



Mendocino County Farm Bureau

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Affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation

March 17, 2020

County of Mendocino
Executive Office
501 Low Gap Road Room 1010
Ukiah, CA 95482

Via Email: angeloc@mendocinocounty.org

RE: COVID-19 and Agricultural Operations Defined as Essential Businesses

Dear CEO Angelo,

With the recent public health concerns related to COVID-19, Mendocino County Farm Bureau (MCFB) appreciates the actions that the county has taken to work to prevent, or best prepare for, the presence of the virus in the county. These are unprecedented times that we are in.

Agriculture is working to take precautionary measures related to the COVID-19 outbreak. MCFB participated in a conference call on March 16th with Karen Ross, state Secretary of Agriculture, and other county Farm Bureau offices to discuss concerns related to COVID-19 specific to agricultural operations. The California Department of Food and Agriculture is working with the Governor's office and state public health entities to discuss how to best take proactive steps related to COVID-10 without shutting down the state's agricultural industry. Locally, MCFB has been distributing updated information related to employer resources from the Center for Disease Control and OSHA for COVID-19 so that farmers and ranchers can work with employees to implement preventative practices.

MCFB would like to remind the county leadership that agriculture is an industry that is seasonally dependent and is not a "business" that can be easily shut down. In Mendocino County we are currently in the middle of frost season and it is a critical time of the year for our local wine grape and pear industries. With the COVID-19 information evolving daily, and with the recent shelter in place orders made by neighboring counties to the south, MCFB asks that the County of Mendocino defines agricultural operations and processing facilities as essential businesses (allowed to operate and not required to cease activities) if there is future consideration of taking any similar action.

Crops and livestock will require attention amid this public health issue or any other unplanned natural disaster. It may not be business as usual, but it cannot be no business at all. If the county considers any future action that could limit the ability of agricultural operations to function, it would be detrimental. MCFB requests that the county leadership work with the county Department of Agriculture, who in turn can work with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, to develop reasonable action steps that can be taken for COVID-19 and local agriculture. MCFB will continue to engage on this issue and are willing to work with the county as a resource to assist as needed. If there are any questions related to this correspondence, please feel free to contact the MCFB office.

Sincerely,

George Hollister
President

CC:
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Mendocino County Agricultural Commissioner, Jim Donnelly
Senator Mike McGuire
Assemblymember Jim Wood
Congressman Jared Huffman