Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Special News Update
March 26, 2020

Message from President Kevin Paap

Thank you for everything you, your family and your community are doing to help keep us safe, healthy and fed.

While we continue to provide a safe and secure food supply, there have been many challenges that are impacting rural Minnesota because of COVID-19 that include a rapid and unanticipated decline in commodity prices, possible closure of ethanol plants, the dramatic decline in full-service restaurant and school meal demand, the reduction in direct-to-consumer sales and many others. Minnesota Farm Bureau will continue to constantly engage with state and federal elected and appointed officials to advocate for our members during this unprecedented time.

The global pandemic we are facing has the potential to overwhelm many of our systems, especially our healthcare. We must be part of the significant, smart mitigation to help push back the peak to have the time to continue to be better prepared for the estimated 15% that will need hospitalization, especially the estimated 5% that will need an Intensive Care Unit and a ventilator. I’m asking everyone to do everything we can to help to comply with the Governor’s Executive Order. More details on how this impacts our farms and families can be found below.

Minnesota Farm Bureau is here to help you navigate through the uncertainty our world is facing. As always, if you have any concerns on how this will impact your family, farm or community please reach out. I am available at 507-327-4555.

Stay At Home Executive Order

Earlier this week, Governor Walz issued Executive Order #20-20, a stay at home order for the State of Minnesota. The order goes into effect Friday, March 27, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. through Friday, April 10, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

This Executive Order includes:
- Critical Services that are exempt from the Stay at Home requirements. Food and agriculture were deemed critical. More information can be found below.
- Clarifications will be available for public review [here](#).
- Outside Activities - Individuals may engage in outdoor activities (e.g., walking, hiking, running, biking, driving for pleasure, hunting or fishing), and may go to available public parks and other public recreation lands, consistent with remaining at least six feet apart from individuals from other households.
- Bars and restaurants remain closed until May 1.
- School districts will continue with distance learning until May 4.

Food and agriculture are considered critical sectors. This means that all workers who can work from home must do so. However, workers in Critical Sectors as identified in the Executive Order, who are performing work that cannot be done at their home or residence through telework or virtual work and can be done only at a place of work outside of their home or residence, are exempted from the prohibition.

Under the Executive Order, food and agriculture are defined as “food and agriculture workers listed in the CISA Guidance, including agricultural equipment repair services.” CISA guidance refers to a federal effort through Homeland Security that has provided a list of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.

For agriculture, exemptions include things such as:
- Farm workers to include those employed in animal food, feed and ingredient production, packaging and distribution; manufacturing, packaging and distribution of veterinary medicines; truck delivery and transport; and farm and fishery labor needed to produce our food supply domestically.
  - 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; and 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 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.
  - Animal agriculture workers to include those employed in veterinary health; manufacturing and distribution of animal medical materials, animal vaccines, animal medicines, 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.

The full list for agriculture and all other industries can be viewed [here](#).

Read Minnesota Farm Bureau comments on #StayHomeMN [here](#).

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**Employee Transit Information**

In accordance with Governor Walz’s Executive Order 20-
20, many Farm Bureau members would like to have documentation for themselves and/or their employees in their vehicles to carry as they travel to and from work. While the Governor has been clear that their priority is education over enforcement, Minnesota Farm Bureau has drafted a template that you can customize for you or your employees that have been classified as critical services under the Executive Order.

The form is designed to help the agriculture workforce verify the purpose of travel in the event law enforcement or other officials question their reasoning for being on the road rather than at home. It is intended to be used for general use only and is not intended to be considered specific legal advice.

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**State Legislative Update**

Like all Minnesotans, the State Legislature is making adjustments in order to follow social distancing guidelines and other health and wellness recommendations, while remaining responsive to the public.

The legislature met on March 26 to pass bi-partisan legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill, H.F. 4531/S.F. 4451, spends nearly $300 million from the General Fund, in addition to the $200 million of immediate funding assistance to hospitals and health care workers that was passed on March 17.

Both bodies passed historic resolutions changing the rules to allow members to vote from remote locations during the remainder of the pandemic emergency order. The bill was passed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 99-4 and by a vote of 67-0 in the Senate.

The Legislature adjourned until approximately April 14 at Noon.

**H.F. 4531 Includes:**

- **COVID-19 Minnesota Fund** - $200 million is appropriated for the creation of a fund to protect Minnesota citizens from the COVID-19 outbreak and maintain state government operations throughout the duration of the peacetime emergency. Any money in the fund that remains unobligated on May 11, 2020, returns to the general fund.

- **Childcare** – $29,964,000 is appropriated for peacetime emergency child care grants. To be eligible for grants, programs must agree in writing to: prioritize spaces in their program for children of essential workers, as identified in state guidance; maintain service for the period of the grant or until the peacetime public health emergency ends, whichever is first, except during any periods of temporary discontinuation of service in response to public health guidance to protect the safety and health of children and child care providers; and use health and safety practices that prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a child care environment.

