



Asa Hutchinson
Governor

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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



Wes Ward
Secretary of Agriculture

April 1, 2020

Subject: Inquiries Regarding Agriculture as Essential Critical Infrastructure

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is providing this letter to individuals and businesses to assist in eliminating any confusion regarding documentation needed for essential critical infrastructure workers.

On March 16, 2020, President Trump issued updated Coronavirus Guidance for America and in that guidance stated “if you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule.”

On March 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued an advisory memorandum on identification of essential critical infrastructure workers during COVID-19 response. This advisory memorandum included food and agriculture workers. On March 28, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security released updated guidance which includes the following:

Food and Agriculture

- Workers supporting groceries, pharmacies, convenience stores, and other retail (including unattended and vending) that sells human food, animal/pet food and pet supply, and beverage products, including retail customer support service and information technology support staff necessary for online orders, pickup and delivery.
- Restaurant carry-out and quick serve food operations, including dark kitchen and food prep centers, and carry- out and delivery food employees.
- Food manufacturer employees and their supplier employees—to include those employed in food ingredient production and processing facilities; livestock, poultry, seafood slaughter facilities; pet and animal feed processing facilities; human food facilities producing by-products for animal food; beverage production facilities; and the production of food packaging.
- Farmers, farm workers, and agribusiness support services to include those employed in auction and sales: grain and oilseed handling, processing and distribution; animal food, feed, and ingredient production, packaging, and distribution; manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of veterinary drugs; truck delivery and transport; farm and fishery labor needed to produce our food supply domestically and for export.
- Farmers, farm workers, support service workers, and their supplier employees to include those engaged in producing and harvesting field crops; commodity inspection; fuel ethanol facilities; biodiesel and renewable diesel facilities; storage facilities; and other agricultural inputs.
- Employees and firms supporting the distribution of food, feed, and beverage and ingredients used in these products, including warehouse workers, vendor- managed inventory controllers and blockchain managers.
- Workers supporting the sanitation and pest control of all food manufacturing processes and operations from wholesale to retail.
- Employees in cafeterias used to feed employees, particularly employee populations sheltered against COVID-19.
- Workers in animal diagnostic and food testing laboratories in private industries and in institutions of higher education.
- Government, private, and non-governmental organizations’ workers essential for food assistance programs (including school lunch programs) and government payments.
- Employees of companies engaged in the production, storage, transport, and distribution of chemicals, medicines, vaccines, and other substances used by the food and agriculture industry, including seeds, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, minerals, enrichments, and other agricultural production aids.
- Animal agriculture workers to include those employed in veterinary health (including those involved in supporting emergency veterinary or livestock services); raising of animals for food; animal production operations; livestock markets; slaughter and packing plants, manufacturers, renderers, and associated regulatory and government workforce.
- Transportation supporting animal agricultural industries, including movement of animal medical and reproductive supplies and materials, animal vaccines, animal drugs, feed ingredients, feed, and bedding, live animals, animal by-products, and deceased animals for disposal.
- Workers who support sawmills and the manufacture and distribution of fiber and forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood and fiber products.
- Employees engaged in the manufacture and maintenance of equipment and other infrastructure necessary for agricultural production and distribution.

Governor Hutchinson understands the importance of our agriculture industry and the role that it plays in providing the food, fiber, and shelter that we all depend on every day. The Governor has been consistent in his message that we must do everything that we can to ensure that our state’s economy, as well as our state’s agriculture industry, be able to continue to operate to the full extent possible while also taking the necessary and appropriate actions to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

At this time, there are no directives or orders that would limit any individual or business within our state’s agriculture industry from continuing to perform normal activities. We encourage everyone to follow the health safety guidelines and directives from the Arkansas Department of Health which can be found at: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>

In the event that an individual or business is asked for documentation that they are critical essential infrastructure please refer them to this letter or have them contact the Arkansas Department of Agriculture at (501) 225-1598 or email at info@agriculture.arkansas.gov. A copy of this letter is posted on the Arkansas Department of Agriculture website at <https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/covid-19>

Respectfully,

Wesley W. Ward
Secretary of Agriculture
State of Arkansas