



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

May 5, 2020

Re: Executive Order 13917 Delegating Authority Under the Defense Production Act with Respect to the Food Supply Chain Resources During the National Emergency Caused by the Outbreak of COVID-19

I am heartened to see that companies and local communities are cooperating in restoration of plant activities in accordance with the guidance for their operations jointly issued on Sunday, April 26, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) regarding worker health and safety. I write now to exhort you to follow those examples and with respect to any current or proposed actions that may lead to a reduction in the Nation's meat and poultry food supply. Executive Order 13917 signed by President Trump on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, delegated to the Secretary of Agriculture the powers of the President under the Defense Production Act to take all appropriate action to ensure America's meat and poultry processors continue operations.

Maintaining the health and safety of plant employees in addition to ensuring continued operations and a plentiful food supply during this unprecedented time is paramount. Our Nation's meat and poultry processing facilities and workers play an integral role in the continuity of our food supply chain. Effective immediately, meat and poultry processing plants should utilize the guidance issued on Sunday, April 26, 2020, by the CDC and OSHA specific to the meat and poultry processing industry to implement practices and protocols for safeguarding the health of the workers and the community while staying operational or resuming operations.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) mission is to inspect meat and poultry products to ensure that they are wholesome and safe. For this reason, USDA is partnering with OSHA and CDC as they have the authority and expertise over public health and worker safety issues for plant employees.

Meat and poultry processing plants contemplating reductions of operations or recently closed since Friday May 1, and without a clear timetable for near term resumption of operations, should submit written documentation of their operations and health and safety protocol developed based on the CDC/OSHA guidance to USDA at foodsupplychain@usda.gov. Plants should resume operations as soon as they are able after implementing the CDC/OSHA guidance for the protection of workers. USDA will continue to work with plants, the CDC, OSHA, and state, tribal, and local officials to ensure facilities are implementing practices consistent with the guidance to keep employees safe and continue operations. Again, I exhort you to do this; further action under the Executive Order and the Defense Production Act is under consideration and will be taken if necessary.

We thank you for your dedication to ensuring that your employees will be able to continue working at your facilities to provide Americans with an abundant, healthy, and safe food supply.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sonny Perdue", is positioned below the "Signed," text. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Secretary Perdue

An Equal Opportunity Employer