

## AAFC – Industry-Government COVID-19 monitoring call

April 24, 2020

Noon – 1:00 PM EST

Summary of the updates provided by government officials is provided below.

### Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) (Steve Jurgutis - AAFC)

- Since April 1, 2020, 7,500 TFWs have arrived in Canada, with an additional 3,700 scheduled to arrive prior to the end of April. In total, 11,200 TFWs are expected for April, compared to last year's 13,000.
- AAFC continues to work with provinces and industry on logistical challenges impacting TFW travel. Industry is encouraged to continue to send questions/requests to the [Roundtable](#) account.
- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has shared updated information on employer compliance inspections for TFWs. This was also distributed via email from the [Roundtable](#) Account on April 24, 2020. These requirements are as a result of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR) that came into force on April 20, 2020. The compliance inspections included:
  - Service Canada will be conducting inspections (remotely/virtually), with or without prior notice, including within the first fourteen (14) days of the TFW's arrival.
  - **Employers are expected to inform Service Canada immediately when employees arrive at work locations.**
  - Employers can expect to be contacted by phone and by email and will have up to 48 hours to provide the requested documentation by email or through an online LMIA portal.
  - Penalties for non-compliance are significant and dependant on the severity of the violation.
- AAFC's job portal is now live and will point employers and employees to provincial job matching resources with the intent of reducing labour shortages in the agriculture and agri-food sector.
- On April 22, 2020 Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced comprehensive support of nearly \$9 billion for post-secondary students and recent graduates. AAFC is exploring how this support may be used to assist the sector.

### Science and Technology Branch Update (Dr. Javier Gracia-Garza - AAFC)

- Science and Technology Branch staff have been focusing exclusively on the care of livestock and insect colonies; germplasm maintenance; and, the maintenance of specialized laboratory equipment and biocontainment facilities.
- The Department recently implemented additional actions to protect the stewardship of land and resources. Critical, time-sensitive services will be provided to the agricultural sector, including:
  - Supporting the sector through activities such as distribution of breeder seed to seed producers;
  - Protecting the long-term integrity of science assets through germplasm, land, orchard and vineyard stewardship (i.e. seeding with crops, applying fertilizer, pruning and spraying vineyards and maintaining long-term – greater than 5 year – crop rotations); and,
  - Protecting research infrastructure (i.e. irrigation systems or major scientific equipment).
- These actions do not allow for the conduct of field-based research projects that require physical presence in our facilities at this time. Moreover, non-field research conducted in laboratories and greenhouses will not resume until further notice.
- In terms of the planting season, the Department is looking at all submitted projects and how it can remain flexible and prepare to respond as return to work conditions evolve across the country.

### International Supply chains (Kathleen Donohue - AAFC)

- United States (U.S.)

- On April 18, 2020, Canada and the U.S. agreed to extend border restrictions for 30 more days.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced \$20.72 billion in support of the U.S. agriculture sector, including \$16 billion in direct payments and \$4.72 billion in commodity purchases.
- AAFC has received several questions from stakeholders on this financial support to U.S. farmers, but the details of the announcement have yet to be publically released, including eligibility, payment rates, and other implementation details.
- AAFC is monitoring closely to ensure that the U.S. abides by its international obligations.
- Mexico
  - The Mexican government has announced that the suspension of non-essential activities due to COVID-19 will be extended until May 30<sup>th</sup> in regions classified as high-transmission, including cities such as: Mexico City and its surroundings, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Puebla.
  - Minister Bibeau recently held a call with Mexican officials early on April 24, 2020 which provided an opportunity to reaffirm the commitment to ongoing collaboration, uninterrupted flow of agriculture and agri-food, and safety of citizens and food production between Canada and Mexico. The Minister also underscored the importance of Mexican workers for the TFW program and confirmed Canada is committed to working with all foreign partners.
- India
  - The Government of India has extended its lockdown period until May 3, 2020 and will review the lockdown closer to this date. The agriculture sector (and all agriculture activities) have been deemed as essential services.
  - The Government of India has now confirmed that ports and inland container depots for cargo transport will operate 24/7, easing restrictions to facilitate transportation of all agricultural goods, including testing and clearance.

#### Next Call

- The next stakeholder call will take place on Monday, April 27, 2020 at noon EST.