

COVID-19: FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN UPDATE

A message from the Maryland Department of Agriculture



As the State of Maryland continues its unprecedented response to COVID-19, the Maryland Department of Agriculture is emphasizing the need for businesses involved in the state's food supply chain to continue production. As a key stakeholder, we are asking for your assistance in delivering this message to your customers, employees and related supply chain partners.

Reliable access to food is a human right and it is critical that our food supply chain maintain - and even be prepared to expand - operations throughout this state of emergency. Any business involved in food distribution, production, processing, sales and supply will be considered essential, including, but not limited to:

- Agricultural equipment sales and service
- Agricultural supply businesses
- Animal feed supply and distribution
- Farms
- Farmers markets and food banks
- Feed mills
- Food and meat processors and manufacturers, including bakeries, etc.
- Food safety laboratories and inspectors
- Greenhouses and nurseries
- Grocery delivery services
- Pet food manufacturers and distributors
- Retailers, including grocery stores
- Seafood industry (crabbers, watermen, processors, etc.)
- Transportation, distribution and suppliers
- Veterinary services and supplies

As essential businesses, we are asking you to remain open and operational - normally and safely - until or unless directed otherwise. Develop procedures for safe operation of your facility or farm and post those procedures for the benefit of your employees and the broader public. To clarify, the governor's current order to suspend operations applies only to bars, dine-in restaurants and other non-essential retail locations. All other businesses, especially food-related businesses, are encouraged to continue operating within the parameters and protocols (large gatherings, social distancing, etc.) recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Maryland Department of Health.

We understand that there are a number of challenges facing businesses right now. Please keep the Maryland Department of Agriculture informed of any regulatory/statutory challenge or hurdle that may impede production, processing or sales so we can address it accordingly and promptly.

On behalf of the Hogan-Rutherford administration, we appreciate your support and patience as we continue to navigate this constantly-evolving situation with as few disruptions to food production and processing. Thank you for all that you do to ensure Marylanders continue to have access to a safe, reliable food source.

Joe Bartenfelder
Secretary, MD Dept. of Agriculture