



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

### **MDARD, MI Pork and Beef Producers adjusting for COVID-19 to ensure continuity of meat supply** *Consumers urged to shop as they normally would*

**LANSING, MICH.** Michigan's animal agriculture leaders today responded to state and national news of processor shutdowns that some fear will create food shortages around the country.

In particular, the leaders said Michigan is working quickly to help ensure grocery stores are able to continue to offer ample supplies of pork and beef.

"Michigan's animal agriculture industries, like every business and every industry around the country, are making adjustments to their businesses to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Gary McDowell, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

"While this could lead to some near-term speedbumps, everyone should recognize these changes will deliver long-term supply chain strength and, most importantly, improved safety for workers throughout the agricultural industries."

Leaders from the Michigan beef and pork industries said processing in Michigan has slowed and occasionally stopped briefly in recent weeks as they install new safety measures for employees.

"Worker safety is job one," said George Quackenbush, executive director of the Michigan Beef Industry Commission. "A safe and healthy workforce is the key to bringing us back to full production. And we know it's important that we get this right, so we don't have to do it twice."

Mary Kelpinski, chief executive officer of the Michigan Pork Producers Association, urged shoppers to resist panic buying of meat products in the weeks ahead.

"We have determined that with production facilities continuing to function and plenty of meat in cold storage around the state, consumers should expect to continue to see meat products in grocery stores," she said. "The only way we could encounter a problem is if consumers start panic-buying. We want everyone to know that production in Michigan remains strong. Don't buy more than you need."

The two industries issued a formal statement to consumers, which is below.

#### **Joint Statement on Status of Michigan Meat Industry**

*COVID-19 has changed everything about how people come together. The meat industry, like everyone, has been adapting to these new challenges.*

*Michigan's farmers are among the most productive in the United States. Together, beef and pork farmers feed millions of Michiganders and Americans. Our processors lead the industry in food safety. We are committed to supplying wholesome meat products consumers rely upon.*

*The impact of this pandemic has not been easy, and it is not over. While Michigan's meat supply chain may experience occasional and temporary suspensions of operations, these breaks are necessary to implement new worker safety measures.*

*We are focused on prevention protocols to keep the food supply moving and ensure the health and welfare of employees and animals. We applaud the extraordinary steps the industry is taking to ensure worker safety, including COVID-19 testing, temperature checks, use of personal protective equipment and social distancing of employees.*

*One thing we can all do to help each other during this time is avoid panic-buying. Buying only what you need will ensure families across the U.S. can continue to enjoy the safe and nutritious protein they know and love.*

*The meat and livestock community is committed to delivering safe and high-quality products to consumers and is working diligently to return to full capacity as quickly and safely as possible.*

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://CDC.gov/Coronavirus).

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Media contacts: MDARD: [Jennifer Holton](#), 517-284-5724

MI Beef Industry Commission: [George Quackenbush](#), 419-261-2058

MI Pork Producers Association: [Mary Kelpinski](#), 517-282-0970

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