

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Mike DeWine
Governor of Ohio
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6117

Dear Governor DeWine:

Every sector in Ohio continues to face unprecedented challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Ohio's agriculture industry – one of 16 essential infrastructures- is no exception.

Earlier this year, operations within the food supply chain were drastically disrupted due to the public health crisis. Ultimately, slowdowns and shutdowns in the entire agriculture supply chain caused a shortage of commodity products within retail settings, leaving a severe strain on food pantries across the state.

Despite these hardships early in the pandemic, Ohio's agriculture industry remains resilient, and continues to persevere in providing nutritious food and other valuable products for communities in Ohio, and beyond. Still, the responsibility to produce food is at the hand of an already stressed labor force.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 public health crisis, the U.S. agriculture industry has worked in lockstep with food production partners. Following interim guidance developed by the Center for Disease Control and Occupational Safety and Health Administration, food processing and packing plants worked diligently towards the common goal to protect employees by developing COVID-19 control and assessment plans. From the farm to the plants, agriculture businesses provided workers with Personal Protective Equipment, adopted social distancing guidelines, heightened cleaning and disinfection regimens, and developed screening of employees.

Now that a COVID-19 vaccine is on the horizon, we urge you to consider designating members of Ohio's agriculture industry – one of 16 essential infrastructures – to high priority status in phase 2, outlined in the proposed Ohio COVID-19 vaccination plan.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of the agriculture industry.