- **Disaster Loan Programs for Farmers** – Changes to RFA disaster loans to cover loss of revenue when revenue loss is due to an infectious human disease for which the governor has declared a peacetime emergency.

- **Commercial Applicator Licenses** - Temporary, limited exemption from commercial applicator license for COVID-19 cleaning.

- **Property Tax Petitions** - Extends the deadline for property tax petitions by one month for 2020 only.

**Other legislation recently signed into law:**

- $50 million under the state's public health response contingency account.

- $150 million to create a health care response fund in the state treasury, which would be used to make grants and take a little longer to reach the beneficiaries. Any money left over on February 1, 2021, would be returned to the General Fund and the section would sunset on June 30, 2022.
Resources to use on COVID-19

Minnesota Board of Animal Health
Minnesota Department of Health
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Minnesota Department of Education
World Health Organization

Check with your local school district for more information on receiving school lunches while school is not in session. Families with questions about COVID-19 should call 800-657-3903, and childcare providers with questions can call 888-234-1268.

Internet Resources

These resources may help you based on your internet provider. Efforts include opening Wi-Fi hotspots, pausing data plans/data caps, expanding internet access for low-income families and more. Networks are expected to be fine. Engineers are confident in the network capacity.

What to Know About COVID-19 and the Internet Experience

Mediacom Announces Company Initiatives to Combat Spread of Coronavirus
Chairman Pai Launches the Keep Americans Connected Pledge
Charter to Offer Free Access to Spectrum Broadband and Wi-Fi For 60 Days For New K-12 and College Student Households and More
Charter Spectrum Internet Assist

Resources for Kids

American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture
Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom
America’s Heartland Educational Lessons
America’s Heartland YouTube
4-H Resources
4-H Inspire Kids to Do

Check out the Farm Bureau members in Minnesota sharing an agriculture book on-line.

TransFARMation

Prompted by the many sources of stress currently impacting farmers and ranchers, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Red River Farm Network have joined forces to create a new radio and podcast series called TransFARMation.

TransFARMation: Farm Leader Says Healing Can Begin by Talking
TransFARMation: The Proper Attitude Can Help Take on the Challenges
TransFARMation: Let People Help You
TransFARMation: Farm Stress in Farm Children
TransFARMation: Faith and Farming

If you have a story idea for TransFARMation, contact Riley Maanum – MFBF area program, who serves on the TransFARMation advisory team. Riley can be reached at...
Cultivating Resiliency for Women in Agriculture

*Sessions to Help Weather Stress*

Raising awareness of farm stress is important, but offering some tools to help weather the stress is critical. This interactive online series sets out to help women in agriculture cultivate resiliency by focusing on what they can control in these challenging times and connect them with resources and information that can help them weather stress.

- [UMASH](#) has archived sessions - listen [here](#).

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**Farm Resiliency Resources**

Please ask for help. Click the underlined phrases for more information.

**Resources for difficult times**

Find help, counseling, advocacy, legal and referral resources.

**Farm financial counseling**

Experiencing financial stress? Call 1-800-232-9077 for free, confidential financial counseling.

**Farmer-Lender mediation**

Need help with farm debt? Learn how mediation can help.

*Source: University of Minnesota Extension*

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**Minnesota Farm and Rural Stress Resources**

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Ted Matthews - 320-266-2390
Monica McConkey - 218-280-7785

Rural Mental Health Counselor

Ted and Monica work with farmers across Minnesota. No cost; no paperwork. This service is available thanks to funds from the Minnesota State Legislature. You are welcome to contact either Ted or Monica. Monica generally serves the area north of Highway 12 (which runs from Ortonville through Willmar to the Twin Cities), and Ted generally serves the area south of Highway 12.
The following links are meant to keep you aware of what's in the news. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation.

Farmers Respond to COVID-19
-AFBF Farmside Chat

Farmers and Ranchers Rise to the Call
-AFBF The Zipline

Neutral March Cattle on Feed Report Overshadowed by Pandemic Fears
-AFBF MarketIntel

Leisure and Hospitality Woes a Harbinger of Employment Trouble to Come
-AFBF MarketIntel

Homeland Security Recognizes Agriculture as Critical Industry
-AgProfessional

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March 22-26 - CANCELLED
Farmers to D.C.

March 31 - CANCELLED
Day on the Hill
North, Southeast

June 4
Minnesota Farm Bureau Foundation
Sporting Clays Tournament
Viking Valley Hunt Club, Ashby

June 23
Minnesota Farm Bureau Foundation
Golf Outing
River Oaks Golf Course, Cottage Grove

August 4-6
Farmfest
Gilfillan Estate, Redwood Falls

August 27-September 7
Minnesota State Fair

September 15-18
Farmers to Washington, D.C. Trip

November 19-21
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
102nd Annual Meeting
DoubleTree Hotel, Bloomington

Minnesota Farm Bureau Website