

We are now nearly a month into food and agricultural workers being eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine, and I want to encourage the agriculture community to sign up to take the shot if they have not done so already.

I have received my vaccine already and feel better knowing I am helping to achieve herd immunity from this deadly virus.

As an essential industry, a healthy workforce is critical to agriculture and agribusiness. At a department level, we have advocated for agriculture and agribusiness to be given priority status for vaccinations because of the critical nature of the work we do.

To help farmworkers get vaccinated, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Farmworker Vaccination Plan takes a team approach, using staff from farmworker health clinics, N.C. Cooperative Extension, local health departments and community health workers. These teams will be reaching out to farm workers, farm labor contractors and farmers to facilitate vaccination.

I would encourage you to talk to your workers about the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations and share information with them that has been developed by DHHS and local health departments. You can find links to information in Spanish and English on our website at www.ncagr.gov. Just click on the COVID-19 link on the front page.

In addition to sharing information, DHHS suggests farmers can create a list of names and birthdates of farmworkers who are interested in getting a vaccine, and make sure they have some form of ID with their first and last names on it. This can be a foreign document, and it will be used for registration purposes only.

COVID-19 has created many challenges for agriculture, but our farm community has quickly adapted to be able to continue to meet the needs of consumers. I am hopeful as more and more people are vaccinated, that we can return to meeting in person, return to our workstations and return to the events, activities and family gatherings that bring us so much joy.

We are moving in the right direction and I pray we get there soon.