

Commissioner Nikki Fried & FDACS Launch Bilingual Farmworker Vaccine Education Campaign

Tallahassee, Fla. – With the COVID-19 vaccine becoming available for at-risk populations in Florida, **Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried** and the **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** today launched a bilingual vaccine education campaign to encourage COVID-19 vaccination among Florida’s farmworkers and agriculture community.

A recent study found that food and agricultural workers are [among those most at risk of death](#) from COVID-19, facing a 39 percent increase in excess mortality during the pandemic, the highest of all sectors studied – **including a 59 percent increase for Hispanic/Latino food and agriculture workers**. Farmworkers are also more susceptible to respiratory diseases like COVID-19 and frequently lack health coverage. Commissioner Fried has [strongly advocated](#) that the Governor include farmworkers and agriculture personnel in the critical infrastructure category of the vaccine rollout’s next phase.

The education campaign, created in partnership with the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), includes a safety video featuring Commissioner Fried and the Centro Campesino Farmworker Center, printable materials, and events available in both English and Spanish. [The campaign toolkit can be downloaded here.](#)

“Florida’s farmworkers are critical to a safe, healthy domestic food supply upon which 150 million Americans rely to feed their families,” said **Commissioner Nikki Fried**. “That’s why we’re encouraging Florida’s farmworkers and agriculture community to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it’s available to them. Getting the vaccine will not only help farmworkers stay safe, but their communities as well. I thank UF/IFAS, Centro Campesino, and others for helping spread the word about these life-saving vaccines to some of our most susceptible essential workers.”

“We are pleased to partner with Commissioner Fried and FDACS to help Florida’s agriculture workers protect themselves against the negative effects of COVID-19,” said **Dr. Saqib Mukhtar**, Associate Dean and Program Leader, Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Florida. “The vaccine is proven safe and effective, and we encourage everyone in Florida’s agriculture community to get the information they need – with an elevated risk from COVID-19, it’s vital to their health and safety.”

“At Centro Campesino, we recognize that farmworkers are vital to the production of a safe, healthy domestic food supply for Florida and the country, and we understand the devastating effects of COVID-19. It’s essential that we stand in solidarity and do everything we can to provide the tools and knowledge to stay well,” said **John Martinez**, Executive Director of Centro Campesino Farmworker Center. “We appreciate the opportunity to work with Commissioner Fried and her department to encourage Florida’s farmworkers and all essential workers to get the COVID-19 vaccine – it’s critical to keep themselves, their families, and their neighbors safe.”

“The Farmworker Association of Florida is grateful for those in government who understand the vulnerability and risks farmworkers face under the COVID-19 pandemic, and who prioritize their protection as essential workers,” said **Antonio Tovar**, Executive Director of the Farmworker Association of Florida. “Commissioner Nikki Fried shows once again that Florida agriculture depends on farmworkers, and they need reliable information and tangible support. We continue our demands to prioritize farmworkers’ vaccination, as the CDC has recommended. While some in our population can stay home, most essential workers continue to put their lives on the line without the support and recognition they deserve.”

Background: Throughout the pandemic, Commissioner Fried has worked to ensure farmworkers are supported. In September, **Commissioner Fried** and FDACS launched a [heat illness safety campaign](#) to bring awareness to the devastating effects of heat illnesses. Also in September, FDACS launched a [nine-part video series](#) with COVID-19 safety guidance in both English and Spanish for farmworkers. Topics included best practices on mask wearing, effectively sanitizing hands and work surfaces, and strategies to physically distance during work, transportation, and after work hours. The video series can be viewed [in English](#) and [in Spanish](#), and a printable version of the safety guidance can be [viewed and downloaded here](#).

In October, **Commissioner Fried** and FDACS coordinated with the **University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences** (UF/IFAS), the **Florida Division of Emergency Management** (FDEM), and local county governments [to provide COVID-19 testing](#) for farmworkers in key agricultural counties. This included outreach materials in English, Spanish, and Creole and a Spanish-language social media video for distribution.