



PRESS RELEASE

CPMA Pleased with Government Exemption for Temporary Foreign Workers from COVID-19 Travel Ban

March 21, 2020 (Ottawa, ON) – On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, CPMA, along with over 20 other agriculture organizations across Canada, submitted a [Temporary Foreign Worker Program \(TFWP\) COVID-19 Agri-food Risk Management Plan](#) to the Prime Minister’s Office. This plan supports the entry into Canada of temporary foreign workers, within the agriculture stream and seasonal agricultural worker program, essential to the agriculture industry, while taking necessary precautions to address the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canada’s primary agriculture sector alone relies on access to approximately 60,000 international farm workers to help address a persistent labour shortage of more than 76,000 workers each year. Initial estimates suggest approximately 10,000 workers are in Canada to date, representing only a small fraction of the workers needed to plant labour-intensive crops like fresh fruit and vegetables.

On Friday, March 20, the Government of Canada announced [exemptions to the air travel restrictions for foreign nationals who have already committed to working, studying or making Canada their home](#), and travel by these individuals will be considered essential travel for land border restrictions. Among these individuals are seasonal agricultural workers and all other temporary foreign workers, vital to Canada’s agriculture industry.

“CPMA fully supports the Canadian Government’s proactive measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Ron Lemaire, CPMA President. “As we address this pandemic as a unified country, we must also focus our attention on food security. Public Safety Canada has identified the food sector as one of the ten critical infrastructures required in the National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure, and it is important that we ensure the functionality of the agriculture industry to feed Canadians. With this in mind, the industry-led TFWP COVID-19 Agri-food Risk Management Plan was developed to ensure the safety of Canadians and the continuity of our agri-food supply.”

The update from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) acknowledges that “Allowing foreign workers to enter Canada recognizes their vital importance to the Canadian economy, including food security for Canadians and the success of Canadian food producers.”

CPMA would like to reiterate, as stated in the update from IRCC, those affected by these exemptions should not try to travel to Canada immediately. The Government will announce when the exemptions are in place, which IRCC anticipates will be early this coming week.

For more information on CPMA's efforts to support the produce industry's operations with regards to the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as resources for businesses and consumers in the produce industry, visit [CPMA's COVID-19 Updates page](#). This page continues to be updated multiple times per day as the situation evolves.

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About the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA):

Based in Ottawa, Ontario, CPMA is a not-for-profit organization that represents a diverse membership made up of every segment of the produce industry supply chain who are responsible for 90% of the fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada. CPMA is fortunate to represent a sector that is both a significant economic driver for communities and that also improves the health and productivity of Canadians.