

March 27, 2020

U.S. Department of Agriculture Operations Allowed to Operate During Shelter in Residence

1. There has been a shelter in place directive to individuals except for those who need to leave in order to provide or receive certain essential services, engage in certain essential services, or fulfill work requirements for essential business and government services.

2. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has determined the following functions to be an essential government service or activity, both of which qualify under the State's exemption. As such, employees providing the following services or functions should be exempt from any conflicting shelter in place requirement as they are supporting critical federal infrastructure sectors as defined by the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency via a Memorandum titled "[Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response](#)" and issued on March 19, 2020:

- **Food Safety and Inspection Service:** Meat, poultry, swine and egg inspection and related laboratory services.
- **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service:** Inspection of live plants and animals; managing animal and plant disease programs; veterinary, aviation and laboratory services in support of these operations.
- **Agricultural Marketing Service:** Commodity grading, commodity procurement, market news, and protecting fair agriculture trade.
- **Farm Service Agency:** Farm loan and farm disaster and loss programs to ensure farmers can continue operations.
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service:** Flood prevention and watershed operations, protection of plants and vegetation for long-term research studies, and conservation payments for farms and ranches.
- **Forest Service:** Law enforcement, wildland firefighting, forest and rangeland management activities that support the manufacture and distribution of forest products, activities associated with maintaining and protecting critical energy, communications and infrastructure, preservation of research property and other functions supporting protection of public safety and natural resource management at National Forests and Grasslands.
- **Agricultural Research Service:** Animal caretaking and preservation of research property.
- **Rural Development:** Rural Development loan, grant and loan guarantee programs that support essential services such as housing; health care; first responder services and equipment; and water, electric and communications infrastructure.
- **Food and Nutrition Service:** Operates fifteen nutrition programs including childhood nutrition and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- **National Finance Center:** Payroll operations for the Departments of Agriculture, Homeland Security, Justice, Treasury and other Federal agencies performing mission critical activities.
- **National Agricultural Statistics Service:** Collection and publication of statistical data essential to both the public and private sectors for making effective policy, production, and marketing decisions.
- **Office of the Chief Economist and Economic Research Service:** Coordinate, approve and publish the monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Reports and other related economic analysis.
- **Risk Management Agency:** Manage the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation to support farmers and ranchers.
- **Foreign Agricultural Service:** Conduct international trade negotiations.
- **Office of the Inspector General:** Conduct investigations and intelligence for incidents involving USDA.
- Support services needed to provide the functions listed above to include information technology, legal, human resources, procurement, budget, financial management and coordination of classified communication capabilities.

Failure to provide the services outlined above could jeopardize United States agriculture, food safety, and food production and supply as well as adversely affect the health, welfare and safety of the public. Accordingly, employees must be allowed to travel and commute to perform law enforcement and other functions and should not be prevented from doing so, even when travel restrictions are in place.

3. This information is being furnished to USDA employees and contractors in these areas to assist them in continuing to perform these essential government functions when law enforcement professionals seek to enforce otherwise applicable state shelter-in-place orders in some instances. For this reason, it is critical that employees **have their Federal Government identification, such as their PIV badge, and a copy of this directive when traveling to and from work and while at work to verify the employee's standing as an essential government worker.** Contractors should carry a copy of this directive and their identification.

Deputy Secretary Stephen L. Censky

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