



MDOC grows more than 40 crop varieties For inmates' fresh meals and skills

JACKSON – Months of planting and hard work are beginning to pay off in gardens across MDOC facilities. Inmates are cultivating more than 40 varieties of fruits and vegetables while gaining hands-on experience in agriculture and horticulture.

A wide variety of crops, including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, zucchini, sweet corn, okra, peas, watermelons, pumpkins, eggplant, blueberries, and herbs, are being harvested and supplied to facility kitchens and inmate incentive meal programs. Fresh, homegrown fruits and vegetables are going from the gardens directly to the tables and cold storage.

“These gardens are producing more than fresh food,” Commissioner Burl Cain said. “They're helping supply our facilities with homegrown fruits and vegetables while giving participants practical skills they can use to provide for themselves and their families long after they leave MDOC.”

Harvests and garden highlights include:

- Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP): Harvested 1,600 pounds of squash, with sweet corn currently being picked and watermelons and cantaloupes expected later this summer.
- Central Mississippi Correctional Facility (CMCF): 19 garden plots, including an outdoor classroom, herb garden, and greenhouse, are being planted.
- Marshall County Correctional Facility (MCCF): Harvested 43 bushels of cucumbers and 15 bushels of peas.
- Mississippi Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW): Currently growing 13 varieties of fruits and vegetables, with okra currently the highest-producing crop.
- Walnut Grove Correctional Facility (WGCF): Harvested 10 pounds of okra, 35 pounds of corn, 10 pounds of peppers, and 30 pounds of tomatoes.
- Delta Correctional Facility (DCF): Currently growing seven crops, including tomatoes, cucumbers, yellow squash, zucchini, pumpkin, and sweet and hot peppers.
- South Mississippi Correctional Institute (SMCI): Harvested 19,816 pounds of blueberries for meals such as pancakes, muffins, and cakes at no additional cost to the facility.

By combining hands-on agricultural training with food production, MDOC's garden program continues to benefit both the participating inmates and the department. Participants gain experience in every stage of the growing process, from preparing the soil and planting seeds to maintaining and harvesting crops while developing practical skills in agriculture and horticulture. This knowledge can lead to future employment opportunities, home gardening, and greater self-sufficiency after release.







