

ARKANSAS PRODUCE SAFETY

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PREVENTION MEASURES FOR PRODUCE FARMS

On behalf of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (UACES) and the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

As produce growers, you are on the front line with helping America during this challenging time as we manage response to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Our food system is strong, dynamic and critical to our success as nation. We Americans owe our farmers a great deal of respect as you have helped to build a great economy that offers much opportunity for our citizens and we have the luxury of having food available to us. We know that as producers you may be facing unique challenges right now, and those challenges could change at any time. We would like to share a few updates and resources with you at the links provided throughout this document. [Let us know what information and resources you need, opportunities your experiencing and challenges you are facing by click here to complete a brief survey.](#)



The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is making periodic [updates](#) that affect farms and food businesses. FDA is providing the latest information and research on [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

Arkansas produce farms that are subject to the [Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule](#) can rest assured that *on-farm inspections* have currently been discontinued until further notice.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture **Cooperative Extension Service (UACES)**

has currently suspended all public programs and the **Produce Safety Team** will not provide *On-Farm Educational Visits or On-Farm Readiness Reviews*.

As we deal with this global pandemic, as declared by the World Health Organization, *every person should take precautions to help prevent the spread of this virus*. We can all take part in the fight against coronavirus by practicing good personal hygiene and social distancing. However, ***we understand that produce must be grown, harvested, packed, and transported, and this will require an adequate and healthy workforce.***

The FDA, Center's for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), universities, advocacy organization, industry and elected officials are working diligently to understand and address the barriers being faced by your industry.

With uncertainty of the impact on our food supply, health and hygiene practices on our produce farms is even more critical. The [Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule](#) is even more relevant today. Though there is [no current evidence that coronavirus can be transmitted via food or food packaging](#), viruses are [long persisting in the environment](#) and have the potential for being spread by food and food packaging. Take all necessary precautions to prevent contamination on your farm.



What can I do on farm to help fight coronavirus while supplying food for your community?

- Reiterate the importance of worker health and hygiene.
 - Inform your workers on how coronavirus is spread and the severity of the virus. [Symptoms can start between 2 and 14 days](#) after contraction and include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
 - Just as 112.31 of the Produce Safety Rule requires, any employees that feel ill should not be allowed to come into contact with produce or surfaces that will come into contact with produce. Tell workers to stay home if they feel ill or report any illness symptoms to their supervisor if they start to feel ill on the job.
 - Remind your employees to wash their hands frequently. Be sure that employees are using soap, scrubbing their hands for at least 20 seconds, using single-use disposable towels to dry their hands and are using a disposable towel to turn off the water faucet.
 - Post signs to remind and encourage good hygiene practices. There are many general health and hygiene posters available, but the CDC has provided free [posters](#) specific to coronavirus in both English and Spanish.
 - [Encourage social distancing of at least 6 ft](#) between employees in break areas, in the field, in packing areas or in transportation vehicles.
- Review your sick leave policy with your employees.
- Clean and sanitize your facilities. Don't forget: you cannot sanitize a dirty surface. You must use a surfactant (soap) to clean the surface before your sanitizer (bleach) is effective. Provide cleaning supplies for your employees to use at work.
- Take special care in cleaning and sanitizing bathrooms and employee breakrooms. Anything that is frequently touched, such as doorknobs, faucets and computers, should be regularly cleaned to help prevent the transmission of the virus.

- Establish a plan. What will you do if the majority of your workers become ill? Learn the steps to respond to having sick employees, suspected coronavirus infected employees or confirmed cases among employees with this resource from the [Occupational Safety and Health Association](#).

For more information on Coronavirus, check out the following resources:

- [Arkansas Department of Health](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [Food and Drug Administration](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)

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About the Division of Agriculture

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation's historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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Visit our pages to learn more:

www.uaex.edu/covid-19

www.uaex.edu/producesafety

<https://www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/produce-safety-program>