

COVID-19 Weekly Information Update – (EN)

Hello,

We would like to share with you a few updates related to COVID-19 that you may find of interest. Please do not hesitate to share this information with your networks.

1) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Due to potential critical shortages of PPE during the COVID-19 response, we would like to share with you information that you may find of interest.

- **Guidance on re-using N95 masks:** On April 8, 2020, Health Canada released a [Notice](#) on important regulatory considerations for the reprocessing of single use N95 respirators during the COVID-19 response. Health Canada is currently monitoring and assessing the acceptability of various decontamination and sterilization methods/strategies for the reprocessing of single use N95 respirators in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Guidance on using N95 beyond their shelf-life:** While most masks have a limited shelf life, in times of increased demand and decreased supply, consideration can be made to use these expired N95 respirators. Please consult Health Canada's website to read this [guidance](#).
- **Considerations on the use of homemade masks:** Health Canada provides [considerations](#) in the use of homemade masks to protect against COVID-19. Wearing a facial covering/non-medical mask in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it and is not a substitute for physical distancing and hand washing. However, it can be an additional measure you can take to protect others around you, even if you have no symptoms. It can be useful for short periods of time, when physical distancing is not possible in public settings such as when grocery shopping or using public transit.

2) Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) – Notice to industry

The CFIA will be posting a notice to industry on its [website](#) today to advise that the Agency and the USDA have agreed to a six-month extension for approved facilities to continue to export certain animal products, by-products and pet foods. This will be effective immediately and will run until September 30, 2020.

This will ensure the CFIA can continue to provide critical inspections and help maintain bilateral trade flows of animal products between Canada and the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

3) Modifications to Canada's Emergency Business Account (CEBA)

On April 16, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the eligibility criteria for the [CEBA](#) will be expanded to businesses that paid between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million in total payroll in 2019. This new range will replace the previous one of between \$50,000 and \$1 million, and will help address the challenges faced by smaller businesses to cover non-deferrable operating costs.

4) Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA)

On April 16, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced its intent to introduce the [CECRA](#) for small businesses. This new program will seek to provide loans, including forgivable loans, to commercial property owners who in turn will lower or forgo the rent of small businesses for the months of April (retroactive), May, and June. Implementation of the program will require a partnership between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments, which are responsible for property owner-tenant relationships. More details will be shared soon.

5) Modifications to Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

On April 15, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced [modifications](#) to the CERB's eligibility rules to:

- Allow people to earn up to \$1,000 per month while collecting the CERB.
- Extend the CERB to seasonal workers who have exhausted their Employment Insurance (EI) regular benefits and are unable to undertake their usual seasonal work as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Extend the CERB to workers who recently exhausted their EI regular benefits and are unable to find a job or return to work because of COVID-19.

6) Temporary top-up to salaries of workers deemed essential

In recognition that essential workers' salaries are often less or similar than what they would receive from the CERB, the government will also work with provinces and territories through a new transfer to cost-share a [temporary top-up](#) to the salaries of workers deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19, who make less than \$2,500 a month. Details as to the application and delivery of this measure will be released shortly following further work with provinces and territories.

7) Stay of Default under the Advance Payments Program (APP)

As you know, on March 23, 2020, the Government of Canada announced an extension to an existing Stay of Default and two new Stays of Default. We would like to clarify that, the Stays only apply to a [restricted number of commodities](#) who received advances in a specific program year. These commodities will be eligible for a Stay if their repayment deadline is within the dates identified.

- A six-month extension of the Stay of Default on [2018 grain, oilseed and pulse advances](#) which [would have expired on March 31, 2020](#) and has been extended to [September 30, 2020](#).

- A six month Stay of Default on 2018 advances on cattle and bison producers which would have come due on March 31, 2020 and have been extended to September 30, 2020; and
- A six month Stay of Default on 2019 advances on flowers and potted plants, which would have come due on April 30, 2020 and has been extended to October 31, 2020.

A producer is allowed to have advances under multiple program years, including a Stay, but the sum of those advances need to be within the total program limit of \$1million.

Producers can continue to receive up to \$100,000 in interest-free advances for each program year. For most of the commodities, the 2020 program year started April 1, 2020. With respect to the Stays of Default and the repayment deadlines announced, under certain circumstances, it is possible that a producer has an outstanding interest free advance from a previous program year when requesting a 2020 APP advance. The producer will still be eligible for a 2020 advance of \$100,000 interest-free, potentially giving him for a limited period, interest free advances greater than \$100,000.

8) Updates from International Trading Partners

- **United States**

On April 16, 2020, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, held a call with her U.S. counterpart, Secretary Sonny Perdue to affirm agriculture and food production as critical infrastructures in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to underscore the importance of uninterrupted food and agriculture trade across the Canada-U.S. border.

Slaughter capacity of beef, pork and poultry continues to be diminished in the U.S. due to COVID-19 outbreaks amongst plant employees. We continue to monitor this.

Regarding reduced service hours at a number of U.S. border crossing points, please note that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBSA is temporarily reducing service hours at 27 low-traffic border entry locations along the Canada-U.S. land border. The temporary hour adjustments are in effect as of April 15th at 11:59 pm EDT and will remain in effect until further notice. Further information is available [here](#).

- **Mexico**

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the newly implemented restrictive measures now in place in several countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, please note that the Migration Office of the Embassy of Canada in Mexico is offering

essential services only. Such services include processing of work permit applications for those intending to work in critical industries, such as agriculture.

IRCC has [implemented special measures](#) to help temporary and permanent residents and applicants affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19). A FAQ has been developed to answer questions from the public regarding the [Implications of travel restrictions on IRCC clients](#).

Reminders

In case you missed it:

1) Keeping Canadians and workers in the food supply chain safe

On April 13, 2020, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, announced [\\$50 million](#) to help farmers, fish harvesters, and all food production and processing employers, put in place the measures necessary to follow the mandatory 14-day isolation period required of all workers arriving from abroad.

2) Additional Funding for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

On April 14, 2020, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, and the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, have announced [\\$20 million](#) in funding for the CFIA to support critical food inspection services.

3) CFIA expectations on the prevention of and response to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 by operators

New expectations for operators have been posted on the CFIA website about [preventing and responding to COVID-19 in establishments regulated by CFIA](#). This document is **not** intended for meat slaughter and processing establishments. Separate CFIA guidance about [preventing and responding to COVID-19 in meat slaughter and processing establishments](#) exists.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and please continue to consult regularly the [AAFC website](#) for updates. This week, we added information on how to participate in our ongoing COVID-19 information sharing stakeholder calls, and additional Qs&As on interprovincial trucking and scientific research.

Industry Engagement Division / Division de la consultation du secteur
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada / Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada
Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada