for needs and wants related to specialty crops. Topics were arranged into appropriate groups and then voted upon for prioritization.

SESSION NOTES

VEGETABLES, FRUITS, NUTS & SPECIALTY CROPS *continued*

2024 Priority Needs

1. Encourage continued focus on the need for Extension specialists
2. Development of beginner programs: veggie, fruit, nut production (including IPM), how to begin a horticulture business (farmer's market, etc.)
3. Have cut flower/specialty crop demonstrations in high tunnels/greenhouses brought to our area (market for locally-produced cuts)
4. Live or virtual field days, events, trainings, workshops, etc.
5. Outreach to younger generation for horticultural opportunities - provide hands-on work shops and share career opportunities with high school students inside schools
6. Create resources on heirloom varieties and seed saving
7. Provide assistance facilitating events/activities to get more people into agriculture to bring growers together where networks can be formed



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
**CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI RESEARCH
AND EXTENSION CENTER**

The Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center is Mississippi State University's "southern exposure", linking residents of the central and southwest regions to the University. The Center's mission is to conduct research and educational programs aimed at developing a better understanding and use of renewable and nonrenewable resources in Southwest Mississippi. Its applied research and educational programs with biological, physical, and social systems focus on enhancing the quality of life of residents of Mississippi and other Gulf states.

Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center

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The Mississippi State University Extension Service provides research-based information, educational programs, and technology transfer focused on issues and needs of the people of Mississippi, enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social, and cultural well-being. The Extension Southwest Region serves 20 counties across the southwestern portion of the state.

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 Phone: 601-857-2284

County	County Coordinator	Address	Phone
Adams	Jason Jones	75A Carthage Point Road Natchez, MS 39120	601-445-8201
Amite	Amy Walsh	185 Irene Street Liberty, MS 39645	601-657-8937
Attala	Rebecca Hamilton	715 Fairground Road Kosciusko, MS 39090	662-289-5431
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Copiah	Shelby Bearden	2040 W Gallman Road Hazlehurst, MS 39083	601-892-1809
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