

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Office of Communications
E-mail: MDOCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables on Prison Menu

JACKSON –Fresh fruits and vegetables should be on the prison menus this summer thanks to garden projects, row crops, and greenhouse productions at the state prisons.

One of the plots planted at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Rankin County is 1.5 acres of pepper, squash, watermelons, cantaloupes, cucumbers, tomatoes, and okra. Incarcerated women planted the Community Garden on April 28 with the help of Broadmoor Baptist Church.

“Broadmoor asked about a project to engage the female offenders to start their ministries, so I suggested a garden,” Superintendent Ron King said. “Initially 50 women participated but there are more wanting to do so. They must be free of any rules violation and are actively participating and have a constructive work/program assignment.”

Staff and incarcerated men at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman are busier with 20 acres each of purple hull peas, butterbeans, and green beans along with 10 acres of watermelons, 5 acres of cantaloupes, 25 acres of corn, and 3 acres of squash.

“In our greenhouse, we have some eggplant, pumpkins, popcorn, several varieties of peppers, butternut squash, tomatoes, okra, and cilantro,” said MDOC Food Service and Agriculture Division Director Roger Davis.

Currently, 6,000 pounds of blueberries have been harvested at the South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI).

The production of fruits and vegetables helps save on the department's food cost in addition to keeping inmates busy in a productive way and giving them valuable skills they can use when released, prison officials said. Since January, vegetables produced on prison grounds have saved \$65,000 in food cost.

Thus far, in row crops, \$15,000 worth of wheat and over \$500,000 in soybeans planted at MSP have been sold.

“Agriculture is a thriving industry in Mississippi, and having our incarcerated men and women demonstrate an interest in working in agriculture serves the state in positive way,” Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said.