



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205
agriculture.arkansas.gov
(501) 225-1598



Wes Ward
Secretary of Agriculture

May 23, 2023

Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development
Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development

Dear Chairs and Committee Members,

As you may know, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture participates in the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) which had previously scheduled board and executive committee meetings today. We are proud to serve as the 2nd Vice President of NASDA and are looking forward to hosting an inbound trade delegation to Arkansas later this year as well as bringing the national organization to Arkansas in 2025 for our annual meeting.

We regret that we are unable to attend today's joint committee meeting, but we appreciate the opportunity to submit a short-written update regarding the Department. This update will include the status of the Plant Board and a few other items that we hope you will find helpful.

Act 135 of the 2023 legislative session amended the method of how Plant Board members are selected and appointed. The changes were required due to the litigation that had found the makeup of the board to be unconstitutional. Numerous individuals have submitted applications to be considered for appointment to the broad range of boards and commissions that exist in Arkansas, to include the boards and commissions that serve the agriculture industry. The Department is working with the Governor's office as well as numerous legislators to consider applicants before final decisions are made by the Governor. We anticipate decisions regarding appointments to the Plant Board within the next 30 days.

The Department is working to implement numerous other changes from the legislative session as quickly as possible, these include but are not limited to:

- Consolidation of the numerous boards and commissions within the Department
- Ensuring the seamless transition of the six research and promotion boards to the Department
- Creating an online format for fencing law changes
- Creating an online format for poultry registration
- Conducting a thorough review of the best use of scholarship funding within the Department

Arkansas is blessed with broad diversity of agriculture production that includes row crops, specialty crops, livestock, poultry, aquaculture, and forestry. As our state's largest industry there is never a shortage of issues that impact our state's agriculture industry. The Department looks forward to providing a more comprehensive report to the full Arkansas Legislative Council (ALC) through the Act 413 report which is scheduled for July 21, 2023.

We appreciate all that you do for our state and our agriculture industry. Please don't hesitate to let us know if we can be of service to you or any of your constituents.

Respectfully,

Wesley W. Ward