



December 10, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

Thank you for your leadership over the past months to help Virginia navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, which we know has been an enormous task. We particularly appreciate the federal and state governments' continued support for and recognition of the food and agriculture industry as an essential component of the nation's infrastructure, and we are grateful for the steps that public health officials at all levels of government have taken to protect the safety of meat and poultry industry workers.

I am writing today on behalf of Perdue Farms' 21,000 employees—including 3,081 across multiple facilities in Virginia—who have been working tirelessly through the pandemic to ensure America's safe and reliable food supply. We understand that confronted with limited supply and a vast need, vaccine distribution is being prioritized in a manner that will achieve the greatest public health impact, and we appreciate that you have already taken steps to ensure meat and poultry processing plant workers are prioritized in receiving a COVID-19 vaccination.

We also appreciate the deference the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has shown in allowing states to determine prioritization of vaccine distribution, but as a company that employs meat and poultry industry workers in 15 states, many of whom live in one state but work in another, we believe the CDC and state governments can collectively play an important role in working together to coordinate policies.

For this reason, we are writing to you, the CDC, and all the governors of states where Perdue has operations to urge you to place not only meat and poultry workers, but also their families and co-habitants, at the top of the list as vaccines are distributed to those listed in Phase 1b. To truly stop the spread of this virus, and to protect the men and women who continue to support our economy and food supply through their essential work, meat and poultry employees—and those who live with them—must be able to receive a vaccine as quickly as possible.

In addition, many of our facilities are located near state borders, which means our employees, their neighbors and their families, often live in one state but commute to work in another. For this reason, a patchwork of state policies that prioritizes different groups may do little to stop community spread if people are traveling between states on a frequent basis. We know that you along with other governors have expressed the necessity of close coordination and clear delineation of roles between state and federal governments throughout this process, and we hope that this request is viewed as supportive of that perspective.¹

¹ <https://www.nga.org/advocacy-communications/letters-nga/executive-committee/nga-leadership-letter-requesting-white-house-meeting-on-vaccine-distribution/>

Perdue Farms is uniquely situated in the industry and communities in which we operate to support vaccine distribution and education efforts. The vast majority of our processing facilities are equipped with onsite Wellness Centers, staffed by local health care professionals, where we would be able to provide the vaccine to our associates. However, inconsistent policies between states where our associates work and live will only add to confusion and will potentially be detrimental to vaccine participation. We are asking that you and your neighboring governors coordinate with one another and establish similar policies to address these issues. We also believe the CDC can assist in this effort, and we have urged the agency to help ensure consistency in policy, practice and outreach.

Finally, we know that health officials have an immense challenge ahead in educating the public on the importance of the vaccine. Our teams communicate daily to a diverse workforce in which more than a dozen languages are spoken. We also have deep relationships in the communities our associates call home, having worked directly with local political, religious and business leaders. We stand ready to support the CDC and state governments in the important work of education and information dissemination through direct communication to our associates, but also through a broader education effort in their communities.

Our associates have been on the front lines since the beginning of this pandemic, providing our country with a healthy, nutritious, and safe food supply Americans have come to expect. Perdue Farms responded swiftly to the threat of COVID-19 in the U.S. to protect our associates, and has strived to be a good public health partner in Virginia, which we believe is evidenced by the fact that illness rates at our facilities have been recorded at lower levels than the surrounding areas. In addition, the CDC toured many of our facilities in May and found our safety protocols and mitigation steps to be “best in class.”

Perdue will continue to exceed the requirements and recommendations for COVID-19 safety protocols to protect our associates. We appreciate your consideration of this request, and we thank you for your continued guidance and leadership.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Day". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Randy" and last name "Day" clearly distinguishable.

Randy Day, CEO
Perdue Farms