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Kansas Food and Ag Industry Continues to Focus on Essential Functions

MANHATTAN, Kan. — The Kansas Department of Agriculture continues to support the state’s food and agriculture industry as it serves an essential role across the state. With today’s announcement that Governor Laura Kelly has issued a statewide “stay home” order ([Executive Order No. 20-16](#)), it is important to emphasize that those food and agriculture businesses must keep a strong focus on their essential functions and follow safety protocols.

The Governor’s Kansas Essential Function Framework, outlined in the executive order, clearly identifies food and agriculture businesses as essential functions that are exempt from the stay home order. KDA will continue to provide support and guidance to those businesses as needed, but urges all of those in the food and agriculture industry to scrutinize their activities and staffing and limit them to those which are essential to the food supply chain, public health and safety, and protection of animal health and welfare.

The food and agriculture industry truly serves an essential role in this statewide response, and all those who work within that industry are playing an important part in keeping the state fed, healthy and safe. “Since Kansas is the fifth largest state in regard to value of agricultural production, our state’s role in the production of food, fuel and fiber remains critical for consumers everywhere,” said Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam. “KDA is grateful to these dedicated Kansans who are working every day throughout this crisis, and appreciates their commitment.”

KDA reminds those food and agriculture businesses that while they continue to operate, they must — to the extent possible without significant disruption to essential functions — use telework capabilities to avoid meeting in person. Any essential functions being performed on-site or in-person must — to the extent possible without significant disruption to essential functions — follow appropriate safety protocols, including maintaining a six-foot distance between individuals and limiting gatherings to fewer than 10 people. When

not performing an essential function, or traveling to or from work to perform an essential function, individuals must adhere to the stay home order.

In addition, all food and agriculture businesses should continue to follow all Kansas Department of Health and Environment protocols to protect the health of their employees: regular handwashing; routine cleaning of all frequently touched surfaces; adequate supplies of soap and water, hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes, and tissues; promoting proper coughing and sneezing etiquette; and especially sending home any employee who is sick or who has been exposed to COVID-19.

All of these efforts are critical to slowing the spread of the virus and limiting the impact on local healthcare workers and hospitals. Although many rural areas have not seen the effect of the virus thus far, the health care system in those rural areas has a more limited capacity and could feel the impact quickly if precautions are not taken now.

Information about the state's response to this emergency event can be found the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's COVID-19 Resource Center at www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus, and ag-related support and guidance can be found on the KDA website at www.agriculture.ks.gov/coronavirus.

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