

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson
Governor
500 Woodlane Avenue
Little Rock, AR 72201

March 21, 2020

Dear Governor Hutchinson:

We write to you today to express our thanks for your leadership to address the situation surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak gripping our state and our country. Arkansas' farmers, ranchers, and forest products producers are very appreciative of your coordinated efforts to protect Arkansas families and businesses during this challenging time.

Agriculture is the economic engine of Arkansas and contributes \$21.4 billion to the state's economy annually. Every day, the 42,300 farm families across Arkansas work hard to provide consumers with the most affordable, abundant and highest quality food, fiber and shelter available. As you evaluate future initiatives to safeguard Arkansas and decrease the impact of COVID-19, we respectfully request you ensure all measures recognize the vital role our industries play in the safety and well-being of all Arkansans. Each sector of Arkansas' agriculture community is critically important to the food supply chain and should be classified as "essential infrastructure" in the event of any potential lockdown scenario that may occur in the state.

Food availability is directly dependent on the continuation of "essential" services. These include businesses that supply important inputs like seed, fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides, water, and animal feed, as well as our livestock auction markets, logging crews, timber mills, greenhouses, nurseries, vineyards, farms and ranches. Moreover, downstream industries like transportation, packaging, manufacturing and food processing also provide "essential" services to the short-and-long term food security and availability. Any disruptions to these businesses and industries could significantly disrupt the food supply chain, placing additional, and unnecessary burdens, on food retailers and consumers.

As you are aware, on March 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency designated the entire food and agriculture production chain as critical infrastructure as our country responds to COVID-19. This designation recognizes that workers in the entire food production supply chain are crucial and states should also prioritize them as "essential." Most importantly, classifying production agriculture and all related industries as "essential" provides reassurance and some certainty to rural communities impacted by depressed commodity prices, battling challenging weather conditions and facing economic uncertainty as a result of COVID-19.

Our organizations recognize we are facing an unprecedented crisis and greatly appreciate the work you and your team have done to protect the health and interests of Arkansans. We will continue to play our part in feeding, clothing and sheltering Arkansas families and families across the nation and around the world.

Sincerely,

Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
Livestock Marketing Association
Arkansas Forestry Association
Catfish Farmers of Arkansas
Agricultural Council of Arkansas
Arkansas Pork Producers Association
Producers Rice Mill
Arkansas Soybean Association
The Poultry Federation
Riceland Foods
AgHeritage Farm Credit Services
Farm Credit of Western Arkansas
Farm Credit MidSouth
Delta ACA Farm Credit Services
Arkansas Rice Federation