

Iowa State Updates

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: None

Food Service: Restaurants reopened statewide on May 15 with these [guidelines](#) in place. Bars were permitted to reopen at 50% capacity on May 28. On June 12, Gov. Reynolds lifted the 50% capacity limit.

**The full list of Iowa Reopening Criteria/Operation Restrictions can be found [here](#).

**The Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship COVID-19 resources page can be found [here](#).

September 15

The windstorm that blasted across Iowa — “basically a 40-mile-wide tornado,” in the words of Governor Kim Reynolds — wiped out 9% of the crop in the nation’s No. 1 corn state and obliterated the chances for a record-large corn harvest nationwide, said the USDA. Farmers will see notably higher season-average prices for the smaller, but still ample, crop that remains in the field ([source](#)).

Iowa, the biggest U.S. corn-producing state, is facing its most widespread drought since September 2013, according to its state agriculture secretary, Mike Naig. The drought is compounding problems for farmers after the once-in-a-lifetime derecho windstorm. The drought threatens to lower crop yields and grain quality even more for farmers who are also struggling with ripple effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of the losses will be determined by whether the state remains painfully dry, according to crop experts ([source](#)).

September 8

Iowa Senator Joni Ernst remains hopeful that a coronavirus relief package will be worked out in congress. Congress failed to pass a COVID-19 relief bill before the August recess, which increased frustration among lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. Ernst hopes the Senate will be able to find a clear path forward as it returns from the summer break. As the stalemate continues over coronavirus relief at the federal level, congressional leadership from Iowa has been confident biofuels will be included in any upcoming aid deal. Ernst echoed that support ([source](#)).

Effective at 5 p.m. on August 27, 2020 until 11:59 p.m. on September 20, all bars, taverns, wineries, breweries, distilleries and night clubs must close in the following six counties: Black Hawk, Dallas, Johnson, Linn, Polk, and Story county. They may continue to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption off premises. Restaurants in these six counties are permitted to

remain open, but must stop selling and serving alcoholic beverages after 10 p.m. To view the most recent proclamation in its entirety, click [here \(source\)](#).

Effective until 11:59 p.m. on September 20, restaurants, bars, wedding reception venues, wineries, breweries, distilleries, country clubs or other social and fraternal clubs may reopen or remain open to serve food and beverages on their premises but only to the extent that they comply with certain requirements ([source](#)).

September 1

Iowa, the biggest U.S. corn-producing state, is facing its most widespread drought since September 2013, state agriculture secretary Mike Naig said on Aug. 28, compounding problems for farmers after a damaging windstorm. The drought threatens to lower crop yields and grain quality even more for farmers who are also struggling with ripple effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of the losses will be determined by whether the state remains painfully dry, according to crop experts ([source](#)).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is preparing to pay out the rest of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program payments to the nation's farmers while looking at ways to further cover ag losses, says Bill Northey, USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. Congress provided an additional \$14 billion in Commodity Credit Corporation money to be able to address some other losses, and Northey says that will broaden out the commodities and sectors of agriculture they can provide assistance to. American Farm Bureau analysis indicates the \$7 billion of direct payments paid in the first round of CFAP averages out to around \$13,600 per producer. The top payout went to Iowa at \$697.4 million ([source](#)).

August 25

Financial worries, unpredictable weather, unpredictable commodity prices, plant pests, livestock diseases and isolation all contribute to farmers' anxiety. And now Iowa's rural communities and families are coping with the unpredictability and imposed isolation produced by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the destruction from the derecho that swept through Iowa. In response to this additional stress, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, in collaboration with COVID Recovery Iowa, will offer 10 online "Stress on the Farm: Strategies That Help" programs beginning Friday, said David Brown, behavioral health specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach ([source](#)).

Loopholes remain, but the USDA is tightening its crop subsidy rules by limiting who can collect a payment for managing a farm, historically one of its most porous definitions. The new regulation, to be published on Monday, requires people to perform at least 500 hours of management or at least 25% of the management work required annually to merit a subsidy check — "a very major advancement," according to a small-farm advocate ([source](#)).

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds announced the additional allocation of Iowa's funds from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief & Economic Security (CARES) Act of \$100 million, with much of that available to assist and support Iowa's agricultural economy, including biofuel and livestock producers, and funds to help small meat processors expand ([source](#)).

