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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Minnesota Crop Improvement Association Enacts Covid-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA, June 29, 2020 Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) has strengthened its response to the Covid-19 pandemic by developing and implementing a Covid-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan for its workplaces. The plan follows health and safety guidelines issued by state and federal government authorities. With the goal of mitigating potential disease transmission, the plan addresses the following topics: screening for symptoms; handwashing; respiratory etiquette; social distancing; cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation; deliveries and vendor protocol; onsite inspections; communications and training; and traveling.

One aspect of MCIA's Covid-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan is to share the plan with MCIA's customers. Therefore, the full text of the plan is published here:

COVID-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan

MCIA is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our employees. To help ensure this, the following COVID-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan has been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All staff members are responsible for implementing the plan laid out within the following COVID-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan.

MCIA's goal is to mitigate the potential transmission of COVID-19 in our workplaces and communities. Only through this cooperative effort can MCIA establish and maintain the safety and health of its workers and workplaces. Employees are the most important asset of MCIA. We are serious about your health and safety while continuing our business operations.

MCIA's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines, federal OSHA standards related to COVID-19, and Executive Order 20-48.

Screening and Policies for Employees Exhibiting Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

Staff members are asked and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, including shortness of breath, dry cough, muscle and body aches, low grade fever, etc. The following policies and procedures are being implemented to assess an employee's health status prior to entering the workplace and for staff to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms. If a staff member or a member of their household is sick or experiencing symptoms, they are asked to stay home, and work from home, if possible.

Please notify your supervisor about your condition. Practice quarantine when required by a health care provider. Return to work only after being symptoms-free for 72 hours. MCIA will follow instructions from state health officials in case a staff member is tested positive for COVID-19, including testing for the rest of the staff, and isolation of infected staff members by asking them to stay home in self quarantine. *Staff with COVID-19 symptoms such as listed below will be sent home immediately.*

If you are entering the MCIA Building, you affirm the following:

- a) You are not tested positive for COVID-19.
- b) You are not waiting for results for your COVID-19 test.
- c) You don't have a new or worsening cough
- d) You don't experience shortening of breath
- e) You don't have body aches
- f) Your body temperature is not at or over 100°F
- g) You don't have chills
- h) You don't have running nose
- i) You don't have a headache
- j) You don't experience loss of taste or smell

Handwashing

Staff members are asked to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their workday, prior to and after any mealtimes, and after using the toilet. Visitors in the workplace are required to wear a mask and wash or sanitize their hands immediately upon entering the facility. The staff member that opens the door is requested to remind the visitor to sanitize or wash their hands and provide a mask if needed. Hand-sanitizer dispensers (that use sanitizers of greater than 60% alcohol) are at entrances and locations in the workplace to be used for hand hygiene in place of soap and water.

Respiratory Etiquette

MCIA has disposable masks available to staff and visitors entering the building. Staff members and visitors in the building are asked to wear a mask when walking throughout the building. Staff members are asked to cover their cough or sneeze; customers and visitors are being instructed to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face, in particular their mouth, nose and eyes, with their hands. Dispose of tissues in provided trash receptacles and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward.

Social distancing:

MCIA has provided accommodations such as laptops or computers, and related accessories as well as IT support to facilitate work from home. In addition, in order to reduce the number of employees at the MCIA office at any one time, some members of the staff are on alternate schedules as arranged by the manager of their respective department. For now, on a given day, less than 50 percent of the staff is present in the building. When working in the building, many staff members have their dedicated office, cubical space, or work stations that are well distanced from others. Employees are asked to use social distancing of six feet from others while in the building. Meetings are organized via conference call or virtual meeting platforms such as GoToMeeting or Zoom.

The break area has been re-organized to maintain social distancing. Only one staff member is asked to occupy one table and keep safe distance. Common areas of use, such as the mail machine, the coffee/water station, the microwave, and refrigerator, etc., are wiped regularly. The staff is asked to do its part in keeping commonly used areas disinfected. Clorox wipes are supplied and available for use. MCIA vehicles are supplied with masks and disinfectant wipes or hand sanitizers.

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation

Regular housekeeping practices are being implemented, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of work surfaces, equipment, and areas in the work environment, including restrooms, break rooms, and conference rooms. The staff is asked to do its part and regularly clean and disinfect high-touch areas. Disinfectant wipes are available to use. Windows can be opened for better ventilation and to circulate fresh air.

Deliveries and Vendors Protocol

Entry into the MCIA building is limited and all entry doors remain locked. COVID-19 safety protocols are posted at each entry to the building. Masks are required for entry to the building. Visitors are required to wash hands or use hand sanitizer upon entry of the building. No one shall enter the MCIA building if showing symptoms of COVID-19. Staff members are asked to remain 6 feet from visitors during interactions.

Onsite Inspections

Staff members are asked to follow all safety measures within this policy while working with clients. Make a routine of calling client ahead of time and inform them about your upcoming inspection; ask for any precautions to be followed. Make sure you are wearing a mask to protect yourself and others; gloves can be worn on an as-needed basis.

Communications and Training

This COVID-19 Policy and Preparedness Plan is shared with all staff members and posted on the MCIA website. Pertinent guidance and insights have been communicated since early March with the entire staff. MCIA is seeking staff training options related to the pandemic. As new and relevant information becomes available, it will be shared with the MCIA staff and our customers.

Traveling

Use extreme caution when it is necessary to travel. Person-to-person meetings should be done virtually when possible. When travel and in-person meetings are necessary, contact the party ahead of time to ensure they are willing and able to meet with you.

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Since 1903, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) has provided programs and services to meet the needs of an ever-changing agricultural world. These services include seed certification, organic certification, foundation seed production, and a variety of customized third-party verification programs for seed and identity-preserved grains. MCIA operates from facilities on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus with field staff located throughout Minnesota.

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If you would like more information on this topic please contact MCIA President/CEO Fawad Shah at 612-625-7766 or mncia@mncia.org.