

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 23, 2020

Dear Grower,

This email 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 health and welfare of the Canadian public and our greenhouse workforce.

While we wait more details from the Federal government regarding travel restriction exemptions and arriving workers under SAWP and TFWP, 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.

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. You can facilitate this as much as possible by providing on-farm services for your employees. At this point in time we have yet to receive the details of the isolation protocol for arriving workers. In the meantime, the following are some best practices you should consider implementing **immediately** at your operation:

- Establish COVID-19 monitoring protocols for existing employees and encourage them to self-monitor (see [screening protocol](#) and [Ontario self-assessment questionnaire](#))
- Develop an emergency response plan to manage your workforce should someone exhibit symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. This might require you to secure alternative housing arrangements for employees you provide housing for.
- Encouraging social distancing by providing on-farm services:
 - Provide computer access for online shopping and delivery
 - Provide grocery/meal delivery options, Click-and-Collect, etc.
 - Medication delivery
 - On-site or preferably online banking 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.)
 - Making use of Telehealth, OTN and online/phone health services (Further details to follow)
- Discourage workers from going into town unless absolutely necessary.
 - If necessary, limit the size of the group traveling together 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.
- 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.
- Increase social distances where possible by increasing housing amenities and establish bunkhouse sanitation and anti-congregation protocols ([see website](#)).
- Increase on-farm sanitation practices in all common areas ([see website](#)).
- Encourage your workforce to download the HUB Connect App for ongoing updates and select Ontario if their region is not listed.
- Offer mental health supports to your workforce during these times of stress ([see website](#)).
- 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.

Your local Health Unit will have a wealth of information on their website for employers and employees. The following is an example from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit: <https://www.wechu.org/cv/workplaces>.

Information from the Ontario government can be found here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus> and the federal government's page is here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html#a2>.

Factsheets in English, French and Spanish are attached with basic information on Helping to Prevent COVID. These are critical for your workforce and we encourage you to make these factsheets available around your farm. In the near future we will be making multilanguage employee focused resources available to you to distribute to your workforce.

In addition, the following COVID-19 information video should be provided to the Spanish speaking workforce: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN4TMQYJ-zU&feature=youtu.be>

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