



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2020

Agricultural Commissioner Issues Advisory for Agricultural Worker Protection During COVID-19 Crisis

VENTURA, Calif. – The County of Ventura, in a collaboration with the County Executive Office, the Farmworker Resource Program, Farm Bureau of Ventura County, Ventura County Agricultural Association, Reiter Affiliated Companies, Lideres Campesinas en California, Good Farms, Brokaw Ranch and the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, has issued an Advisory for Agricultural Worker Protection to be used during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Agriculture is part of Ventura County's critical infrastructure and farmworkers are carrying out essential functions to keep our food supply safe and strong every day. Agriculture operations adhere to stringent policies related to worker safety and hygiene and each person in the chain of development, growth and production is vital to this effort.

"I want to say how grateful I am to all of the hardworking farmers, farmworkers, pest control workers, fresh food packers and all those who bring high quality food from our fields and ranches to our communities near and far. Our food system is critical to our County and Nation's collective health. Our Farmworkers are critical in keeping the system strong and healthy. This advisory has been issued to help make sure that agricultural workers throughout our County are protected," said Ed Williams, County of Ventura Agricultural Commissioner.

The Advisory provides information for employee hygiene emphasizing hand washing, staying home when sick and social distancing to avoid the spreading of illness during work activities and breaks. The advisory also provides guidance for employers to have soap or disinfectant, potable water and single-use disposable towels available at worksites and throughout facilities. Instruction for routine environmental cleaning in high traffic areas, training and limiting nonessential visits and travel are included in the advisory.

"Our farmworkers are essential to providing food," said Talia Barrera, County of Ventura Farmworker Resource Program Manager. "During this time, we have been working to provide more than 43,000 farmworkers with important information so they are informed about the situation and where they can get needed resources. This outreach is important during this time and has been very important throughout the year in meeting the needs of this important population."

The Farmworker Resource Program coordinators assist in facilitating prompt resolutions to workplace concerns such as payroll issues and working conditions, navigating services available from public agencies, and leveraging existing resources. The program is staffed by two trilingual employees who are knowledgeable about the agricultural industry and serve as outreach resources to farmworkers and their employers.

The partnerships developed through this program have been helpful in the COVID-19 response and outreach. Educational outreach materials have been provided with Farmworker paychecks, information has been provided through WhatsApp which helps community members who do not read or write, videos have been created in multiple languages and new platforms have been developed on social media to share the message.



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Through effective outreach activities, the Farmworker Resource Program has established partnerships between healthcare, education, human services and many other agencies that serve the agricultural community. “Building trust and relationships with farmworkers, employers, farmers, and advocates has allowed this program to be very successful in assisting with resolutions for workplace issues while also providing information when it is needed most for basic needs. These partnerships have been so helpful during this time of emergency. We are working together to help support people when they need it most,” said Program Coordinator Israel Vazquez-Nicolas.

For additional information about the Farmworker Resource Program, call (805) 385-1899, email HSA-AGFRP@ventura.org or visit www.ventura.org/human-services-agency/farmworker-resources/.

For more information about the Agricultural Worker Protection Advisory please contact the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office at (805) 388-4222, or online at <https://www.ventura.org/agricultural-commissioner/>.