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Homeland Security – *UPDATED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 30*****
(Updated information shown in yellow shading)

- **U.S. Health Officials Provide Update on H1N1 Virus (Swine Flu); WHO Raises Alert Level to 5 as Some Foreign Countries Ban U.S. Meat Products:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that as of April 29, 109 human cases of a new strain of A/H1N1 influenza (*commonly, but mistakenly, called “swine flu”*) had been diagnosed in the United States, including the first death – a 23-month-old Mexican child who had recently traveled to that country succumbed in Texas. The agency said five of the 109 U.S. cases have required hospitalization thus far. During a conference call on April 29 with the NGFA and other organizations and companies from the food and agriculture sector, a CDC official said the situation was “rapidly evolving” and that “few conclusions can be drawn at this time about how serious” it may become. Of the 109 U.S. cases officially confirmed thus far in 11 states, 50 are in New York City; 26 in Texas; 14 in California; 10 in South Carolina; two each in Kansas and Massachusetts; and one each in Arizona, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada and Ohio. The CDC official projected that it will be six months before a specific vaccine likely will be available to treat the new strain of A/H1N1, which is a quadruple influenza virus that contains a mixture of genetic material from a Eurasian version of the swine influenza virus, plus avian and human influenza viruses. Until then, existing influenza antiviral drugs will be available to treat the disease. In that regard, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on April 27 issued an order allowing the distribution of Relenza and Tamiflu to treat influenza in large segments of the U.S. population, despite current label restrictions on their use.

Separately, the World Health Organization (WHO) late on April 29 raised its Pandemic Alert Level to Phase 5, which indicates human-to-human spread of the virus in at least two countries in one WHO region. WHO’s Phase 5 declaration is intended to send a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that time is short to finalize the organization, communication and implementation of planned mitigation measures. As of April 29, WHO said nine countries officially have reported 148 cases of the A/H1N1 virus. Of those, Mexico has reported 26 confirmed human cases of infection, including seven deaths. That’s far fewer than 159 deaths in Mexico that have been confirmed or tentatively linked to the disease thus far in the media, believed to reflect the lag time in confirming and reporting the cases to WHO. WHO said the following countries thus far have reported laboratory-confirmed cases with no deaths: Austria (1), Canada (13), Germany (3), Israel (2), New Zealand (3), Spain (4) and the United Kingdom (5).

Travel Advisories: The CDC and other U.S. government agencies have issued travel advisories urging that all non-essential travel to Mexico be avoided, calling the influenza situation in Mexico “very sobering.” The agency noted that suspect clinical cases of the influenza virus have been reported in at least 19 of Mexico’s 32 states, and that some of the U.S. cases have been linked to individuals that traveled to Mexico. The CDC said it is “concerned that continued travel (by U.S. residents) to Mexico presents a serious risk for further outbreaks (of the virus) in the United States.”

Safety of U.S. Meat Products: Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has issued several public statements reiterating the safety of U.S. pork and other meat products. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) states there is no evidence that U.S. swine are infected with the new virus, despite active monitoring and surveillance. Further, there is no evidence that humans can contract the virus by handling or consuming pork products. USDA is encouraging pork producers to intensify existing and long-standing bio-security practices to protect their herds, including not loaning equipment or vehicles to other farms; not bringing swine from outside sources back to the farm if they could have come into contact with feral swine; permitting only essential workers and vehicles to enter the property; and

having employees disinfect shoes, clothes, hands, vehicles and equipment upon entering and leaving the farm.

Trade Disruptions: USDA and FDA officials told the NGFA and other agricultural and food groups today that they have not imposed any restrictions yet on imports of food or agricultural products (including meat and poultry) from Mexico or Canada because of the A/H1N1 virus. But USDA said that science-based U.S. policy – which reflects WHO and World Animal Health Organization (OIE) recommendations – has not prevented nine countries from imposing import restrictions on U.S. meat and poultry products. Heading the list of offending countries is Russia, which banned all imports of pork, beef and poultry exports from, or transshipped through, California, Kansas, New York, Ohio and Texas. China has banned all fresh-, frozen- and heat-treated pork and pork products from, or transshipped through, the same five states. Russia also banned imports of U.S. pork from eight other U.S. states (Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma) if it has not been thermally treated. Ukraine also banned pork imports from the United States and other affected countries. Information on foreign countries’ restrictions on imports of U.S. agricultural and meat products may be obtained from USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service website by [clicking here](#).

Secretary Vilsack and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk responded by issuing a statement warning that such trade restrictions are inconsistent with guidelines issued by the OIE. The U.S. government’s arguments were buttressed by the OIE, which stated, “There is no evidence that this virus is transmitted by food. Currently, only findings related to the circulation of this virus in pigs in zones of countries having human cases would justify trade measures on the importation of pigs from these countries.” OIE went on to add: “No current information on the...disease in Mexico or the United States supports a link between human cases and possible animal cases, including swine,”

Information Resources: NGFA members may find the following information resources on A/H1N1 useful:

- **[Pandemicflu.gov:](#)** This consolidated U.S. government website is designed to provide access to all relevant U.S. government information on various influenzas, including A/H1N1, avian influenza and others.
- **[Centers for Disease Control Website:](#)** Updates currently are being posted at 11 a.m. daily on confirmed cases of H1N1, as well as other information (including travel restriction advisories).
- **[U.S. Department of Agriculture Website:](#)** Thus far, USDA has posted a series of questions and answers on H1N1 and its interaction with swine health and transmission to humans.
- **[Food and Drug Administration Website:](#)** FDA said it will be posting information on emergency use authorizations it will be granting for use of certain antiviral products and diagnostic tests for the influenza.
- **[WHO Website:](#)** WHO’s website provides daily updates on confirmed A/H1N1 cases worldwide, the agency’s current Pandemic Alert Levels and travel advisories.
- **[Draft Industry Pandemic Continuity-of-Operations Plan:](#)** On the NGFA website, a draft template of a Pandemic Continuity-of-Operations Plan has been posted that the NGFA helped develop last year as part of the joint government-private sector partnership known as the Food and Agriculture Coordinating Council. The NGFA serves as one of the three private-sector co-chairs of the council, comprised of representatives from federal, state and private-sector associations and firms that focus on further enhancing the security of U.S. agricultural and food facilities and promote food defense. The draft guide was developed for a broad spectrum of the food industry, so some portions may not be relevant to all grain, feed and grain processing firms. But it does contain useful elements that NGFA-member companies may wish to consider.