Ohio State Updates

Stay at Home Order/Shelter in Place Order: expired May 29, and is now considered voluntary. The Urgent Health Advisory can be found [here](#).

Restaurants: Outdoor service resumed May 15. Dine-in service resumed May 21. The rules and guidelines for reopening and sanitation can be found [here](#).

**The Ohio Department of Agriculture's COVID-19 information and resources can be found [here](#).

September 15

Montgomery County has allocated \$5 million from the Federal CARES Act for agribusiness in the county. Farmers impacted by the pandemic can be awarded up to \$100,000. A formal announcement will be made Wednesday, September 16. Applications for the grant money can be picked up at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds Monday through Friday from 2-8 p.m. ([source](#)).

For the first time in its nearly 60 year history, Ohio State's Farm Science Review scheduled for September 22 -24 will not be held in-person. Instead, a virtual show will be held and the Review will come to you on your laptop or smartphone this year, and for free. You can watch live streamed talks and recorded videos featuring the latest farm equipment and research to pique your curiosity ([source](#)).

September 8

Due to orders from the Ohio Department of Health limiting indoor gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Ohio Farm Bureau Annual Meeting is going remote this year. The new format will enable many Ohio Farm Bureau delegates to join together in small groups throughout Ohio and connect with other delegates around the state through a virtual platform as they vote on policies and leadership. This year's remote experience also will recognize the organization's exciting accomplishments and will give even more Farm Bureau members an opportunity to take part in the programs. The major components of the annual meeting, the delegate and business sessions, will take place Dec. 11, with the organization focusing on presentations of awards and recognitions online earlier in the week ([source](#)).

U.S. Department of Agriculture Ohio Rural Development State Director David L. Hall announced the agency is awarding its first-ever Business & Industry Loan Guarantee using targeted [CARES Act funds through USDA's Business-Cooperative Services program](#). Like many U.S. businesses and manufacturers, Appalachian Oilfield and Industrial services experienced a downturn in operations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. With funding from Marietta-based Peoples Bank, the business will combine a standard \$1.1 million B&I loan guarantee to undertake debt

consolidation with a \$1.9 million CARES Act B&I loan guarantee for use as working capital ([source](#)).

September 1

N/A

August 25

Scott Kenney, an assistant professor of veterinary preventive medicine at The Ohio State University [College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences](#), whose research focuses on viruses that spread from animals to people, is pursuing grants with colleagues to study whether various farm animals are susceptible to COVID-19. He will address the risk of animals catching or spreading COVID-19 during “Ask the Expert” presentations Sept. 22–24 at this year’s Farm Science Review, an all-virtual show sponsored by CFAES ([source](#)).

Indiana State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: expired statewide May 4 – expired in Marion County on May 15.

Restaurants: Restaurants in all counties except Marion, Lake and Cass were able to reopen at 50% capacity on May 4. Restaurants in Marion, Lake and Cass counties have all been able to reopen since. Restaurants are currently operating at 75% capacity and bars are operating at 50% capacity. Guidance for restaurants can be found [here](#).

**Guidance for businesses and employers can be found [here](#).

**The Indiana Farm Bureau's COVID-19 resource page can be found [here](#).

September 15

UMOS has implemented a “Farmworker Protection Project” to assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers and employers in Wisconsin, Missouri, Northern Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Florida, Minnesota, Kansas, Texas, **Indiana** and Michigan ([source](#)).

Crop analysts are forecasting a record-setting soybean harvest and solid corn yields this year in Indiana, but area farmers say they still aren't expecting to bring in huge profits. The U.S. Department of Agriculture projects that soybean yields will be 61 bushels per acre, up 10 bushels from the 2019, setting a new state record. Total production across the state is forecast at 346.5 million bushels, up 27% from last year. That would also be a record high ([source](#)).

September 8

Rural broadband could be a main focus for Hoosier farmers in the upcoming legislative session. Indiana Farm Bureau delegates compiled a list of issues they would like to see the organization address in the upcoming legislative session. Due to the pandemic, farmers across the state called in for a virtual meeting last weekend to discuss what issues should be taken to the Indiana Statehouse ([source](#)).

September 1

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) reminds farmers and ranchers that the deadline to apply for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) is Sept. 11, 2020. This program provides direct relief to producers who faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19 ([source](#)).

