



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
HEALTH / AGRICULTURE BUILDING
PO BOX 330
TRENTON NJ 08625-0330

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor
SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

DOUGLAS H. FISHER
Secretary

URGENT REQUEST

July 13, 2020

Dear Farm Owner/Operator,

As you are all aware, New Jersey is still under a Public Health Emergency as we try to contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19, a contagious and, at times, fatal disease transmitted mainly through close contact with infected people, such as an infected person's coughs and sneezes. The Department of Health has identified farm workers as one of the most vulnerable populations in the State for potentially contracting COVID-19 because such employees often work and live near each other.

Over the past several months, the Department of Agriculture has been closely coordinating with the Departments of Health and Labor to assist farm operators and farm workers to minimize and control the spread of COVID-19 during this pandemic. One program that is being implemented FREE OF CHARGE for all farms is a COVID-19 testing and education program through Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and local health departments. Along with free testing, the program provides education and other related support services. The Department of Health has also created [guidelines for seasonal farm labor camps](#), a "[Quick Facts](#)" infographic, and prevention signs on [face coverings](#), [hand cleaning](#), [social distancing](#), and [helpful hotlines](#).

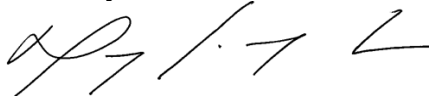
The Commissioner of the Department of Health has broad powers under the Emergency Health Powers Act to take all reasonable and necessary measures to prevent the transmission of infectious disease, which can include mandated testing for COVID-19 as part of the above-mentioned program (N.J.S.A. 26: 13-12; 13-13). At this time, the Commissioner strongly urges farm workers and staff to be tested by an FQHC or another county testing site. This will help reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others.

Although many farms have been cooperating and thousands of farmworkers have been tested to date, our goal is to work together with every farm in the State to reach the best possible outcome for everyone. Thus, workers can cohort or assemble into groups based on the test results. As a last resort, they can continue to work even if they test positive for COVID-19 but do not exhibit symptoms. Also, workers tested through the program that require medical attention will be assisted with housing options and provided medical treatment at no cost to the operator or the worker. In addition to the above, FQHC staff are available and more than willing to discuss other options/solutions/concerns with you.

For all these reasons, it is critical that you welcome FQHC staff to your farm to educate you and your workers about the virus, how to reduce the potential for transmission through best practices, and to provide testing services.

Let's stand together and demonstrate the agricultural community's responsible reaction in confronting this unprecedented situation with emphasis on the safety of workers and farm families across the state.

Sincerely,



Douglas Fisher
Secretary, NJ Department of Agriculture

Sincerely,



Judith M. Persichilli, RN, BSN, MA
Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Health