



## March 2020 Newsletter

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### National Ag Week is March 22 – 28, National Ag Day is March 24

National Ag Week, which is celebrated this week, is devoted to educating people about where food, fiber, and fuel come from. Every year, producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies, and others join together to recognize the contributions of agriculture.

Regarding National Ag Day, which was yesterday, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) had this to say: "Today is National Ag Day, and in communities across the country, our national emergency has made all of us more aware than ever of how important the people who produce, distribute, cook, and sell our food are to the health and well-being of all Americans.

"We on the House Agriculture Committee have always been proud to stand up for agriculture and food in Washington, but today that role takes on even more meaning as we honor and thank the farmers and ranchers that anchor that system."

For those of us that work in agriculture, every day is Ag Day/Week. We know, understand and appreciate where the food we eat, the clothes we wear & items we use daily come from. However, we're fortunate to have one week each year dedicated to recognizing the significant impact agriculture has on everyone. We're proud of the industry we serve!

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## **Governor Walz Issues Stay At Home Order**

Today Governor Walz issued a "stay at home order" for Minnesotans to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the state. Walz said he's putting in place "significant mitigation" for two weeks, planned to reduce person-to-person contact by 80%. The stay at home order is effective from **March 27 until April 10** and asks people to not leave their homes except for essential needs. Workers who provide critical services are exempt from the order. The State is following the federal guidance from the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) with some Minnesota-specific additions. This includes but is not limited to jobs in:

- Healthcare and public health
  - Law enforcement, public safety & first responders
  - Child care
  - Food and agriculture
  - News media
  - Energy
  - Water & wastewater
  - Critical manufacturing
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## **MGFA Postpones Spring Grain Grading Schools**

Out of concern for MGFA members and industry employees and in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, the MGFA has postponed the spring grain grading schools scheduled for March 31 & April 8. We will reschedule both schools once we see a clear path forward. If you have any questions, please contact the MGFA office at 651-454-8212.

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## **COVID-19 Bill Includes Billions for Ag**

Today, the Senate leadership announced a bipartisan deal on a new comprehensive aid package responding to the expanding COVID-19 pandemic. The Senate package, which includes \$14 billion for the agriculture secretary to pay out as necessary and \$9.5 billion in emergency funding, is part of the third emergency relief bill considered by Congress and comes after several failed attempts by the Senate to advance a package on Sunday and Monday after resistance from Democrats.

A Senate vote is scheduled for later in the day Wednesday, with the House expected to follow suit shortly thereafter.

As part of the funding, \$14 billion will be provided to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corp. (CCC) to help agriculture, as well as a separate appropriation of \$9.5 billion for livestock and specialty crops.

Senate agriculture appropriations subcommittee chairman John Hoeven (R., N.D.) had pushed for a \$30 billion CCC replenishment for this fiscal year, a \$20 billion increase and for authority for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to use the CCC to make payments to livestock producers. In a March 23 letter to congressional

leaders, 48 agricultural groups called on Congress to expand USDA's borrowing authority. Some estimates called for as much as \$50 billion in additional authority.

"Farmers, ranchers and the supply chain that support them will not let Americans down during this unprecedented crisis, and they are asking the same of you. Millions of producers will need help with cash flow, given the rapid and unanticipated decline in commodity prices, the likely closures of ethanol processing plants, the effective elimination of direct-to-consumer sales and decline in full-service restaurant and school meal demand," the letter said.

National Pork Producers Council president Howard "A.V." Roth, a pork producer from Wauzeka, Wis., said the pork industry has already suffered losses due to COVID-19-related concerns.

"These new financial setbacks come on the heels of two very difficult years during which pork was at the tip of the trade retaliation spear. We are pleased that the stimulus package includes funding for much-needed relief to livestock farmers, and we recognize a vote is pending. We look forward to working with Congress and the Administration to make sure that all pork producers can access this critically important lifeline as we remain committed to keeping food on American tables," Roth said in a statement.