Scottsburg-based farmer Doug Krieger said that in more than two decades of selling at southern Indiana farmers markets, he's never had a year like this one. The family's booming business could be a result of inaccessibility this year to some foods due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially early in the season when staples such as meat and eggs were scarce in groceries as shoppers stocked up for the unknown and supply chains were disrupted at times ([source](#)).

August 25

Steve Brown wrote a piece for AgriNews urging farmers and ranchers in Indiana to apply for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. He said, "Whether you farm one acre or many more, grow food for local markets or big supply chains, CFAP can help. We're accepting applications through Aug. 28 and encouraging producers to apply now. In Indiana, we have already approved 15,034 applications and disbursed \$164,250,055 as of July 27. I know many of you have applied for CFAP already, but the numbers indicate that some who are eligible have not. CFAP provides direct relief to producers who faced price declines and additional marketing costs due to COVID-19. A range of commodities are eligible for CFAP, including cattle, milk, corn, hogs and soybeans. You can access the full list of eligible non-specialty, specialty, livestock, dairy and wool commodities by visiting farmers.gov/cfap" ([source](#)).

A longstanding tradition of Indiana agriculture is feeling the effects of COVID-19. Organizers of the Indiana Farm Equipment and Technology Expo have announced the 2020 show, scheduled for December, will not take place. In a statement, show organizers said with safety protocols in place it is "impossible to operate the show in a way that will be beneficial and enjoyable for both exhibitors and attendees" ([source](#)).

Pennsylvania State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: expired statewide May 8 – Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Northampton, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties remained under the order through June 4.

Restaurants: Counties in the green phase may reopen bars and restaurants at 25% occupancy for dine-in service and outdoor service if they follow the appropriate [guidelines](#). On-site alcohol sales at bars and restaurants are banned in Allegheny county.

**Reopening status by county can be found [here](#).

**Guidelines for essential business and operations employers can be found [here](#).

**The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture’s COVID-19 guidance and resources page can be found [here](#).

September 15

Coronavirus-related policies implemented by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf’s administration, which required people to stay home, ordered “non-life-sustaining” businesses to close, and placed limits on public gatherings are unconstitutional, a federal judge [ruled](#) Monday. U.S. District Judge William Stickman IV, an appointee of President Donald Trump, said that measures taken by Wolf and the state’s secretary of health to combat the spread of the virus were “well-intentioned,” but he found that “good intentions toward a laudable end are not alone enough to uphold governmental action against a constitutional challenge.” The judge ruled that limits imposed on gatherings violate the right of assembly under the First Amendment and found that stay-at-home and business closure orders violate the Fourteenth Amendment ([source](#)).

Bucks County now is accepting applications for a second round of grants to help small businesses hurt by the coronavirus pandemic and shutdown. The Bucks Back To Work small business grant is a \$30 million program funded by the federal CARES Act. Applications will be accepted between 8 a.m. Monday and 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 18. [Digital applications are preferred](#), but paper applications will be accepted from businesses that show a need for one, county officials said ([source](#)).

A grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture will enable Penn State researchers to study the potential for SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, to infect and spread among livestock. USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, through its Agricultural and Food Research Initiative, awarded the nearly \$1 million grant to a team led by Suresh Kuchipudi, clinical professor of veterinary and biomedical sciences in the College of Agricultural Sciences ([source](#)).

September 8

Governor Tom Wolf announced that restaurants may increase indoor occupancy to 50 percent starting September 21. To ensure that these businesses operate safely as Pennsylvania continues to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and to instill customers and employees with confidence knowing that they can dine safely, restaurants will commit to strictly complying to all public health safety guidelines and orders through a self-certification process ([source](#)).

September 1

Farmworkers are on the front lines of food production, and often exposed to environmental hazards, like pesticides. This year, their jobs have [become even harder](#), because of climate change, COVID and wildfires. In agricultural areas across the country, including in Pennsylvania, many farmworkers face unrelenting summer heat. With climate change, those temperatures are rising. In the vast industrial farmland of central California, where much of the nation's fruits and vegetables are produced, farmworkers face added [air quality concerns](#) caused by wildfires. This is all happening while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic ([source](#)).

The volume of sales for the 2019-2020 mushroom crop totaled 816 million pounds, down 2 percent from last season, according to the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) 2020 Report. Value of sales for the 2019-2020 mushroom crop was \$1.15 billion, up 3 percent from the previous season. The average reported price was \$1.41 per pound, up 7 cents from the previous year ([source](#)).

