

NOVEMBER 10, 2022

# FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Releases National Security Memorandum to Strengthen the Security and Resilience of U.S. Food and Agriculture

Today President Joe Biden signed National Security Memorandum-16 (NSM-16) to strengthen the security and resilience of United States food and agriculture. The National Security Memorandum builds on the Biden-Harris Administration's ongoing work to ensure that American families have access to safe, affordable food, that America's producers are able to get their goods to market, and that the American food and agricultural system is better prepared for threats that may harm the health of crops and livestock and cause shocks to the cost or availability of food.

Agriculture, food, and related industries contribute about five percent of the United States gross domestic product (GDP), representing over one trillion dollars per year and more than 19 million jobs. Inherently vital to American life, wellness, health, and economy, this critical food and agriculture sector has, in recent years, faced a range of deliberate and naturally occurring threats to its security and resilience:

- In June 2021, one of the world's largest meat suppliers was forced to halt North American operations due to a ransomware attack;
- Over the past year, highly pathogenic avian influenza has spread across the United States, threatening the health and wellness of our poultry and contributing to increases in the price of everyday groceries; and
- Russia's unjust war in Ukraine has caused grain shortages and is threatening global food security.

Food and agriculture systems and supply chains are designated as critical infrastructure, primarily owned and operated by private sector and non-Federal entities, and can be vulnerable to disruption and damage from domestic and global threats. To strengthen the security and resilience of this vital sector, President Biden approved NSM-16. NSM-16 supersedes Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (Defense of United States Agriculture

and Food) (HSPD-9), issued in 2004, and provides presidential guidance to (i) identify and assess the threats of greatest consequence; (ii) strengthen partnerships to enhance the resilience of the workforce; and coordinating our government to act more efficiently and effectively, and (iii) enhance preparedness and response. This work builds upon ongoing actions by the Administration, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to strengthen the resilience of U.S. food and agriculture supply chains.

**Identify and Assess the Threats of Greatest Consequence:** The NSM outlines a process for the Federal Government to identify and assess threats of greatest consequence to the food and agriculture sector. This includes:

- Redefining the way that chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats are defined, in relation to the food and agriculture sector specifically;
- Focusing on cyber threats and the consequences of the climate crisis;
- Enhancing threat and risk assessments, disseminating needed information with relevant Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments and private sector partners; and
- Mandating a continuous process to assess and mitigate the risks and vulnerabilities of the food and agriculture sector.

**Strengthen Partnerships to Enhance the Resilience of the Workforce:** The private sector owns and operates the majority of the food and agriculture sector and, in conjunction with SLTT officials, is generally the first line of response when an incident happens. This NSM sets out to strengthen the resilience of the food and agriculture workforce, who are essential critical infrastructure workers, by:

- Refining and promoting the identification of, and guidance for, essential critical infrastructure workers in the food and agriculture sector to continue to work safely while supporting ongoing operations during high-consequence or catastrophic incidents; and
- Supporting the development, provision, and promotion of relevant education at all levels to train the existing workforce and build a pipeline of future essential workers.

**Enhance Preparedness and Response:** This NSM positions the Federal Government to develop, maintain, assess, enhance, and encourage the adoption of systems and activities that will harden the Nation's ability to prepare and respond to an agricultural incident by:

- Training Federal, SLTT, and private sector partners together on how to prepare for and respond to threats to the food and agriculture sector;
- Integrating Federal, SLTT, private, and academic laboratories to increase testing and diagnostic surge capacity and standardizing diagnostic and reporting protocols to facilitate timely information sharing;
- Enhancing our National Veterinary Stockpile, which is the animal-health equivalent of the Secure National Stockpile; and
- Strengthening our plant disease response capability with the National Plant Disease Recovery System.

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