*Source: Feedstuffs*

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## **NGFA, ag groups, request expansion of hours-of-service exemption for all agricultural haulers during COVID-19 pandemic**

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 25, 2020 -- In a [letter](#) to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) and 53 other agricultural groups today urged that the agency grant relief from federal drive time rules for all truck drivers hauling agricultural goods.

"As trucking capacity and the availability of drivers tightens due to COVID-19, neither surge nor normal trucking capacity may be adequately available to provide the required just-in-time deliveries to animal feeding operations, food processing and manufacturing plants, distribution facilities, export facilities and retail outlets, which could result in significant food chain supply disruptions," the groups said.

The agency previously issued an emergency declaration due to COVID-19, but that only exempted drivers delivering food to distribution and retail facilities from compliance with federal hours-of-service rules that limit drive time until at least April 12. The agency expressly included livestock in the exemption. However, today's letter notes that FMCSA's previous action "was insufficient to adequately encompass the major beginning and middle segments of the food and agricultural supply chain....Each sector of that chain is linked, and when one segment is affected adversely, the ripple effects extend throughout the supply chain."

To address tightening trucking capacity and disruptions to truck transport, the groups urged FMCSA "to expand and extend the hours-of-service relief from farm-to-fork."

The NGFA and other groups said the emergency declaration should be extended to include truck transport of: raw and processed agricultural commodities, animal food and feed ingredients, processed food and food ingredients, honey bees and farm supplies (such as seed, fertilizer and other agricultural products and chemicals needed by farmers to grow crops) "to adequately preserve the resiliency of our nation's food supply during the pandemic."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently identified the full food and agricultural supply chain as essential critical infrastructure workers that have a special responsibility to continue operations, the letter noted.

"The operations within the food and agricultural chain are closely linked and continuing operations requires timely shipping and receiving...We urge FMCSA to extend the hours-of-service relief to include all food and agricultural critical infrastructure operations to ensure the viability of the food distribution system," the groups stated.

The groups also requested that FMCSA add flexibility to the process for obtaining new restricted agricultural commercial driver's licenses, assist in keeping truck washouts open that are necessary for the sanitary transportation of many food products, and provide leadership in harmonizing the temporary increases in truck weight limits that have been announced by several states.

Source: NGFA

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## **COVID-19 Information**

### **MGFA Office Operations**

MGFA staff has begun working from home to do our part in helping stop the spread of COVID-19. A lot of our work is performed via email or over the phone, so we would like you to know that we are still fully operational if you have questions or concerns. You can email us directly at [laura@mgfa.org](mailto:laura@mgfa.org) or [hayley@mgfa.org](mailto:hayley@mgfa.org) or [mgfa@usinternet.com](mailto:mgfa@usinternet.com) is our group email inbox. If you need to call us (651-454-8212), please note you may get our voicemail, but we will call you back. Stay healthy!

### **COVID-19 Informational Resources**

There is an incredible amount of information related to COVID-19 available on the internet, but we'd like to share a few resources the grain & feed industry can utilize:

If you have public health concerns, we encourage you visit the websites for the [Minnesota Department of Health](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or the [World Health Organization](#).

If you are dealing with stress, anxiety or depression and need help, contact the [MN Farm and Rural Helpline](#).

For [Minnesota-specific trucking related COVID-19 emergency announcements](#) & information, go to the MN Trucking Association.

### **OSHA Information on COVID-19**

For the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) and FAQ's related to COVID-19.

For the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) [Guidance on identifying essential critical infrastructure workers](#) (March 19, 2020)

### **FDA Postpones Routine Inspections**

In a recent conference call for food industry stakeholders, Food and Drug Administration officials confirmed the agency's commitment to protecting workers in the food and animal food industries by making changes to current domestic inspection plans. At this time, the FDA will focus its inspection force on mission critical and "for cause" inspections only and postpone routine surveillance inspections temporarily. This policy will be reevaluated on a periodic basis and adjusted as necessary.