August 25

On August 19, The Department of Agriculture on canceled the 2021 Pennsylvania Farm Show as an in-person event due to the coronavirus. Plans are developing for a virtual version of the January indoor agricultural exposition to take its place ([source](#)).

During a visit to Sauder's Eggs this week, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding announced a \$10 million contract with Feeding Pennsylvania to acquire surplus agriculture products from Pennsylvania producers to be funneled through the charitable food system to put fresh, local foods into the hands of Pennsylvanians in need ([source](#)).

California State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: Yes – no official end date.

Food Service: On July 13, Gov. Newsom ordered all counties in the state to close all bars and the indoor operations of businesses including restaurants, movie theaters and museums, as Covid-19 cases continue to climb. The businesses will be allowed to operate outdoors, if possible, except for bars, he said.

** The California Climate & Agriculture Network's COVID-19 resource page can be found [here](#).

September 15

U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) brought both local and state agricultural leaders together on Sept. 11 for a Virtual Ag Forum. The H-2A guest worker program and [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program](#) (CFAP) were among the hot topics discussed. Carbajal said that CFAP will give a total of \$16 billion in direct payments to growers across the nation who experienced price or crop losses due to COVID-19. There are a number of crops grown on the Central Coast that were initially eligible, he added, but [the list of eligible specialty crops](#) has since expanded ([source](#)).

A lack of access to COVID-19 personal protective equipment and an adequate labor force are among the greatest needs of Central Coast farmers and growers, according to a panel of agriculture industry representatives. But expanding assistance to specialty growers, more COVID-19 testing, tracing and treatment and a loosening of pandemic-related restrictions are also on the wish list given to 24th Congressional District Rep. Salud Carbajal, D-Santa Barbara, in a virtual forum Friday ([source](#)).

For more than 52 years, World Ag Expo has served agriculture by bringing buyers and sellers together to innovate, collaborate, and advance agriculture. In 2021, the show will not be held live for the first time in World Ag Expo history. "After working with the Tulare County Health Department and other officials, it has become evident that given health and safety restrictions from the state of California, holding a live, international event is not responsible in February," said Jerry Sinift, International Agri-Center CEO ([source](#)).

September 8

California worker safety officials issued their first workplace fines against 11 companies that failed to follow coronavirus safety guidelines, most of which were ag operations. D.L. Poultry in Monterey Park received the largest fine for not installing Plexiglas barriers or ensuring that employees were spaced six feet apart, [per POLITICO California's Debra Kahn](#) ([source](#)).

September 1

On August 29, Foster Farms announced that it would temporarily shut down the main building of its Livingston, California, poultry complex after almost 400 workers contracted COVID-19. In the statement, Foster Farms confirmed that 392 employees were sickened "in recent months," and eight of these had died of complications related to the virus. The closure follows an order from the Merced County Department of Public Health mandating that the main building close for at least six days ([source](#)).

A deepening COVID-19 crisis now surging in most California agricultural counties—puts farmworkers in the pandemic's crosshairs. Thousands of farm and packinghouse workers have contracted the virus in the agricultural counties of Imperial, Kern, Kings, Tulare, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Monterey and Ventura. Farmworkers in the North Bay are at risk too. To avert catastrophe for workers and consumers, the federal and state governments must quickly adopt policies protecting the state's farmworkers' health and safety ([source](#)).

Texas State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: expired statewide April 30 – the city of Austin and Travis County will remain under the "Stay Home, Work Safe" order until December 15.

Food Service: Bars were ordered to close by Gov. Abbott on June 26. They can remain open only for to-go or delivery. Restaurants were ordered to reduce their capacity from 75% to 50%.

**Texas encourages restaurants and bars to follow the [CDC's guidelines](#) while remaining operations.

**The Texas Farm Bureau COVID-19 resources page can be found [here](#).

September 15

COVID-19 is expected to reduce the U.S. gross domestic product, GDP, by \$2.5 trillion and employment by 19 million full-time equivalent jobs over the next year, according to a [Texas A&M AgriLife](#) coordinated study ([source](#)).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has extended application deadlines for the [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program](#) for farmers and ranchers in Texas and Louisiana affected by Hurricane Laura. The deadline for the program was Sept. 11, but the USDA on Sept. 14 announced the extension for the producers affected by the hurricane, which made landfall on Aug. 27 and caused billions of dollars in damages in Louisiana and Texas. The new deadline for the affected producers is Oct. 9 ([source](#)).

