

Homeland Security Recognizes Agriculture as Critical Industry

by:- Jennifer Shike

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued guidance on Thursday on critical industry workforce that should continue as the country addresses and responds to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. U.S. food and agriculture was included among 16 critical industries.

“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,” the guidance states.

The list of sectors and identified essential critical infrastructure workers are an initial recommended set by DHS and are intended to be overly inclusive, reflecting the diversity of industries across the U.S.

Specifically, DHS recognized these food and agriculture roles as critical:

- Animal agriculture workers to include those employed in veterinary health; manufacturing and distribution of animal medical materials, animal vaccines, animal drugs, feed ingredients, feed, and bedding, etc.; transportation of live animals, animal medical materials; transportation of deceased animals for disposal; raising of animals for food; animal production operations; slaughter and packing plants and associated regulatory and government workforce
- Farm workers to include those employed in 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
- Farm workers and support service workers to include those who field crops; commodity inspection; fuel ethanol facilities; storage facilities; and other agricultural inputs
- Workers supporting groceries, pharmacies and other retail that sells food and beverage products
- Restaurant carry-out and quick serve food operations - Carry-out and delivery food employees
- Food manufacturer employees and their supplier employees—to include those employed in food processing (packers, meat processing, cheese plants, milk plants, produce, etc.) 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
- Employees and firms supporting food, feed, and beverage distribution, including warehouse workers, vendor-managed inventory controllers and blockchain managers
- Workers supporting the sanitation of all food manufacturing processes and operations from wholesale to retail
- Company cafeterias - in-plant cafeterias used to feed employees
- Workers in food testing labs in private industries and in institutions of higher education
- Workers essential for assistance programs and government payments
- Employees of companies engaged in the production of chemicals, medicines, vaccines, and other substances used by the food and agriculture industry, including pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, minerals, enrichments, and other agricultural production aids

- Workers who support the manufacture and distribution of forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood products
- Employees engaged in the manufacture and maintenance of equipment and other infrastructure necessary to agricultural production and distribution

"We thank DHS for acknowledging the vital role that pork producers play in helping to feed consumers here at home and around the globe with a high-quality, affordable protein," says National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) President Howard "A.V." Roth. "We recognize that states and local governments are working hard to ensure operational continuity. As part of that effort, we urge state and local governments to swiftly follow and implement this federal directive. We need to ensure there is a continuous and uninterrupted supply of pork to America's kitchen tables."

The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) President and CEO Corey Rosenbusch applauded DHS for listing fertilizer employees as essential and the fertilizer industry as one of the nation's critical infrastructure industries.

"Fertilizer is responsible for 50% of crop yields and is essential to our nation's agricultural production and food supply," Rosenbusch says. "We thank the Trump administration for recognizing the critical role fertilizer plays in feeding our nation and the world."

Other areas deemed as critical industries include healthcare and public health; emergency services; energy; water; nuclear reactors, materials and waste; transportation systems; dams; communications; information technology; government facilities; commercial facilities; critical manufacturing; financial; chemical; and defense industrial base.

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