

November 11, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

Thank you for your leadership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic here in the U.S. and abroad. Early in your Administration, you wisely and appropriately designated the food and agriculture sector as part of the nation's critical infrastructure. As organizations representing the food, agriculture, retail, and consumer packaged goods (CPG) supply chain, we appreciate the steps you and your Administration have taken to protect workers and keep the food supply chain running.

Our members have been on the front lines of the response to the pandemic by continuing operations and ensuring Americans have access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food. Challenges have taxed the food supply chain over the past eight months, but the food, agriculture, manufacturing, and retail industries are resilient, and the supply chains have not broken.

Once a vaccine for COVID-19 is developed, it is imperative that we have a federally orchestrated vaccine distribution program and prioritization of vaccination among population groups. The Administration's COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations (the "Playbook")¹ seeks to do both. Importantly, the Playbook considers prioritizing four groups for COVID-19 vaccinations if the initial supply is limited: 1) Healthcare personnel (paid and unpaid persons serving in healthcare settings who have the potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials); 2) non-healthcare essential workers; 3) adults with high-risk medical conditions who possess risk factors for severe COVID-19 illness; and 4) people 65 years of age and older (including those living in LTCFs).

As described in the Playbook, we strongly support prioritizing essential workers in critical infrastructure industries, including those responsible for ensuring the continuity of our nation's food supply. Prioritizing vaccinations for food, agriculture, retail, and CPG workers will be a key intervention to help keep workers healthy and to ensure that agricultural and food supply chains remain operating.

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/downloads/COVID-19-Vaccination-Program-Interim_Playbook.pdf

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To ensure a successful vaccination campaign, a strong, coordinated, public education campaign will be required to ensure widespread and sustained acceptance of vaccinations. The Playbook provides a roadmap for doing so. We encourage the Administration to begin activating this as soon as possible. Furthermore, we urge the Administration to leverage state and local cooperative public health organizations, such as the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and National Association of County and City Health Officials, which provide for addressing challenges that may arise and can help ensure consistent communication nationwide.

The agricultural, food manufacturing, distribution, and retail industries will continue to fulfill the “special responsibility” critical infrastructure industries carry, and we are proud that our industry’s workforce has selflessly persevered to feed America. We also look forward to partnering with the Administration to reinforce the importance and safety of vaccinations and ensuring our essential workers can access and receive vaccinations when available.

Thank you for your leadership and we appreciate your consideration of this request.

Respectfully submitted,

American Bakers Association
American Frozen Food Institute
Consumer Brands Association
FMI - The Food Industry Association
Global Cold Chain Alliance
International Dairy Foods Association
National Automatic Merchandising Association
National Confectioners Association
National Grocers Association
National Restaurant Association
North American Millers Association
North American Meat Institute
Peanut and Tree Nut Processors Association
SNAC International
United Fresh Produce Association