September 8

N/A

September 1

Texans receiving emergency benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program will continue to get their benefits through the month of September, according to Gov. [Greg Abbott](#). The Texas Health and Human Services Commission will provide approximately \$188 million in emergency food benefits in response to the coronavirus pandemic ([source](#)).

As part of its efforts to enforce the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act and ensure fair trading practices within the U.S. produce industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has filed an administrative complaint against Martinez Fresh Produce LLC. The company, operating from Texas, allegedly failed to make payment promptly to eight produce sellers in the amount of \$155,508 from April 2017 through March 2019 ([source](#)).

August 25

The Environmental Protection Agency gave emergency approval Monday for the application of a cleanser intended to kill the novel [coronavirus](#) on surfaces for up to seven days, and the state of Texas said it would allow American Airlines and two branches of Total Orthopedics Sports & Spine to start using the new product ([source](#)).

Michigan State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: expired June 1

Restaurants: 32 counties could reopen bars and restaurants at 50% capacity on May 22 if they followed these [guidelines](#). On July 29, Gov. Whitmer closed down indoor bar service statewide. Outdoor service and restaurant service can remain open.

Operations that remain open must follow certain [guidelines](#) and can find other resources on how to keep employees safe [here](#).

**The Michigan Farm Bureau COVID-19 resources page can be found [here](#).

September 15

The Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association (MRLA) is back this week with more dire predictions about the state of the food and beverage industry during an ongoing pandemic. Among them, the trade group is projecting that roughly a quarter of the state's restaurants — approximately 4,000 establishments — could close within the next six months ([source](#)).

A lawsuit that was filed last month on behalf of some farms in Michigan against the state's mandate for coronavirus testing of all farmworkers was dismissed Wednesday. The move ends the legal dispute between farm owners and the state of Michigan over a state order issued Aug. 3 that required farms, meat plants and migrant camps to test all workers, many of whom are Latino immigrants. On Tuesday, attorneys representing the two farms — True Blue Berry Management and Smeltzer Orchards — and four workers filed a motion to dismiss the case. On Wednesday, the case was dismissed ([source](#)).

September 8

On September 2, a federal appeals court ruled in favor of the state order mandating coronavirus testing for all farmworkers in Michigan. The court's decision was cheered by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and immigrant advocates who say the order protects farmworkers, most of whom are Latino immigrants. In a 3-0 ruling, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals denied a request by farm owners in Michigan for a preliminary injunction to block the state order issued Aug. 3. In a lawsuit filed after the order, a group of farm owners had maintained that the state order unfairly targeted farms and was discriminatory since the workers affected are mostly Latino ([source](#)).

United Migrant Opportunity Services is implementing their "Farmworker Protection Project" initiative to secure the safety of migrant farm workers who have been deemed essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. UMOS is distributing \$1 million in financial aid and personal protective

equipment to seasonal migrant farm workers in 11 states, including Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa. The non-profit organization claims that despite these workers being essential to the US food supply chain, protective measures like safety standards, monitoring and hazard pay have not been uniformly enforced across the industry ([source](#)).

Agri-tourism destinations in Michigan are seeing a bump in attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic, but if you make your way to a west Michigan farm this fall you may find major changes. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development set [guidelines](#) it says will keep people safe during the pandemic. Among the guidelines, agri-tourism business must develop and publish a COVID-19 preparedness plan, screen staff daily for symptoms of COVID-19, employ social distancing, and encourage families to stay together and distance from others ([source](#)).

September 1

In August, Michigan for the first time began [publicly posting its weekly data on COVID-19 outbreaks by setting](#). This data provides a better picture of what types of locations and activities are driving new and ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks in the state and could potentially show how effective policies are at controlling outbreaks impacting industries like restaurants, bars and agriculture overtime. The [data is updated weekly](#) on Mondays by the state online and Eater is tracking and analyzing the numbers related specifically to outbreaks in the food industry here ([source](#)).

On Thursday, immigration attorneys with the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center and other groups filed a friend of the court brief with the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati, opposing a lawsuit that was filed by attorneys representing farms trying to block a state order mandating coronavirus testing for farm workers. On Aug. 3, the state of Michigan ordered farms, migrant camps and food processing centers to test all workers for the coronavirus and have protections for their workers. A [lawsuit was then filed](#) on behalf of farms who alleged the order unfairly singles out them and discriminates against Latino workers. Immigrant advocates countered by saying the lawsuit was a cynical invoking of civil rights law to push the interests of farm owners, not Latino workers ([source](#)).

