



Agriculture and Markets



COVID-19: Guidance and Resources for the Ag Community

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About This Guide

In an effort to keep the agricultural industry informed on the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation and New York State's response, the Department is providing this document to help connect you with industry-relevant resources. Below, you will find information on small businesses, food safety, companion animals, mental health, and more. This document will be updated frequently as new information arises. Additionally, please continue to check agriculture.ny.gov/coronavirus regularly for the latest resources.

As New York begins to reopen, news regarding the status of COVID-19 response is ever-changing. Stay up-to-date on the latest from [Governor Cuomo](#) and the New York State response.

For general COVID-19 information, including information on how you can keep yourself and your family safe, and how you can get involved, visit the [Department of Health](#) or call their hotline at [1-888-364-3065](tel:1-888-364-3065). You can also [submit a question online](#) and it will be answered within 24 hours.

Additional resources include:

- [Governor Cuomo's Executive Orders](#)
- [Guidance on reopening and New York Forward](#)
- [Coronavirus testing](#)
- [Reporting Coronavirus price gouging](#)
- [Learn how you can help](#)

We thank our farmers and our entire food industry for their commitment and contributions to agriculture and for maintaining the work and services that ensure all New Yorkers have access to the food they need.



General Information for the Agriculture Industry

Governor Cuomo has outlined which industries and businesses can open in each phase of the state's re-opening plan. Businesses considered "more essential" with inherent low risks of infection in the workplace and to customers will be prioritized, followed by other businesses considered "less essential" or those that present a higher risk of infection spread. Regions must not open attractions or businesses that would draw a large number of visitors from outside the local area.

The Governor also outlined new safety precautions that each business must put in place upon re-opening to help lower the risk of spreading the virus. Businesses will be required to:

- Adjust workplace hours and shift design as necessary to reduce density in the workplace;
- Enact social distancing protocols;
- Restrict non-essential travel for employees;
- Require all employees and customers to wear masks if social distancing cannot be maintained;
- Implement strict cleaning and sanitation standards;
- Enact a continuous health screening process for individuals to enter the workplace;
- Continue tracing, tracking and reporting of cases; and
- Develop liability processes.

All agricultural businesses should follow the guidelines found at agriculture.ny.gov/coronavirus as well as coronavirus.health.ny.gov. In addition, some sectors must follow the more specific NY Forward Guidance, available at <https://forward.ny.gov/>. Below, please find several guidance documents for different kinds of agricultural businesses that help them to determine what they need to do in order to properly operate in compliance with the Governor's orders.



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- NY Forward Guidance (<https://forward.ny.gov/>), including but not limited to:
 - Non-Food Related Agriculture, including Local Agricultural Demonstrations and Exhibitions
 - [Non-Food Related Agriculture Guidance](#)
 - Horse Events and Competitions
 - [Sports and Recreation Guidance](#)
 - Agritourism
 - [Low-Risk Outdoor Arts and Entertainment Guidance](#)
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Department of Health, and Department of Labor:
 - [Prevention Tips for Farmworkers](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Prevention and Response of COVID-19 at Farms](#)
 - [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Operator Checklist for Farms](#)
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Guidance
 - [Interim Guidance for Equine Operations](#)
 - [Interim Guidance to Veterinarians Resuming Elective, Non-Urgent Veterinary Procedures and/or Examinations](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Local Agricultural Demonstrations and Exhibitions](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Farm Equipment Auctions](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for the Operation of Farmers' Markets](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Horticulture](#)
- Empire State Development: [Determining if your business is subject to a workforce reduction](#)
- U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau: [Guidance for distilleries making hand sanitizer](#)
- United State Department of Agriculture: [Rural Resource Guide](#)

Governor Cuomo has announced the Nourish New York Initiative, which is rerouting New York's surplus agricultural products to the populations who need them most through New York's network of food banks.



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Funding can be used by food banks for food drive-through events/giveaways, the direct purchase of products, and distributing dairy vouchers that can be redeemed in grocery stores.

The state launched a new [Nourish New York web page](#) to more easily connect food banks with New York's farmers who have product available for purchase. The website allows farmers to submit product type, volume, and other information directly to the page, and allows the food banks to easily search for agricultural products that are in need. We encourage all farmers who have product available for purchase to make use of this website and connect with buyers. For more information, email NourishNY@agriculture.ny.gov.



Accessing Financial Assistance

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Loans: Producers can continue to apply for farm loans and get their current loans serviced. Farm loans are critical for annual operating and family living expenses, emergency needs, and cash flow in challenging times like this. FSA is relaxing the loan-making process and adding flexibilities for servicing direct and guaranteed loans to provide credit to producers in need. More information can be found at <https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus>.

General Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) Information: The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program provides direct relief to producers who faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19. USDA's Farm Service Agency is accepting CFAP applications now through August 28, 2020. More information is available at <https://www.farmers.gov/cfap>.

Additionally, USDA released the [RFP for the food box distribution program](#), which is being implemented as part of the Coronavirus Farm Assistance Program

Grants for Shelters and Rescue Groups: Many national organizations are stepping in to assist animal shelters and rescues that are impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The ASPCA has compiled a list of available opportunities at <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/grants-shelters-and-rescue-groups>.

Child Care Scholarships: New York State will provide child care scholarships to essential workers. Child care costs will be covered for essential staff whose income is less than 300% of the federal poverty level — or \$78,600 for a family of four. Essential workers can use these scholarships to pay for their existing care arrangement. Learn more: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/news/article.php?id=2119>.

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP): There is an additional \$310 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program allocated in the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. The PPP supports small businesses and help support their payroll during the coronavirus situation. Farms with 500 employees or less are eligible for the PPP. More information can be found at www.farmers.gov/coronavirus.



