



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 28, 2020

**Contact: Paige Manning, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
(601) 359-1163
paige@mdac.ms.gov**

Ag Commissioner Gipson Provides Guidance to Recipients of Unsolicited Seeds

JACKSON, Miss. – Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson instructs anyone receiving packages of unsolicited seeds from China, or any foreign country, in recent days to immediately contact the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce’s Bureau of Plant Industry by phoning (662) 325-3390. Those receiving the seeds are instructed to hold onto the seeds and packaging, including the mailing label, until someone from MDAC’s Bureau of Plant Industry contacts you with further instructions. Do not plant seeds from unknown origins.

“We are aware that citizens in Mississippi, as well as other states, have received unsolicited packages of seed appearing to be from China over the last few days. We are working closely with the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service on this issue. If you have received these seeds, please call the Bureau of Plant Industry, and we will send an inspector to your location to pick up the seeds from you. Please don’t plant the seeds. I don’t want to scare people because there is no indication these seeds pose a danger to human health. But any foreign seeds can have a negative impact on our environment as a threat to plant and animal health, and to agriculture. Also, foreign seeds could carry fungi or pests which could cause great destruction to our native ecosystem. So, I can’t stress enough the importance of contacting our office regarding this matter. Your assistance will help us to prevent the unlawful entry of prohibited seeds into the country and protect against invasive pests and noxious weeds,” said Commissioner Gipson.

At this time, the USDA does not have any evidence indicating this is something other than a “brushing scam” where people receive unsolicited items from a seller who then posts false customer reviews to boost sales. That scam can involve many different random products, but foreign seeds could be an environmental threat. USDA is currently collecting seed packages from recipients and will test their contents and determine if they contain anything that could be of concern to U.S. agriculture or the environment.

###