



Please note that the COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving and information in this guidance document will be added to and amended as available.

Version: March 30, 2020 (Adapted from OGVG document)

This document contains important information for ALL GROWERS who already have foreign workers on farm or anticipate the arrival of workers once the travel restrictions are amended. It is imperative that growers take all steps to protect the of the Canadian public and our edible horticulture workforce.

Growers must take make themselves aware of the federal government's [Guidance for Employers of Temporary Foreign Workers Regarding COVID-19](#) and any other requirements that are placed by your [local health unit](#). Any additional clarification on federal or provincial guidance will be provided as available.

Doing your part will ensure the safety of the public, the workers, and safeguard the future of the program.

It is critical that all growers take **immediate** steps to ensure our current workforce is supported and protected and are prepared for when workers begin to arrive. The following are some best practices you should consider implementing **immediately** at your operation.

Healthcare & Sanitation Practices

- Establish COVID-19 monitoring protocols for existing employees and encourage them to self-monitor and report any concerning symptoms. ([Ontario self-assessment questionnaire](#), [self-monitoring factsheet](#), [Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#))
- Make sure your employees know the importance of reporting their symptoms early and understand there will not be penalties/repercussions for reporting.
 - If any of your workers exhibit COVID-19 symptoms: fever, dry cough, sore throat, muscle aches, diarrhea, nausea, isolate them immediately and contact your local Community Health Center for support.
 - Do not allow them to come to work.
 - Do not send them to a walk-in clinic or hospital unless their symptoms are rapidly becoming severe.
- Increase on-farm sanitation practices in all common areas ([see factsheet](#)). Focus on high-touch areas like door handles and switches. The best approach is to use soap and water and scrub down surfaces. The same approach you take for plant viruses is effective against human viruses. (Please note that VIRKON is not approved for food-contacting surfaces) Make sure your workforce has access to products to disinfect their living accommodations.
- Make use of Telehealth, OTN and online/phone health services.

Growers are encouraged to work with their local health unit to ensure they have appropriate plans in place to reduce the chances of spread through appropriate isolation and social distancing measures.

Growers that have employees that are exhibiting symptoms should reach out to their local health unit.

Contact information for all of Ontario's health units can be [accessed here](#).

Telehealth Ontario can also be contacted at 1-866-797-0000.

Social Distancing in the Community

Social distancing is a critical component of reducing the spread of this virus. Workers should be encouraged to remain on farm and not to travel as much as possible.

- Encourage social distancing by providing on-farm services:
 - Provide computer access for online shopping and delivery. The computer should be cleaned/disinfected between uses.
 - Provide grocery/meal delivery options, Click-and-Collect, etc.
 - In the event that someone might get sick you may want to have the following on hand: juices, canned soups, crackers, water, ginger ale, teas, etc.
 - Medication delivery. Consider stocking frequently requested items such as Tylenol, cough syrup, inhalers, etc.
 - Facilitate on-site or online banking options for international money transfer. We urge you to work with your bank to develop an online banking 101 and provide computer access to workers to facilitate this. Please ensure congregation around the computer is minimized by setting a schedule. Institute a regular disinfection schedule for all common areas.
 - Explore options with local faith-based organization to provide on-farm services.
 - Offer [mental health supports](#) to your workforce during these times of stress.
- Discourage workers from going into town unless absolutely necessary.
 - If necessary, limit the size of the group traveling together (no more than 4) and **encourage them to leave a distance of 2m (6ft) between themselves and anyone else, both within stores but also if congregating in public spaces.**
 - Encourage your workforce to designate shoppers who can collect supplies for several workers or coordinate the shopping for all of your workers.
 - NOTE: As many retailers have instituted maximum item purchases per person to limit hoarding, the OFVGA is working to encourage retail chains to allow larger purchases when the intent is to buy for the needs of many individuals. Please do not abuse this.
 - Inform workers of the seriousness of the situation and indicate the potential for service providers and retailers to ask additional questions about recent travel, and encourage them to follow new or seemingly unusual rules that have been implemented to lower the risk of transmissions within businesses.
 - Inform workers of the potential that law enforcement officers may take steps to disperse groups of individuals, including workers, in public spaces.
 - If workers must leave the farm, it is advisable that they carry a letter from the employer to indicate they have completed a 14-day isolation period and that they are on official work-related tasks. [A template letter can be found here.](#)

