

COVID-19 Information for Farmers

April 9, 2020

Summary:

This is a very difficult time for many people. Farmers and those involved in other aspects of agriculture and food production are experiencing significant challenges. This fact sheet has information that may help those involved with agriculture navigate some of these.

Food and Agriculture is Designated as Critical Infrastructure

Food and Agriculture is designated as Critical Infrastructure by the United State Department of Homeland Security (USDHS). According to USDHS: *Critical infrastructure describes the physical and cyber systems and assets that are so vital to the United States that their incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on our physical or economic security or public health or safety. The nation's critical infrastructure provides the essential services that underpin American society.* USDHS, <https://www.dhs.gov/topic/critical-infrastructure-security>

As part of a Critical Infrastructure sector farmers, businesses, transportation and other services supporting agriculture are not just allowed but expected to maintain operations through an emergency or disaster. While it is unrealistic to expect no impacts from novel coronavirus, people need to eat. Food production and distribution should continue.

Social Distancing and Agriculture

Most farming operations do not involve large numbers of people engaged in face-to-face interactions. Even those interactions that take place may often be mitigated. Some strategies that may be helpful include:

- Farmer should observe all CDC recommendations regarding handwashing, sanitation of surfaces, social distancing, reducing travel, etc.
- Arrange for pickups and deliveries to be made without direct contact between individuals. Use of pre-pays, account billing, etc. should be explored to help with this.
- Conduct meetings by phone or videoconference where possible.
- While this may not be practical in many operations, consider where employees may work remotely from home.
- Consider how you may reduce the number of people at a single location at one time on the farm.
- Communication is key. Be sure to discuss matters thoroughly with employees and maintain contact with those involved in your farm's supply chain such as seed and fertilizer dealers.
- For greenhouse retail businesses engaged in production only of ornamentals, flowers or seedlings, sales may ONLY be made by delivery, curbside pickup, or online.

Document templates for those traveling on food and agriculture business

Indiana is not issuing travel documents for those employed in critical infrastructure or essential businesses. Employers may choose to issue those at their discretion. Other states may have different policies. Here are two templates that may be helpful.

- For employees traveling on agricultural business:
https://images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/PMA_/attach/EmployeeTravelRelatedtoCriticalInfrastructure_ENGLISH.pdf
- For transportation and shipping:
https://images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/PMA_/attach/Shipment_of_Supplies_Related_to_Critical_Infrastructure_ENG.pdf

Online Resources

Purdue Extension COVID-19 Resources: <https://extension.purdue.edu/label/44>. This includes considerable information about direct-to-consumer food sales and farmers markets.

Indiana Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 20-18 issued April 6, "Continued Directive for Hoosiers to Stay at Home; Extension of Continuity of Operations of Government; and Extension of Executive Orders Pertaining to Restaurants and Alcoholic Beverages."

<https://www.in.gov/gov/files/Executive%20Order%2020-18%20Cont%20Stay%20at%20Home%20Restaurants%20Govt%20Ops.pdf>. This replaces Executive order 20-08, "Directive for Hoosiers to Stay at Home" issued on March 23.

USDHS – CISA Guidance on Workers in Critical Infrastructure Positions:

<https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CISA-Guidance-on-Essential-Critical-Infrastructure-Workers-1-20-508c.pdf> This document lists specific workers considered part of Critical Infrastructure by USDHS. It is important to note that while the federal document does not list horticulture, we have been informed that within Indiana, landscape and lawn care services are viewed as essential businesses under Governor Holcomb's Executive Orders.

Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) "Guidance for Businesses and Employers" which includes specific steps to be taken for workers in Critical Infrastructure and Essential Businesses:

https://coronavirus.in.gov/files/IN-COVID-19_Occupational%20Guidance%204.1.20.pdf

CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) instructions for employers regarding how to prepare for COVID-19:

<file:///U:/Emergency%20Planning/COVID%2019/OSHA3990.pdf>

Bob Nielsen has put together a COVID-19 page in his Chat-n'-Chew Café:

<https://www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/corn/cafe/covid19.html>

Information about USDA Farm Service Centers: <https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus>

Video Message from US Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOGuTRViNCw&feature=youtu.be>