

*News Release***Ontario Helps Farmers and Agri-food Operators Keep Workers Safe During COVID-19**

April 8, 2021

Investment will protect provincial food supply

WOODSTOCK — The Ontario government is providing \$10 million to allow more farmers and agri-food operators to purchase personal protective equipment, enhance cleaning and disinfection and redesign workstations to better protect workers. This announcement is part of the [2021 Budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy](#).

"It is critical that we take every step possible to protect worker health and safety and ensure the province's food producers can continue operating," said Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. "The men and women on our farms and in the agri-food sector are essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic and deserve our support and appreciation."

Under the new Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program, farms and agri-food businesses that hire three or more employees will be eligible for funding. Additional businesses and workers will be eligible including corn detassellers, transporters, hatcheries, and primary processing (e.g., cutting, cleaning, packaging, storage and refrigeration of raw plant foods to prevent food from spoiling before it reaches consumers).

"The OFVGA appreciates the continued funding to help offset some of the additional costs associated with ensuring the health and safety of farm workers during the COVID-19 pandemic," says Bill George, Chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association. "The health of our workforce is number one priority, as without these critical employees' fruit and vegetable farmers would not be able to continue producing food for the people of Ontario."

"Extending funding and access to this program will help address the concerns we've heard from farmers regarding cost and availability of personal protective equipment," said Peggy Brekveld,

OFA President. "OFA appreciates the efforts of the Ontario government to deliver this program, and we encourage farm businesses struggling with PPE shortages to utilize these resources to protect the health and safety of our essential workforce."

The funding will help farmers who experience unexpected costs for short-term or temporary housing and transportation as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak among on-farm employees. In addition, increased flexibility has been built into the program to ensure it can respond to emerging issues and risks.

Detailed program information and application forms will be available when the intake opens on April 22, 2021 and cover costs retroactive to March 13, 2021. Applications will be accepted while funding is available or until November 30, 2021. The approval process has been simplified and will be expedited to help support workplace health and safety in the agri-food sector.

QUICK FACTS

- Last year's [Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program](#) (EAWPP) committed \$26.6 million to help farmers and other agri-food places with expenses related to protecting workers against COVID-19.
- Ontario is encouraging the use of rapid antigen point-of-care tests by agri-food businesses, including primary agricultural production, food and beverage processing and key distribution centres. Businesses who are interested in participating can contact omafra.labour@ontario.ca for more information on how to join this free program.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- [Enhanced Agri-food Workplace Protection Program](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [2021 Budget - Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy](#)

CONTACTS

Avi Yufest

Minister's Office

avi.yufest@ontario.ca

Christa Roettele

Communications Branch

519-826-3145

OMAFRA.media@ontario.ca

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

<http://www.ontario.ca/omafra>

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99 Wellesley Street West 4th floor, Room 4620 Toronto ON M7A 1A1