

Napoleon Bonaparte is often credited with the quote, “An Army marches on its stomach.” With that, he acknowledged that food is one of the most essential elements to survival.

We are fortunate in North Carolina to have a strong agricultural industry, which means consumers have access to fresh, local foods. Agriculture and agribusiness represent our state’s leading industry and while we continue to navigate through this unprecedented global pandemic, we remain focused on keeping farms, agribusinesses and allied industries operating with minimal interruptions. Many people in the state and beyond rely on our farmers and our agribusiness companies, and I know they are up to the challenge.

The food supply chain works in a well-established rhythm, with each sector from production to distribution playing a critical role in meeting consumer needs. We know successful production leans heavily on such essential partners as fertilizer manufacturers, ag chemical companies and potting mix makers. This outbreak will demand we remain flexible and adaptive – qualities that I know our agricultural community have called on time and time again.

Together we will overcome any obstacles we may face going forward. Please reach out if you have issues of concern. I can assure you we are continuing to monitor the changing landscape of this pandemic and what it means for our state.

At the department, we are:

- monitoring issues with H2A workers
- identifying essential functions of our labs with the focus on keeping ag moving forward, i.e.
 - Agronomic Services nematode lab
 - Necropsy services at our Veterinary labs
 - Other animal diagnostic services
 - Food safety services
- communicating with federal and state agencies about agricultural concerns and needs. Specifically, we are asking the federal government to streamline its processes to make sure we can continue with our business/functions.
- offering what guidance we can to agritourism farms, wineries, farmers markets and roadside stands.

To keep everyone in the loop, we have a COVID-19 link on our homepage at www.ncagr.gov, where we will provide departmental updates on what is open, closed, cancelled or rescheduled. I encourage you to check that link often to stay up to date.

Arm yourself with knowledge. There are many good resources available, including these from the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>; the N.C.

Department of Health and Human Services at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>; and N.C. State University at <https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/covid-19-resources/>

These are trying and stressful times, but I know we will get through this. I pray for your well-being and safety.