The FDA believes this approach will protect public health, the health of the inspection force and their families and will not overburden the food and animal food industries. Mission critical inspections, which are those investigating the cause of a foodborne illness or in a Class I recall, will occur when needed and when inspectors are able to safely travel to the facility. The agency reiterated that the safety of the food supply is a shared responsibility between regulators and industry and that doesn't change in the face of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

FDA officials stated that there is no evidence of food or feed packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19. According to the question and answers section on the agency's COVID-19 response webpage, it is not anticipated that food products, including animal food products, would need to be recalled if an employee in a facility contracts COVID-19.

Officials also shared a new resource for facilities experiencing issues regarding the supply chain, delivery of goods or business continuity. Facilities should contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Business Emergency Operations Center at [NBEOC@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:NBEOC@fema.dhs.gov). This operations center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can assist in directing inquiries to the proper contacts.

*Source: AFIA*

### **Preparing Your Workforce for a State-Ordered Shelter-In-Place**

In the last week, several states have recently issued "shelter-in-place" orders to battle the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Here are some tips on what this means and what animal food facilities need to do to prepare:

What does a "shelter in place" mean?

- Under such an order, everyone in the state is required to stay home except to get food, care for a relative or friend, get necessary health care or go to an "essential" job.

Does each state get to determine what is "essential?"

- Yes, local or state authorities determine what jobs are "essential."
- On March 19, the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released guidance to state and local decision-makers on what they deem to be the "Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce." Under this guidance, the agency lists 16 industry sectors as imperative to the stability of the nation during the COVID-19 emergency, **of which food and agriculture is one of these essential sectors**. However, this is just guidance and a state does not have to adopt these industry sectors as "essential."

How do I determine if my state has deemed the animal food industry as "essential?"

- Each state should provide information on what is considered "essential" when making the announcement to shelter in place. For instance, California referenced the DHS federal critical infrastructure industry guidance in the governor's executive order.
- Where the orders are not explicitly clear, the American Feed Industry Association, working with the state feed and grain associations, will be seeking clarity for the animal food industry.
- See this list for a compilation of state activities and executive orders (opens best in Google Chrome).

What can I do to prepare?

- If you haven't already determined what staff is needed to run your operation, the time to do so is now!
- Prep letters you will give each employee when the declaration is made so that they can carry it with them while traveling to and from work. Include a copy of the state's executive order or the DHS federal critical infrastructure industry guidance.

*Source: AFIA*

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## **113<sup>th</sup> Annual MGFA Convention & Industry Trade Show Recap**

More than 300 industry and association members converged in Bloomington, MN during the first week of March for the 113<sup>th</sup> Annual MGFA Convention & Industry Trade Show to discuss the new grain law changes, agricultural stress and mental wellness, air quality rules and permits, credit policies, liens and co-op board strategic management and planning. Attendees had the opportunity to take in the U of M's Raptor Center & the Bell Museum; visit with 78 different vendors in the industry trade show over two days; raise funds for the Silent Auction, which benefits the MGFA Scholarship Program and network with their peers in the hospitality suites. MGFA honored the 2020 Community Service Award winner, Larry Olsen, during the annual meeting for his generous volunteerism and dedication to his community. Our Wednesday keynote speaker, Paul Douglas, gave everyone plenty to think about it comes to the weather and climate change, and PJ Fleck, our convention closing keynote speaker, kept a packed room's attention for close to 2 hours as he shared what it takes to build an elite culture.

Thank you to everyone who attended the convention and we look forward to seeing you all next year at the 114<sup>th</sup> Annual MGFA Convention & Industry Trade Show to be held **January 31-February 2 at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud!**

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## **MGFA Honors the 2020 Community Service Award Recipient, Larry Olsen**

The Minnesota Grain and Feed Association annually recognizes a member of the Association who has demonstrated exceptional community service & leadership. During ceremonies at the recent 113<sup>th</sup> Annual MGFA Meeting, the Association honored Larry Olsen as the 2020 Community Service Award recipient.