August 25

Michigan farm owners and immigrants advocates are in a dispute over a [state order](#) requiring coronavirus testing for farm and food processing workers. A lawsuit filed this month on behalf of farms in Michigan alleges that the state order issued Aug. 3 unfairly discriminates against farm workers, most of whom are Latino, by having requirements that are tougher than other industries. The deadline for businesses to comply with the state order was Monday. The dispute comes amid an increase in coronavirus outbreaks in farms, food processing centers and migrant camps. The number of outbreaks at these places has doubled from 11 to 21, according to the state Department of Health and Human Services ([source](#)).

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is reminding farmers that grants to help farmers and processors affected by the coronavirus pandemic are still available. The Michigan Agricultural Safety Grant Program utilizes up to \$15 million in federal funding from the CARES Act to provide funding to farms and processors and their coronavirus mitigation efforts. To qualify, applicants must be a farm or agricultural processor located in Michigan and have at least 10 employees ([source](#)).

Minnesota State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: expired May 18

Restaurants: Bars and restaurants were able to reopen outdoor seating on June 1 and indoor dining on June 10. Guidelines for reopening can be found [here](#).

**The list of MN essential Food and Agriculture workers can be found [here](#).

**The Minnesota Department of Agriculture COVID-19 resources page can be found [here](#).

September 15

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz called the state legislature into special session starting last Friday. He says there's a need to preserve emergency powers he's been using to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota Farm Bureau's Public Policy Director Amber Hanson Glaeser is hoping lawmakers will be able to also pass tax and bonding bills and conform the Section 179 expensing for agriculture ([source](#)).

September 8

Seven west central Minnesota farm families are among 82 selected this year as winners of the University of Minnesota's Farm Families of the Year award for their contribution to the agriculture industry and their local communities. [One family per county](#) was selected by local University of Minnesota Extension committees based on their demonstrated commitment to enhancing and supporting agriculture. Typically the winners are honored at the annual Farmfest celebration, but the event was canceled this year because of COVID-19 and the recognition was held during a virtual event last month ([source](#)).

September 1

Starting this week, farmers in parts of Minnesota, including in Morrison County, will face new restrictions on how they apply nitrogen fertilizer. The regulations are aimed at reducing nitrate contamination in the state's groundwater. In a testing program a few years ago, more than half of the wells tested in Agram Township, where Tschida farms is located, had a level of nitrate higher than what the federal government considers safe for drinking water. Above that limit, nitrate poses a health risk to humans, especially infants. Consuming too much nitrate can cause a potentially serious or even fatal condition known as blue baby syndrome. Starting this week, farmers won't be allowed to apply nitrogen fertilizer in the fall or on frozen ground, in parts of Minnesota where the groundwater is vulnerable to contamination. The rule applies to about 12 percent of the state's cropland, mainly in the central and southeastern parts of the state ([source](#)).

August 25

Minnesota is the top turkey producing state in the United States, according to USDA statistics, and a new report by the University of Minnesota Extension researchers shows that COVID-19 won't change that ([source](#)).

Minnesota turkey growers and producers are feeling the sting as COVID-19 is causing producers to slow down production. Former Chairman of the National Turkey Federation John Burkel says the industry will be working full-time to help ensure families are not going to be negatively affected by food prices or the upcoming holiday season. Because the industry cannot provide projected losses from the winter, they were not able to qualify for USDA funding leaving them without help for months. Minnesota Congressman Collin Peterson and Senate Republicans have been pushing funding bills to help cover losses from COVID-19 ([source](#)).

Nebraska State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: No official stay at home order – the “21 Days to Stay Home and Stay Healthy” expired April 30.

**Restaurants and bars can reopen and serve customers if they follow these [guidelines](#).

**The Nebraska Farm Bureau COVID-19 resource page can be found [here](#).

September 15

Gov. Pete Ricketts remained adamant Wednesday about refusing emergency supplemental food aid, despite a letter from 20 state senators urging him to change his mind. But the state is pursuing other federal food assistance aimed at families of children who are missing out on free or reduced-price lunches at school. Nebraska is the only state not to continue the pandemic-driven emergency supplemental assistance beyond July. The program, authorized by a federal coronavirus relief bill, boosted Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program benefits, formerly known as food stamps, to the maximum level for all recipients ([source](#)).