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Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL): The Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act into Law makes agricultural enterprises eligible for the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. Any small business with fewer than 500 employees is eligible to apply—this program is inclusive of sole proprietorships, self-employed individuals, and private contractors. The EIDL advance program will issue grants of up to \$10,000 that do not need to be repaid. Funds will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. You can learn more about these loans here: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/Information/EIDLLoans>.



Business Resources

As part of New York's efforts to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 response on businesses and employees, several new actions and resources have been announced to help ensure that New Yorkers are able to care for themselves and their family without jeopardizing their economic security.

Taxes: Governor Cuomo has moved the deadline to file state income tax returns from April 15 to July 15, and other policies have also been adjusted. Both state and federal tax filing deadlines have been extended. [Learn more at the Department of Tax and Finance.](#)

H-2A workers: Many farms across the state rely on H-2A workers as part of their workforce. Farmers experiencing issues hiring H-2A workers should contact [Hector Gonzalez at the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets](#), or email AqLabor@usda.gov for federal resources. [Learn more about the H-2A program.](#)

On April 20, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security and USCIS published a [temporary final rule](#) to amend certain H-2A requirements to help U.S. agricultural employers avoid disruptions in lawful agricultural-related employment, protect the nation's food supply chain, and lessen impacts from the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency. <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/temporary-workers/h-2a-temporary-agricultural-workers>

Paid sick leave: [Paid sick leave is offered to New Yorkers impacted by COVID-19.](#)

Unemployment insurance: New York State has waived the seven-day waiting period for unemployment insurance benefits for people who are out of work due to COVID-19 closures or quarantines. [Learn how to file for unemployment.](#)

Medicaid coverage: The New York State Department of Health has provided [updated guidance on Medicaid coverage and reimbursement](#) in light of COVID-19.

Protecting your workforce: Visit [Cornell's Agricultural Workforce Development page](#) to learn about what you should consider to protect your workforce, business, and markets.



Transporting food: A March 13 federal [emergency declaration](#) waived the hours of service rules for truck drivers transporting emergency supplies of food. The waiver grants temporary relief to drivers, including those moving farm commodities. Should processing facilities experience an exacerbated driver shortage or plant closures that cause milk to be diverted in the coming weeks, such flexibility allows for milk to move in a timely manner. The CDC travel advisory for residents leaving New York City [does not apply to critical transportation and delivery workers](#) moving goods and products in or out of New York State or conducting services related to the food industry.

Other: Find additional useful business resources through:

- [Cornell Agriculture Workforce Development](#)
- [New York Extension Disaster Education Network](#)
- [New York State Liquor Authority](#)
- Empire State Development: [Small Business Administration Disaster Loans](#)
- New York Department of Motor Vehicles: [All licenses, including Commercial Driver's Licenses, with an expiration date of March 1, 2020 or later are extended until further notice.](#)



Food Safety Resources

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets is committed to upholding and protecting food safety standards for all New Yorkers during the COVID-19 outbreak. Agriculture and Markets staff are continuing to conduct all food safety, dairy, and plant inspections to ensure public health. Below, find some resources regarding food safety practices.

- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and Department of Health: [Guidance for cleaning food retail stores and food manufacturing facilities](#)
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets:
 - [Interim Guidance for Temporary Seafood \(Fish and Shellfish\) Processing and/or Retail Sale](#)
 - [Interim Guidance to Restaurants and Food Manufacturers/Distributors to Sell Grocery Items](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for the Operation of Farmers' Markets](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Grocery Home Deliveries and Ecommerce Grocery Home Deliveries](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Retail Grocery Stores During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
 - [Interim Guidance on the Packaging and Labeling of Shell Eggs Sold by Retail Food Establishments During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
- Institute for Food Safety at Cornell University: [Food industry resources](#)
- National Milk Producers' Federation: [Coronavirus resources](#)

Per the US Food and Drug Administration, currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Consumers should continue to practice social distancing at grocery stores and farmers' markets and follow proper hand washing guidelines. They should also continue to follow routine food safety measures, which include four steps —clean, separate, cook, and chill. [Find more information on food safety as it pertains to COVID-19.](#)



Information on Companion Animals

Animal care operations have been deemed essential and are exempt from guidance regarding workforce reductions set forth in the PAUSE Executive Order. Please see some useful resources below for animal care organizations.

- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets:
 - [Interim Guidance for Animal Care Operations](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Equine Operations](#)
 - [Interim Guidance to Veterinarians Resuming Elective, Non-Urgent Veterinary Procedures and/or Examinations](#)
- The ASPCA has committed \$5 million in COVID-19 emergency relief for shelters and pet owners. Learn more: [COVID-19 Support Hub](#)
- Animal Sheltering: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Shelter Kit](#)
- NYS Animal Protection Federation: [COVID-19 and Animal Shelters](#)
- American Association of Equine Practitioners: [COVID-19 Resources for Veterinarians](#)

At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals, including pets, can spread COVID-19.

- Department of Agriculture and Markets: [Information for pet owners](#)
- CDC: [COVID Guidance for Animals](#)
- CDC: [COVID Guidance for Pet Owners if in Isolation](#)



Caring for Your Mental Health

New York State recognizes that access to mental health services is a critical component of the response to COVID-19. Below are resources for those seeking mental health support for themselves, and their employees.

For free emotional support, consultation, and referral to a provider, call the statewide mental health hotline at 1-844-863-9314. You can also review the Office of Mental Health's [guidance for managing stress and anxiety](#).

Additionally, NY FarmNet offers free, confidential services to all farms in New York state. For assistance, call 1-800-547-3276 or [visit their website](#).