Larry was born and raised on a farm in the Hendricks-Canby area. After graduating high school, he worked for the Porter Grain elevator for 4 years. In 1971, he was hired at the Farmers Co-op Association in Jackson, MN working outside until he became grain manager in 1980. During his years at FCA, Larry served on the Board of Directors for the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association for 15 years. He was also President of the Minnesota/Iowa Rail Shippers Association for 17 years.



As his boys grew older, he became involved with coaching their sports teams, mainly basketball & baseball.

In 1972, Larry joined the Jackson Fire & Ambulance Department. He was ambulance director for 15 years and fire chief for 6 years. While in the fire department, he served as an interior fire fighter, rescue and ice and open water scuba diver. He was very passionate about his work with the ambulance service and was EMS examiner for southwestern Minnesota as well as being on the EMS – SW Minnesota Board of Directors. He received a basic life support award for Minnesota, the Sioux-Valley Hospital EMS award, and a CPR life-saving award.

After 43 years of service to his community he decided to retire from both departments.

Larry is also involved in his church. He is an usher, helps with the community Thanksgiving dinner and he and his wife, Judy, co-chair the annual Lutefisk supper with another couple.

He has also donated blood for the Red Cross Blood Mobile for many years, donating 9.5 gallons.

These days you will often see Larry shoveling snow, raking or mowing lawns, giving rides or working on woodworking projects for others. In his spare time, he likes to hunt and fish with family and friends, especially the grandkids.

Congratulations to Larry Olsen, the very deserving recipient of the 2020 MGFA Community Service Award, for his outstanding leadership, generous volunteerism and dedicated service to his community.

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## **Thank You to Our Convention Sponsors**

On behalf of the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association, we would like to thank all of the sponsors of the 113<sup>th</sup> Annual MGFA Convention & Industry Trade Show. Your donations helped us put on an excellent event this year & we greatly appreciate your support!

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## MGFA Membership Re-elects Members to the Board of Directors, Officers Elected



At the recent 113<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association, delegates re-elected three members to serve on the MGFA Board of Directors.

Those re-elected to the Board and serving a three year term are: Bob Heim from St. Cloud, representing District 2; Mark Herberg from St. Peter, representing District 3; and Brian Yager of Howard Lake in the At Large position. We appreciate your service to the Association!

Following the Annual Meeting, the MGFA Board held a re-organizational meeting where the 2020 officers were elected. The 2020 officer team is as follows: David Estrem, President; Ransel Anderson, Vice-President; Gordy Elliott, Secretary; and Jerry Svoboda, Treasurer.

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## MGFA Silent Auction Hauls in Funds for College Scholarship Program

Generous donations and generous bidders in the Silent Auction helped raise much-needed funds for the MGFA Commitment to Agriculture Scholarship Program at the 113<sup>th</sup> Annual MGFA Convention & Industry Trade Show. With a number of popular items available on the auction, like golfing and hotel packages and of course, a PJ Fleck signed football, the grand total raised came to \$2,550.

The MGFA annually awards up to three \$1,000 scholarships to deserving applicants pursuing a degree in agriculture. If you know of a college student who could use some financial help with their education, please share this information. Scholarship applications are due by **April 17, 2020**. To learn more & apply for the scholarship, [click here](#).

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## Member News

VAA's "people first" culture continues to thrive in 2020 as we announce promotions from earlier this year and welcome Doug Nagel, PE, and Brian Utoft, PE to VAA's partner group. The engineering firm of 150 employees is now privately held by 12 owners. Visit VAA's website to learn more about these two individuals at <http://www.vaaeng.com/about/leadership>



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