

Farming Transformed by COVID-19 Crisis

Almost overnight in March 2020, U.S. schools, offices and restaurants closed, farm contracts were canceled, in-person gatherings were limited and entertainment activities were curtailed. All to curb the spread of COVID-19. Extension reached out to help farmers comply with new regulations and quickly find new buyers for large quantities of perishable produce.

Here are some examples of that work:

- **Utah** Extension and community members raised donations to purchase crops, meat and eggs from farmers. Over 700,000 pounds of farm-fresh, locally produced food was purchased from farmers and distributed to food pantries and 605 live sheep were donated to the Navajo Nation.
- When restaurants closed due to COVID-19, Oregon's \$700 million seafood industry scrambled to find new markets. **Oregon** Sea Grant Extension created an educational campaign showing consumers how to prepare locally harvested seafood at home.
- To encourage farmers to sell their products to rural grocery stores, **Minnesota** Extension built a toolkit that covers laws and methods of selling and buying local foods.
- **Georgia** economists estimated chicken and turkey growers in the state lost about \$175 million to COVID-19. The poultry industry used the estimates to request federal emergency assistance.
- To sell direct to consumers, farmers got help with sales methods and communication strategies from **Vermont** Extension. Small vegetable farms are seeing a boost in online orders.
- The LSU AgCenter Farm to School program in **Louisiana** published an online directory and map of farms, farmers markets and distributors selling farm and seafood products directly to consumers.
- Guidance on COVID-19 policies and procedures from Purdue Extension enabled produce auctions to continue safely in **Indiana**.
- **Minnesota** Extension provided best practices for reducing COVID-19 risks on farms via videos in English, Hmong and Spanish.

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Small-scale immigrant farmers get guidance during COVID-19 crisis

*As new COVID-19 safety regulations were issued, **California** Extension alerted immigrant farmers. Because many of the small-scale farmers had trouble obtaining personal protective equipment and supplies, Extension gave them COVID-19 kits containing reusable masks, hand sanitizer, bilingual Cal OSHA guidelines for employers regarding COVID-19 and a resources sheet listing where to buy the enclosed items. Farmers selling at farmers markets and roadside stands were given signs illustrating social distancing and other safety requirements to display for customers. Extension arranged for a nonprofit organization to buy produce from the small-scale farmers to distribute to older people and other vulnerable community members. To help the offset financial losses from unsold specialty crops, Extension helped Asian and Latino farmers complete English-language disaster aid applications.*