

Other States' Food and Agriculture Efforts in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic

As requested in the previous Task Force meeting, below is information from other states on issues and actions they have taken or recommend taking in response to COVID-19, as well as other initiatives on similar issues discussed, specifically related to workforce development. Most states have been dealing with the same issues as Louisiana, and COVID-19 has brought to their attention the need for strengthening the food supply chain, better access to high-speed internet, workforce development and other issues.

The following is information from the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture on state efforts to market and distribute food through safe, efficient, and innovative ways:

- The **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection** joined forces with the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Hunger Task Force to launch the "[Million Dollar Wisconsin Dairy Recovery Partnership](#)." Through the program, dairy farmers will be paid for supplying milk to a dairy co-op which is supplying milk for free to local food banks and pantries.
- **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Nikki Fried** constructed the *Florida Farm to You* commodities list, [part of a larger initiative through FDACS' COVID-19 resource webpage](#), a move that aims to connect Florida producers with consumers and businesses to purchase Florida products.
- The **New Mexico Department of Agriculture** (NMDA) announced the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service recently unveiled a "[Seed to Supper](#)" program for New Mexicans who are interested in beginning gardening at home. The program provides free seeds and gardening guidance both online and through a paper booklet. The program's purpose is to supply New Mexico's families access to healthy foods, as well as an educational opportunity.
- **Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce Commissioner Andy Gipson** [is encouraging Mississippi's consumers](#) to prioritize local farmers markets in their grocery runs. The MDAC compiled a list of farmers markets, hours of operations, and unique methods for purchasing in the wake of the current pandemic, including online pre-order and curbside pick-up. Additionally, through the existing [Genuine MS](#) food marketing program, several farms are offering direct food boxes to consumers for pick-up through the online portal.
- The **Maryland Department of Agriculture** (MDA) has been continuously updating the state's agricultural sector on relief programs and [resources](#) during the pandemic, with agriculture recognized by the governor as the state's top industry. In addition, MDA is working to connect Marylanders with farmers and seafood producers in the state and encouraging the purchase of local products. As some restaurants in the state continue to purchase food and grant carry-out orders, MDA, in partnership with other state agencies, has announced the "Keep Calm and Carry Out" social media [campaign](#), a simple slogan to support the vitality of restaurants and the producers that supply them.

- **Kentucky Department of Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles** has encouraged consumers to utilize its *Kentucky Proud* webpage to locate farmers markets offering locally grown fruit and meat products. KDA has also [relaxed income guidelines](#) for Kentuckians hoping to receive food through the emergency food assistance program. The request for increased income guidelines through TEFAP was quickly approved by the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), and will allow those with dramatically reduced income to receive benefits through local food banks. Kroger, the nation's largest food retail chain, has worked with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture to [increase sales of locally grown](#) Kentucky meat products, a move that provides some relief for the state's livestock producers.
- The **Massachusetts Department Agricultural Resources** has created two COVID-19 specific webpages, [a list of resources for the farming community](#) and a guide for consumers on [how and where to buy local](#). The [MassGrown Map](#) continues to be the portal for direct sales to consumers, and now features the ability to [search specifically for farms that offer delivery or mail-order](#).

Note: Louisiana has a program in place administered through the LSU AgCenter's Extension programs called MarketMaker. Please see

<https://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/jmorgan/articles/page1586874717452>

This database features a diverse community of food-related businesses: buyers, farmers/ranchers, fisheries, farmers markets, processors/packers, wineries, restaurants and more. MarketMaker provides search tools to connect with others across the production and distribution chain.

Related to COVID-19 testing of workers in the food supply chain, **Pennsylvania** announced in April that workers supporting Pennsylvania's food supply chain in select areas in the eastern part of the state- from farmers and seasonal laborers, to food processing facilities and warehouses, and grocery store workers, would be eligible for priority COVID-19 testing. This testing is a direct result of agriculture and the entire food supply chain being deemed as life-sustaining. More information can be found at https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/Agriculture_details.aspx?newsid=915

Other states have seen how the crisis has magnified the need for high-speed internet access in our rural areas. Many aspects of agriculture involve the use of technology, which requires broadband access. Precision agriculture technology and modern farm equipment require high-speed internet access. **Ohio** Governor Mike DeWine announced the creation of BroadbandOhio, an office dedicated to improving access to high-speed internet in the state. BroadbandOhio will implement a broadband strategy and be the point of contact for all broadband projects in the state. Please see <https://ofbf.org/2020/04/08/reliable-broadband-critical-during-covid-19-crisis/>

Additionally, below is information on workforce development initiatives in several states:

- New York: NYFB launched a database to match workers during covid. <https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/2020/05/15/nyfb-launches-farm-relief-workers-database/>

- New Mexico: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture's (NMDA) Agricultural Workforce Development (AWD) Pilot Program offers incentives to the state's agricultural businesses to hire interns. The AWD Pilot Program is intended to provide hands-on educational opportunities for students aspiring to careers in agriculture, as well as young or beginning farmers and ranchers. <http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/awd-applications/>
- Kansas: The Agriculture Marketing, Advocacy and Outreach team works with farmers/ranchers and agribusinesses to identify current and future needs in regards to the skills needed for workforce. The team also works with secondary and post-secondary educational institutions to develop training solutions for the workforce needs of the industry. Creating partnerships between industry and education that ensures a pipeline of qualified individuals to fill the needs of the agricultural employers is the primary workforce development goal at the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Additionally, the team reaches out to secondary education programs in order to promote agriculture careers and opportunities that are available to students upon graduation from high school or post-secondary training. <https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/agricultural-marketing-advocacy-and-outreach-team/workforce-development>
- Colorado: The Agricultural Workforce Development Program (AWDP) provides financial incentives to farms, ranches, and agricultural businesses to hire interns and provide them with hands-on training needed to begin a career in agriculture. Qualified businesses may be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of the actual cost of hiring an intern, not to exceed \$5,000 per internship. The AWDP is the result of legislation introduced during the 2018 session of the Colorado General Assembly by the Young and Beginning Farmers Interim Study Committee. In its first two years alone, the AWDP has supported 27 internships at 20 different Colorado agricultural businesses for a total of \$92,000. <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/agmain/agricultural-workforce-development-program>
- Pennsylvania: The Department of Agriculture is pursuing the workforce development initiative to: identify demand-driven career pathways and agriculture and food-related occupations; marshal substantial resources that already exist in a variety of systems; identify gaps in education and training; focus on work-based learning including micro-credentials and apprenticeships as methods to fill those gaps; and address the needs of young people and adults on the way to finding solutions to the shortage of talent in the near and long-term. https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Business_Industry/workforce-development/Pages/default.aspx