September 8

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue paid a visit to Nebraska on September 4, making stops in Lincoln and Omaha and taking part in a panel discussion. Perdue signed a Shared Stewardship Agreement with Gov. Peter Ricketts, toured parts of the University Nebraska-Lincoln as well as a Certified Piedmontese facility and made a visit to Food Bank for the Heartland in Omaha. The stewardship agreement, between the USDA Forest Service and the State of Nebraska, focuses on shared stewardship, according to the news release, and established a framework for federal and state agencies to maintain forest management, add collaboration and respond to ecological challenges in Nebraska ([source](#)).

September 1

Amid ongoing impacts from last year’s bomb cyclone, low commodity prices and the COVID-19 pandemic, rural Nebraskans remain optimistic about their current situation and future, according to the 2020 Nebraska Rural Poll. In 2019, rural Nebraskans were the most optimistic they had been in the history of the Rural Poll, according to Rebecca Vogt, survey research manager. Only slight changes from those levels were seen in the 2020 poll, which was sent to 7,000 rural households across the state in April. Fifty-three percent of respondents believe they are better off than they were five years ago – a slight decrease from 56% last year ([source](#)).

On Aug. 31, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture unveiled a new marketing initiative geared toward Nebraska's agricultural sector. The program, [“Nebraska Straight from the Good](#)

[Life.](#) features a statewide catalog of agriculture businesses, including bulk grain producers, livestock, food processing and equipment.

August 25

The American Farm Bureau Federation recently reported farm bankruptcies increased 8% over a 12-month period, with 580 filings from June 2019 to June 2020. A six-month comparison by AFBF, however, shows the number of new Chapter 12 filings slowing. According to AFBF, several contributing factors are likely at play as farmers struggle to stay afloat during the pandemic. The Midwest, Northwest and Southeast were hardest hit, representing 80% of the filings across the U.S. Wisconsin led the nation with 69 filings, **followed by 38 in Nebraska.** Georgia and Minnesota each had 36 filings ([source](#)).

Georgia State Update

Stay at Home/Shelter in Place Order: expired April 30 for the general public – older persons and the chronically ill are still under a shelter in place order through September 15.

Restaurants can open for dine-in if they follow Gov. Kemp’s regulations outlined [here](#). Bars were able to open June 1.

**Food and agriculture business is generally safe and can continue operation. However, they have to work under extensive [guidelines](#) to operate.

**The Georgia Department of Agriculture COVID-19 resource page can be found [here](#).

September 15

Georgia farmers have suffered substantial financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Farmers and agribusiness experts knew that Georgia producers were suffering large revenue losses due to the pandemic but no one could point their finger on the extent. A [new impact study](#) released this month by the University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development shows that 82% of farmers have seen revenue loss — those predicting an annual loss on average expected to be short nearly \$50,000 ([source](#)).

September 8

The Georgia Farm Bureau [recently released a report](#) in which the organization said many farmers will lose upwards of \$50,000 this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report was generated after the bureau surveyed approximately 900 farmers, 82% of whom said they will lose income due to the ongoing public health emergency. The average estimated loss totaled \$49,000 per farm. Among those impacted, GFB expects cattle farmers to be impacted the most. Not far behind, however, is field crop farmers. Cotton farmers, for example, saw prices plummet and demand drop when the pandemic hit and consumers stopped spending at the same levels. The international market often used to prop up the market as well was also stagnant as Coronavirus has taken a toll on a worldwide scale. The Georgia Farm Bureau has also been working with D.C. officials, including the USDA, in an effort to assist [with streamlining the H-2A program](#) and avoiding labor shortages ([source](#)).

Organizers of the Regional Education and Economic Development (REED) Summit believe the show must go on despite the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all areas of life. That's why the third annual REED Summit hosted by the University of North Georgia (UNG) will be held virtually on Sept. 23 ([source](#)).

September 1

Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, visited Bonaire Elementary School in Houston County, to announce the extension of the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program. The program gives families food and has distributed over 75 million boxes of fresh produce since May. Houston County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Mark Scott, says the expansion will help families in his school district ([source](#)).

August 25

For the first time since the Georgia National Fair began in 1990, the October event has been canceled. The Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority made the decision to cancel the 2020 fair on August 12 after determining that it would not be possible to host a fair that abides by Georgia and Centers for Disease Control safety regulations for COVID-19 ([source](#)).