



TO: Landscape Industry Businesses and Customers

RE: Pine Straw Shortage and Scan Warning - Spring 2021

Several factors have created a short-term shortage of pine straw this spring.

1. **Unprecedented Demand:** As we surpass the one-year anniversary of Covid 19, cities around the country are rushing to reopen. The demand for pine straw has reached an unprecedented level making it nearly impossible to meet. We are seeing demand as much as 25-50% higher than 2020.
2. **Labor Shortage:** A lack of available workers is at an all-time high. Federal guest worker visa programs are overrun with requests and the program reached its visa limit very quickly. Without American workers returning to the workforce and with the guest worker visa limit set far below what is necessary, many companies lack the necessary workers to complete the harvest in a timely manner.
3. **Freight Shortage:** The US freight market is facing significant factors, specifically, substantial increases in freight rates as businesses across the nation rush to reopen and higher prices at the fuel pumps. As a result, we are seeing a significant increase in cost as well as fewer available drivers to deliver product.
4. **Weather:** The month of February experienced consistent rain in the fields which greatly limited production. Being unable to produce product in the month of February, the greater pine straw industry entered the Spring with extremely low levels of inventory to meet peak demand.

The product is available in the fields, but it will take time to work through the current backlog of demand. We encourage everyone to be patient and understanding as we work together through these unprecedented times.

We would also like to remind you to be wary of a scam involving door-to-door sales of pine straw or mulch.

Law enforcement has received complaints of individuals claiming to have left-over pine straw or mulch from a previous job and offering it to the consumer at a heavily discounted rate. After the consumer agrees to the recommended number of bales, the scammer lays down fewer bales than agreed upon and then tells the consumer he will need to lay down an additional number of bales to cover the yard at a cost of hundreds of dollars more. If the consumer refuses, the scammer tries to intimidate the consumer. Sometimes consumers give in to these scare tactics just to get the scammer to leave.

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