

May 4, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

The fresh produce industry is committed to the safety of our workers, whether harvest crews in the field or employees in packing facilities, all while keeping the food supply chain moving. We are an essential part of feeding American consumers and the world at a time when our healthy fruits and vegetables are more in need than ever.

Recent accusations regarding the employee protections in agriculture are unfounded. With every stage of the emerging COVID-19 crisis, our industry has worked hard to embrace all public health advice for social distancing, personal and facility hygiene, face coverings and more. While awaiting specific on-farm guidance from the CDC, OSHA and FDA, producers have implemented protocols based on general guidance from these agencies, as well as USDA and state and local public health and agriculture officials. Some of these recommendations that have been implemented include but are not limited to those referenced here:

- Centers for Disease Control<sup>1,2</sup>,
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration<sup>3,4</sup>,
- Department of Labor<sup>5</sup>,
- Department of Homeland Security<sup>6</sup>,
- Food and Drug Administration<sup>7</sup>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture<sup>8</sup>

These efforts have resulted in changes to operations across the country in order to keep our workers safe while bringing food to the American people.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/shared-housing/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/standards.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/19/usda-and-dol-announce-information-sharing-assist-h-2a-employers>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Version\\_3.0\\_CISA\\_Guidance\\_on\\_Essential\\_Critical\\_Infrastructure\\_Workers\\_4.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Version_3.0_CISA_Guidance_on_Essential_Critical_Infrastructure_Workers_4.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus> (multifamily housing FAQ)

Furthermore, beyond the government guidance mentioned above, the produce industry has enhanced these government recommendations and provided our strongest commitment to workforce safety:

- Grower groups have partnered with hospitals and health care officials to create a program where doctors and nurses visit employer worksites to discuss COVID-19 risks and provide educational services.
- Grower organizations have sponsored Public Service Announcements in English, Spanish and other languages in communities with a high density of agricultural workers advising them about the proper safety steps to take not only on the job but in their communities.
- Industry organizations have partnered with state extension service to produce educational videos and material in English and Spanish for workers to educate them about proper sanitation and healthcare practices.
- Grower groups have partnered with worker advocates to develop guidelines for strong state enforcement of workplace and housing standards.
- Beyond our farms and our own employee housing, companies are providing workers advice on in-home sanitation, social distancing, and recuperative services.

These steps reflect our continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our employees, the safety of the products they harvest, and the health of all Americans who must continue to consume healthy foods as part of our public health fight back against this virus. Without a safe and healthy work force, we could not continue to meet that challenge.

Going forward, we will continually update our safety protocols in accordance with all government guidance. We also look forward to working with lawmakers on both sides of aisle and with the administration to ensure a safe workplace for our employees and a safe and abundant food supply for our country. In that regard, we note that we need to secure additional personal protective equipment – farmers have some reserves of these supplies but as this crisis lingers, we are concerned about the ability to secure supplies in the future.

Sincerely

United Fresh Produce Association  
American Mushroom Institute  
National Potato Council  
National Council of Agriculture Employers  
National Onion Association  
National Peach Council  
National Watermelon Association  
Produce Marketing Association  
US Apple Association  
US Sweet Potato Council  
United Potato Growers of America  
Gulf Coast Watermelon Association  
Indiana-Illinois Watermelon Association  
Maryland-Delaware Watermelon Association  
Northwest Horticultural Council

Southeast Produce Council  
Western Watermelon Association  
California Apple Commission  
California Blueberry Association  
California Blueberry Commission  
California Cherry Growers and Industry Association  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
California Fresh Fruit Association  
California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement  
California Pear Growers  
California Strawberry Commission  
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California  
Olive Growers Council of California  
Western Growers  
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee  
Florida Citrus Mutual  
Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Florida Tomato Exchange  
Florida Watermelon Association  
Georgia Berry Exchange  
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association  
Georgia Watermelon Association  
Idaho Grower-Shipper Association  
Idaho Potato Commission  
United Potato Growers of Idaho  
Maine Potato Board  
Michigan Apple Committee  
Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board  
Michigan Blueberry Advisory Committee  
Michigan State Horticultural Society  
Potato Growers of Michigan, Inc.  
Empire State Potato Growers  
New York Apple Association, Inc.  
New York State Vegetable Growers Association  
North Carolina Potato Association  
North Carolina Vegetable Growers Association  
North Carolina Watermelon Association  
Ohio Apples Marketing Association  
Ohio Produce Growers Marketing Association  
Fruit Growers Marketing Association  
Pennsylvania Co-operative Potato Growers  
South Carolina Watermelon Association  
Texas Citrus Mutual

Texas International Produce Association  
Texas Watermelon Association  
Washington State Potato Commission  
Washington State Tree Fruit Association  
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Assn., Inc.