

# Agriculture and Coronavirus in 2021

Allison Crittenden  
Director, Congressional Relations



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®

# New Administration, New Approach

- Executive Order on Protecting Worker Health and Safety.
  - Launch national program for targeted OSHA enforcement related to COVID-19 violations.
  - Direct OSHA to examine if emergency temporary standard is needed for COVID-19 mitigation.

# OSHA Findings

- DOL Inspector General Report
  - Recommends OSHA issue Covid-19 specific safety rules.
  - Claims requirements better protect Americans from exposure to the coronavirus.
- All signs point to OSHA issuing ETS by March 15<sup>th</sup> deadline.



# Travel Limitations

- Proclamation limiting travel from several countries, including South Africa.
  - Approximately 5,000 H-2A employees come from South Africa.
  - Specialized skills.
- Worked with Biden Administration to ensure National Interest Exception applied to H-2A workers from South Africa.



# Consulates

- Hearing reports South African consulates are experiencing delays, which means delayed worker arrivals.
- Small percentage of H-2A worker population.



# Pandemic Affect on H-2A Arrivals

Figure 2. H-2A Position Data by Quarter, CY 2019 vs CY 2020



# Takeaways

- Despite the challenges the pandemic has brought to farmers who rely on skilled workers from other countries, H-2A program demand continues to grow.
- South Africa travel limitations are minor compared to the 2020 concerns with the Mexican consulates.



# Unemployment Assistance

- DOL issued new guidance that clarifies workers' rights to "refuse employment that will jeopardize their health" and still qualify for jobless aid.





# Vaccines

- Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Prioritization
  - Frontline essential workers in Phase 1b.
  - Large number of frontline workers.
  - State and local authorities can sub-prioritize.
  - Vaccine demand exceeds supply.



# Agricultural Worker Vaccine Considerations

- Travel from other countries or other states.
- Second dose complications.
  - Ensuring same brand.
  - Side effects.



# Pandemic Shutdowns

- Farmers know about COVID while making planting decisions for 2021.
- Country is trending more open.
- Expect a more stable supply chain.



# Questions

