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**PORT OF GULFPORT NEGOTIATES LONG TERM LEASE WITH DOLE**

GULFPORT, Miss. - The Mississippi State Port Authority is in final lease negotiations with Dole Fresh Fruit Company which will provide Dole with a state-of-the-art, expanded port terminal.

Under the agreement, Dole will relocate their operations to the west pier, significantly increasing capacity at the Port. The new lease calls for a 13-year extension with two, additional five-year extension options, providing Dole the opportunity to remain in Gulfport through 2037.

"Dole has been a valued member of the Port of Gulfport family for 50 years, and we look forward to many more years of partnership and success," Gov. Bryant said. "The progress currently underway at the Port will enhance Dole's ability to compete effectively in a global market and allow them to expand their economic footprint in the Gulf Coast region."

"While we are still working on the final details of the financial terms, we have come to an agreement on the length of the lease extension," said Jonathan Daniels, MSPA executive director and CEO. "Dole's commitment to the Port, region, and the State of Mississippi fully entrenches the company in the Gulfport community for decades to come. The state of Mississippi is making a significant financial investment in the company, and we are pleased by the loyalty Dole is showing to the state."

Dole currently occupies more than 140,000 square feet of warehouse space as well as 24 acres of open storage and container parking space on the port's east pier. The new terminal on the west pier will encompass almost 40 acres and will also allow them to increase container storage capacity by nearly 50 percent. The new warehouse complex will increase dry storage capacity, while also including construction of 20,000 square feet of temperature controlled space.

"We have been at the Port of Gulfport for 50 years, and this agreement affirms our continued commitment to the people of Mississippi," said Barry Jung, Director of North American Terminal Operations for Dole Fresh Fruit Company. "We are confident that our decision to stay in Gulfport will maintain Dole's position as a leader in the fresh fruit market and Gulfport's geographic location, ease to market, combined with our new terminal, creates a highly efficient environment for our import and export activities."

The long term commitment Dole is making to the Port mirrors the agreements made in the past year and a half by tenants such as Island View, DuPont and McDermott International. If all options are renewed, Island View's agreement totals up to 50 years, DuPont 60 years, and McDermott International for up to 40 years at the Port of Gulfport.

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