



March 21, 2020

The Honorable Tate Reeves
Governor of Mississippi
Jackson, Mississippi

Dear Governor Reeves:

USA Rice is the global advocate for all segments of the U.S. rice industry with the mission to promote and protect the livelihood of farmers, millers, merchants and allied businesses throughout the United States. We work in tandem with Mississippi Rice Council to help achieve this mission for those in the rice industry in Mississippi. On behalf of the more than 5,500 farmers and 125,000 Americans that have jobs in the rice industry, we wish to thank you for your efforts in combatting and overcoming the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

The U.S. rice industry contributes in excess of \$34 billion to the U.S. economy annually with rice farmers alone contributing \$5.6 billion to the nation's economic output. In addition, rice farmers contribute an additional \$5.5 billion impact to the economy in value-added and labor income generated by their operations. On average, each rice farm contributes \$1 million to their local, rural economy. Rice milling operations contribute \$9.34 billion in total output value of goods and services, along with an additional \$5.94 billion in total value added and total labor income produced by these businesses. Additional economic impact is created by merchants and allied businesses.

Specifically in Mississippi, rice farmers contribute an average of \$302.5 million to the state's economic output and support 2,194 jobs. Rice milling, food processing operations, and allied businesses also contribute to the state's economic output and support numerous jobs.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency released a guidance document yesterday outlining those sectors critical to our nation's infrastructure, which included food and agriculture, among other industries (<https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CISA-Guidance-on-Essential-Critical-Infrastructure-Workers-1-20-508c.pdf>). As you continue your preparations to combat COVID-19, we respectfully urge you to consider and utilize this guidance as it relates to the food and agriculture industries, deeming the following as essential to the workforce in your state which supports overall infrastructure as well as our national security interests.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

- Workers supporting groceries, pharmacies and other retail that sells food and beverage products
- Restaurant carry-out and quick serve food operations - Carry-out and delivery food employees
- Food manufacturer employees and their supplier employees—to include those employed in food processing (packers, meat processing, cheese plants, milk plants, produce, etc.) facilities; livestock, poultry, seafood slaughter facilities; pet and animal feed processing facilities; human food facilities producing by-products for animal food; beverage production facilities; and the production of food packaging



- Farm workers to include those employed in animal food, feed, and ingredient production, packaging, and distribution; manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of veterinary drugs; truck delivery and transport; farm and fishery labor needed to produce our food supply domestically
- Farm workers and support service workers to include those who field crops; commodity inspection; fuel ethanol facilities; storage facilities; and other agricultural inputs
- Employees and firms supporting food, feed, and beverage distribution, including warehouse workers, vendor managed inventory controllers and blockchain managers
- Workers supporting the sanitation of all food manufacturing processes and operations from wholesale to retail
- Company cafeterias - in-plant cafeterias used to feed employees
- Workers in food testing labs in private industries and in institutions of higher education
- Workers essential for assistance programs and government payments
- Employees of companies engaged in the production of chemicals, medicines, vaccines, and other substances used by the food and agriculture industry, including pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, minerals, enrichments, and other agricultural production aids
- Animal agriculture workers to include those employed in veterinary health; manufacturing and distribution of animal medical materials, animal vaccines, animal drugs, feed ingredients, feed, and bedding, etc.; transportation of live animals, animal medical materials; transportation of deceased animals for disposal; raising of animals for food; animal production operations; slaughter and packing plants and associated regulatory and government workforce
- Workers who support the manufacture and distribution of forest products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood products
- Employees engaged in the manufacture and maintenance of equipment and other infrastructure necessary to agricultural production and distribution

Just as important to the food and agriculture industry as producing and processing is the necessity of getting our products to the consumer. In the U.S., over 80 percent of rice consumed domestically is grown here in our country. Additionally, our industry relies on international trade with over 130 countries around the world importing our rice. We respectfully urge you to also consider guidance issued by CISA for transportation and infrastructure.

TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

- Employees supporting or enabling transportation functions, including dispatchers, maintenance and repair technicians, warehouse workers, truck stop and rest area workers, and workers that maintain and inspect infrastructure (including those that require cross-border travel)
- Employees of firms providing services that enable logistics operations, including cooling, storing, packaging, and distributing products for wholesale or retail sale or use.
- Workers responsible for operating dispatching passenger, commuter and freight trains and maintaining rail infrastructure and equipment
- Maritime transportation workers - port workers, mariners, equipment operators
- Truck drivers who haul hazardous and waste materials to support critical infrastructure, capabilities, functions, and services



- Automotive repair and maintenance facilities
- Manufacturers and distributors (to include service centers and related operations) of packaging materials, pallets, crates, containers, and other supplies needed to support manufacturing, packaging staging and distribution operations
- Postal and shipping workers, to include private companies
- Employees who repair and maintain vehicles, aircraft, rail equipment, marine vessels, and the equipment and infrastructure that enables operations that encompass movement of cargo and passengers
- Air transportation employees, including air traffic controllers, ramp personnel, aviation security, and aviation management
- Workers who support the maintenance and operation of cargo by air transportation, including flight crews, maintenance, airport operations, and other on- and off- airport facilities workers

While we're extremely fortunate in the United States to not currently have a food shortage during these dismal times, any disruptions to the food and agriculture supply chain now could result in precipitative effects with dire consequences later this year. We're in the midst of rice planting season now which will, God willing, yield an abundant supply of the staple crop that our farmers are proud to produce and millers dedicated to processing to continue supplying our country and the world with the top quality, nutritious, and sustainable product we have to offer.

Again, USA Rice thanks you for your efforts and all of the work that you are doing during this national emergency that has impacted us all. Please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Ben Mosely, USA Rice vice president of government affairs, at bmosely@usarice.com or (571) 217-2848 if you have any questions or if there is anything we can do for you. Godspeed and thank you for your time and attention to this issue of utmost importance to the U.S. rice industry.

Sincerely,

Betsy Ward
President & CEO
USA Rice

Kirk Satterfield
Chairman
Mississippi Rice Council

Cc: The Honorable Andy Gipson, Commissioner, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce