

# USDA seeks feedback from producers about 2020 crops and stocks

**Press Release**  
The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is conducting the June Agricultural Survey. The agency is contacting nearly 1,400 producers across Mississippi to determine crop acreage and stock levels as of June 1, 2020. “The June Agricultural Survey is a critical survey of commodities for the 2020 growing season,” said Esmerelda Dickson, NASS Mississippi State Statistician. “When growers respond to this survey, they

provide essential information that helps determine the expected acreage and supply of major commodities in the United States for the 2020 crop year. Results from this survey are used by farmers and ranchers, USDA, businesses, exporters, researchers, economists, policymakers, and others who use the survey information in making a wide range of decisions that benefit the producer.”

Growers can respond to the June Agricultural Survey online, by phone, or mail. They will be asked to provide information on planted and harvested acreage, including acreage for biotech crops, and grain stocks. “NASS safeguards the privacy of all respondents by keeping all individual information confidential, and publishing the data in aggregate form only to ensure that no operation or producer can be identified,” said Dickson. “We recognize that this is a hectic time for farmers, but the information they provide helps U.S. agriculture remain viable and capable. I urge them to respond to the

June Agricultural survey and thank them for their cooperation.”

# ‘Slap in the face’: Columbus DA rips AG Lynn Fitch for dropping charges against white officer who killed black man

**Mississippi Today**  
The district attorney in Columbus, a predominantly African American city of about 20,000, called Attorney General Lynn Fitch’s decision last week to dismiss 2015 charges brought after a black man was killed in an officer-involved shooting a “slap in the face.”

District Attorney Scott Colom initially transferred the case from his office to the state in 2016 to put a distance between the outcome and any local influence. “I don’t know if they’re just not aware of how serious this case was in Columbus back in 2015 and early 2016,” Colom said.

Ricky Ball, 26, was shot to death during a police traffic stop in October 2015. Columbus Police Department officer Canyon Boykin, who is white, was later fired and pleaded not guilty to manslaughter charges brought by the state in 2016.

As tens of thousands protest inequities in the criminal justice system and the police killings of black Americans, Fitch announced last week that her office had dropped the charges against Boykin. In a two-sentence statement, Fitch’s office said its review of the evidence concluded Boykin had acted in self-defense.

“The Attorney General’s Office did a thorough and independent review of the thousands of documents in this case file and concluded that there is not evidence on which to prosecute the case against Officer Boykin,” the statement read. “In fact,

all evidence, including forensics and the sworn statements of four separate MBI investigators, points to necessary self-defense.”

Fitch’s office did not answer questions asking to elaborate on the findings or about the timing of the decision, as protests continue nationwide in response to the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, and George Floyd in Minnesota involving current or former law enforcement.

“It was not something that I expected to happen,” said CPD Chief Fred Shelton of the case’s dismissal.

“They just thought (releasing) two paragraphs, we’re dismissing it, that’s all we need to do. That to me was kind of a slap in the face,” added Colom.

About 250 demonstrators gathered at Leigh Mall in Columbus on Saturday to protest the decision, the *Commercial Dispatch* reported.

Colom said he plans to request the evidence used in the finding, which he expects to get back in the next 10 days.

After his election in 2016, Colom said, he had conversations with then Democratic AG Jim Hood’s office about making sure the case was independent of any local influence. Fitch, a Republican, replaced Hood in last year’s statewide elections and became the first Republican elected to the statewide seat since Reconstruction.

Colom called the dismissal’s timing a “gut punch,”

Crop Production reports, the annual Small Grains Summary, and USDA’s monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates.

These and all NASS reports are available at [nass.usda.gov/Publications/](http://nass.usda.gov/Publications/). For more information, call the NASS Delta Regional Field

## \*Transmission

(Continued from page 1.) months or both.”

McCrory added that Lexington is still under a 9 p.m. curfew.

Executive Order No. 1493 is set to expire on Monday, June 8, unless changed by Governor Reeves.



**Protesters gathered at Leigh Mall Saturday to protest Attorney General Lynn Fitch’s decision to drop the manslaughter charge against former Columbus Police Department officer Canyon Boykin in the 2015 shooting death of Ricky Ball.**

(Photo by Deanna Robinson/Dispatch Staff)

emphasizing that there were no deadlines and the officer was out on bond, and there was little to no ability to hold a trial right now due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

“We need to put the information out there in the public so people can know what happened in this case because there are a lot of unanswered questions,” he said. “There are a lot of people (wondering), what happened? How did you make the decision to dismiss this case after four years and you’ve only had it for four, five months?”

He said any next steps in the case depend on if the charges were dismissed with or without prejudice.

Colom also noted the importance of accessing footage in any officer-involved shooting. Boykin and the other officers on the scene during Ball’s death were wearing body cameras but did not turn them on.

“If you look at what happened in Minnesota, if you

look at what happened in Georgia, without the video, we only get one version of events,” Colom said.

Shelton said new policies and structure in the department have improved accountability of officers. After Ball’s death, CPD enacted stricter penalties for officers who do not turn on their cameras during public interactions, including suspension and termination, and since have had no such issues, Shelton said. The department also now has an oversight committee to receive complaints about excessive use of force.

Shelton said he is meeting with Colom’s office this week to plan a public forum that will both be used to discuss the use of force and racial profiling, and then to institute new training policies for police officers.

“We’re continuing to build and foster the trust we that we have in the community,” he said.



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