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**Aiken APPOINTED deputy commissioner for the**

**tennessee department of agriculture**

NASHVILLE– A farmer known for dedication to and leadership within the agricultural community, Jeff Aiken has been appointed Deputy Commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M. made the announcement today. Beginning Mar. 1, Aiken will oversee many of the day-to-day operations for the department and assist in directing staff, supporting programs and services, and collaborating on policy development.

This appointment follows the retirement of Deputy Commissioner Tom Womack, who worked for the Department of Agriculture and the citizens of Tennessee for more than 35 years.

“Jeff comes to this role with a wealth of experience and unwavering commitment to public service,” Commissioner Hatcher said. “He has the skills and insight to support the department’s efforts to advance agriculture and forestry through economic development, technological innovation, and stewardship of our natural resources. We are so pleased that he is taking on this challenge to help lead our industry into the future.”

Aiken is the third generation of his family to farm in upper East Tennessee. He and his wife, Carol, his brothers, nephew, and niece manage 600 head of beef cattle and produce corn, tobacco, and straw on 900 acres in Washington and Greene Counties.

Aiken most recently led the Tennessee Farm Bureau as president for six years. That organization is the largest Farm Bureau in the nation with more than 680,000 members. He has also served on the boards for the American Farm Bureau Federation, Tennessee Chamber of Commerce, Tennessee FFA Foundation, and Tennessee State Fair Commission. In Washington County, Aiken is known for his leadership with the local Farm Bureau, Farmers Cooperative, and Cattlemen’s Association Board. He remains active with Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee and the First Farmers Bank Board of Columbia.

***Aiken Appointed Deputy Commissioner***

“As a lifelong farmer with a passion for agriculture, I’m excited to join Governor Lee and Commissioner Hatcher in advancing opportunities for rural communities,” Aiken said. “Agriculture is the top industry in Tennessee and its success is vital to our state, our farmers, our foresters, and our citizens. I look forward to working closely with department staff and stakeholders to ensure a bright future for all.”

“Jeff understands the needs of the farming and forestry families of Tennessee,” Commissioner Hatcher continued. “He has the confidence and respect of that community and will continue to strengthen those relationships. As we aim to build resiliency in our food, fuel, and fiber industries and bolster rural economies, Jeff will be instrumental in furthering the department’s goals.”

Aiken is a 2019 graduate of Leadership Tennessee and a steadfast supporter of the youth organizations FFA and 4-H. He and Carol have been married for 30 years and reside in Telford, Tenn. where they are longtime members of the Oakland Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

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