

Message from Under Secretary Greg Ibach

TO: All Employees

FROM: Greg Ibach, USDA Under Secretary

SUBJECT: Message from Under Secretary Greg Ibach

DATE: March 23, 2020

Colleagues,

I hope that you have had the opportunity to try and make yourself and your family feel as settled as you can. Your health and well-being are at the top of my mind, and I encourage you to take the steps you need to adjust to these new circumstances.

The uncertainty of this time has proven to me several things. First, the MRP team is dedicated, resilient and remarkably adaptable. Second, USDA's mission has never been clearer – as people across the country prepare for longer than normal periods at home, the work of USDA employees ensures they have the food to feed their families and supports a vital part of our economy. And third, that despite new challenges and dynamics that change almost daily, the MRP team can always be relied on. Because of your dedication and ability to adapt in the face of these challenges, services we deliver to our customers have continued and the support you provide to U.S. agriculture has been steadfast. Some of your efforts will never be known to the greater population but know that your hard work has not gone unnoticed. Your continued determination to deliver mission critical services ensures human and animal safety, and makes it possible for food to move from the farm to kitchen tables.

Many of us with roles that allow an option to telework have begun to do so, myself included, and I know those of us now teleworking are keeping pace and working hard to ensure business continues. I am grateful we have the technology and support from our IT colleagues to keep in regular contact. It's especially important for us to use the tools USDA has provided to communicate and stay in touch while working remotely.

To the many MRP employees who cannot telework and must report to their regular work locations, Secretary Perdue said it best when he called you heroes. I thank you, and I'm thankful for you. Your work is essential for the country in this unprecedented time – you are keeping the food supply chains working. I, along with AMS and APHIS leadership, am committed to doing everything I can to make sure you feel safe and supported. If you have concerns about being able to safely do your work, please talk with your supervisor.

For areas with shelter in place orders, Attorney General William Barr recently directed the U.S. Attorneys to work with local and state law enforcement to ensure federal employees in essential roles can commute to and from work, as well as to inspections or other locations as needed, following all Centers for Disease Control guidance. The essential functions USDA provides allow you to continue traveling to your worksite. Please make sure you have your USDA Personal Identification Verification (PIV) card with you as you commute and travel between locations, and let your supervisor know if you have any questions or concerns.

I encourage you to keep communicating your needs, concerns and questions with your supervisor and with each other. We will continue to adapt, and we will get through this together.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to your fellow employees, USDA and the American people.

Greg