Social Distancing in the Workplace/On-farm Residence

- Biosecurity protocols for both human and plant viruses should be **strictly** enforced.
- As recommended for all members of the public, all non-essential travel of your employees and non-essential visits from suppliers, vendors etc. should be halted.
- Growers, their family, and any domestic labour and anyone interacting with workers and in the public should be mindful of their own social distancing efforts, and limit non-essential travel, including retrieving farm inputs, groceries, etc., to limit risk of COVID-19 exposure to their workers.
- In production and packing facilities, consider strategies to ensure a minimum of 2m (6ft) is maintained between all employees. Where this is not possible you may need to erect physical barriers, enhance sanitation frequency and/or provide personal protection equipment to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Increase social distances in residences where possible by increasing housing amenities (i.e. establishing additional locations and/or additional portable residence) and establish bunkhouse sanitation and anti-congregation protocols ([see website](#)). You may consider erecting physical barriers in bunkhouses if increased distancing is not possible.
- Allow only essential visitors into the bunkhouse.
- Establish meal, shower and laundry schedules to limit the number of people in a room.
- Ensure the workforce understands the importance of not sharing household items like dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, cigarettes, vaping products or other personal items. After use, these items should be washed with soap in warm water.

Biosecurity and Emergency Response

- Limit all non-essential visitors to the farm.
 - Post signage at the farm entrance with contact information to discourage unexpected visitors from entering the property.
- Develop an emergency response plan to manage your workforce should someone exhibit symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. You may need to secure alternative housing arrangements for employees to whom you provide housing.
- Pending confirmation from the federal government, you may want to start assessing locations at which you can provide full isolation for your incoming workforce. Any such location should be able to provide access to food and essential services without requiring the new arrivals to leave the isolation zone.

Informing your Workforce

- Encourage your workforce to download the HUB Connect App for ongoing updates and select Ontario if their region is not listed. [Google](#) [Apple](#) (especially for workers in the Leamington-Kingsville area)
- Make sure your workforce is fully informed on hand washing, coughing/sneezing, social distancing, face-touching and disinfection procedures. Make sure they are aware of what symptoms they should monitor for and what the procedures are for self-isolation and reporting.
- Ensure that your foreign workforce is aware of their access the healthcare support, either through OHIP or COWAN/private insurers as applicable.

- Specific messaging for international farm workers is being provided. This will be provided in multiple languages. A general COVID-19 information sheet is available in many languages on the [Ontario government website](#).
- Factsheets in several languages can be found [here](#) and in the links below. The WHO Thai resource site has a wealth of materials. These are critical for your workforce and we encourage you to make these factsheets available around your farm.

It is CRITICAL that all growers ensure their workforce understands the importance of these measures and that they are taken seriously. Thank you.

Additional Resources for Farmers:

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association – [COVID-19 and Seasonal Workers](#)

Canadian Federation of Agriculture - [Resources](#)

Farm Credit Canada - [Increase to Lending Capacity](#)

Canadian Horticulture Council: [Information Centre](#)

United Fresh: [Resource Page](#), [LinkedIn Group](#)

Canadian Produce Marketing Association: [Resource Page](#)

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council: [Information and Tips on COVID-19, AgriHR Toolkit](#) (with pandemic related materials and policies)

Ontario Federation of Agriculture - [Statement on COVID-19 Pandemic, Mental Health and Wellness](#)

Food and Beverage Ontario: [Updates](#)

Canadian Government: [Updates](#)

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - [Information for Industry](#)

Canadian Food Inspection Agency: [Update Page](#)

Ontario Government: [Updates](#)

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers: [TFAW and COVID-19](#)

Windsor Essex County Health Unit: [Resources and Updates](#), [Temporary Worker Information](#)

World Health Organization resources: [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Thai](#)

Additional Resources for your workforce:

The following can be found [here](#). Documents will be added as identified.

1. WECHU Cough and sneeze guide EN
2. WECHU Hand washing guide EN
3. WECHU Help to Prevent EN, FR, SP
4. Public Health Ontario Cleaning surface EN
5. Public Health Ontario Self-isolation EN
6. Public Health Ontario Self-monitoring EN
7. WHO COVID graphic EN
8. TMHC A-Practical-Guide-about-Stress SPA
9. MOH Coronavirus Info Sheet EN, FR, SP
10. MMHA Supporting Parents SP
11. MMHA Depression SP
12. MMHA Anxiety SP
13. Gov. Canada know-difference-self-monitoring-isolation-covid-19 EN
14. Gov. Mexico Social Distancing x2 SP
15. Gov. Mexico COVID SP
16. Mexican Consulate COVID x2 SP