



# ALERT

**March 17, 2020**

TO: Maritime Operations Committee  
Ag Working Group

The Maritime Exchange is forwarding the following USDA press release for your information.

[USDA Ensures Food Safety During COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

**(Washington, D.C., March 17, 2020)** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is ensuring the safety and timely delivery of the U.S. food supply while protecting the health of USDA employees during this COVID-19 National Emergency. Yesterday, USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Greg Ibach and USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Mindy Brashears sent a [letter to stakeholders](#) reassuring them that APHIS, AMS, and FSIS are rising to meet the challenges associated with COVID-19.

“As leaders of USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Food Safety and Inspection Service we can assure you that the agencies are committed to ensuring the health and safety of our employees while still providing the timely delivery of the services to maintain the movement of America’s food supply from farm to fork... As we come together as a country to address this public health threat, know that USDA remains committed to working closely with industry to fulfill our mission of ensuring the safety of the U.S. food supply and protecting agricultural health,” Under Secretary Ibach and Deputy Under Secretary Brashears said in the [letter to stakeholders](#).

**Additional Information**

**Food Safety and Inspection Service:**

- Meat, poultry, and processed egg inspection services continue as normal.
- Planning for absenteeism is a part of normal FSIS operations and as such, FSIS is closely monitoring and tracking employee absenteeism to plan for and minimize impacts to operations.
- FSIS is also working to prioritize inspection at establishments based on local conditions and resources available.

**Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS):**

- APHIS and AMS continue to provide critical inspections and grading services.
- APHIS and AMS are ensuring the health and safety of USDA employees while still providing the timely delivery of the services to maintain the movement of America's food supply moving from farms to forks.
- APHIS and AMS are prepared to remedy any possible disruptions in their services.
- AMS will continue to report commodity prices through its market news service.
- Commodity markets can be assured that the USDA will keep America's food supply safe as well as abundant during this national emergency.

For more information from the USDA, you may visit [www.usda.gov/coronavirus](http://www.usda.gov/coronavirus).

The latest information directly from the CDC can be found at [www.coronavirus.gov](http://www.coronavirus.gov).

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