

Merced County Needs to Shut Down Foster Farms and Immediately Adopt Employee Protections

Merced, CA -- Right now, eight families are grieving the loss of a loved one and 358 workers have tested positive for COVID-19 due to reckless and negligent behavior by Foster Farms. On Aug. 27, the Merced County public health officer issued an order to close the Foster Farms facility due to the company's unwillingness and inability to protect the health and safety of their workers and the surrounding community. The [statement](#) issued by the Department of Public Health states that health officials have visited and issued public health directives to comply with safety protocols yet the facility failed to take action.

Despite ordering Foster Farms to close, employees were notified to report to work for their next scheduled shift. Community leaders have now learned that the County of Merced and Foster Farms have met and reached an agreement to NOT shut down the facility. This decision unnecessarily places the health and safety of every worker and that of the surrounding community at risk. It is unclear how Merced County arrived at this decision and what factors were even considered as discussion have occurred behind closed doors. We also encourage an investigation by the State of California.

Meanwhile, the Livingston Foster Farms facility, and others in multiple counties across the Central Valley, must take the right steps to protect workers' health and income during this crisis. To help minimize exposure to workers Foster Farms, and other facilities, must:

- Screen workers before they enter the workplace
- If a worker becomes sick, send them home and disinfect their workstation and any tools they used.
- Move workstations farther apart.
- Install partitions between workstations using strip curtains, plexiglass, or similar materials.
- To limit spread between groups, assign the same workers to the same shifts with the same coworkers.
- Prevent workers from using other workers' equipment.
- Mandate that all workers wear face coverings when entering, inside, and exiting the facility. Masks to be provided by the employer.
- Encourage workers to report any safety and health concerns to their supervisors.

"No se porque no sacan la verdad, hay muchas más personas infectadas de lo que se ha anunciado. No hay reglas para protegerse dentro del sitio y no avisaban cuando alguien sale infectado," said a former employee who decided to leave his job at Foster Farms due to lack of health and safety protections.

Merced County: shut down Foster Farms immediately and take all necessary steps to protect employees. Lives are at risk. There must be no delays.

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