

COVID-19 Resources for the Washington Produce Industry

Resources

FDA

- COVID-19 Food Industry FAQs and Industry Guidance
- Stakeholder March 18, 2020 Call Recording

CDC

- COVID-19 General Guidance
- Interim Guidance for Business and Employers

Washington State Department of Agriculture

- COVID-19 Disease WSDA Produce Safety Program Information
- General COVID-19 News Resources

Washington State Department of Health

- COVID-19
- Workplace and Employer Resources and Recommendations

OSHA

- Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

We understand the Washington produce industry is facing many challenges in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. We have collected some information from the WSDA, FDA, WDOH and CDC that may be helpful to growers and packers.

This information serves as a resource to help you gather information and stay informed on COVID-19 related information. Resources linked in the sidebar were used to compile this information, and each can provide helpful information for farms and packinghouses as they evaluate their current operations.

The food supply chain is viewed as critical infrastructure.

Food and Agriculture operations are considered [critical infrastructure](#) under the Department of Homeland Security. FDA is coordinating with industry partners across the food supply chain to monitor its status now and in the future. If you are having any logistical challenges preventing you from maintaining your supply chain, please reach out to FEMA National Business Emergency Operations Center (nbeoc@fema.dhs.gov). Given that food production and manufacturing is considered critical infrastructure, it is important to coordinate with local or state authorities where restricted movement or shelter in place have been ordered ([FDA](#)).

Is there risk of COVID-19 spread through contaminated produce or packaging?

Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission ([FDA](#)). The FDA does not anticipate that food products would need to be recalled or be withdrawn from the market because of COVID-19.

Facilities are required to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria, such as maintaining clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces, adhere to health and hygiene practices, and train their workers so they recognize and notify symptoms of illness.



What should I consider when reviewing my company's sick leave policy?

Ensure sick leave policies are consistent with public health guidance. Currently, the CDC is recommending that employees isolate at home until they are fever free for 72 hours or at least 7 days since the symptoms first appeared (whichever is longer) AND other symptoms have improved (such as coughing or any difficulty breathing) ([CDC](#)).

Work with your local health department regarding screening of employees for symptoms of COVID-19. It is important to consider risks posed by temperature monitoring with thermometers that touch skin.

In cases where an employee tests positive for COVID-19, what steps should the grower/packer consider?

Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality. Sick employees should follow the CDC's guidelines [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). Employers should consult with the local health department for additional guidance ([FDA](#)).

Surface sanitation will be key in the future.

While the primary responsibility in this instance is to take appropriate actions to protect other workers and people who might have come in contact with the ill employee, facilities should reevaluate their cleaning and sanitation efforts to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces ([FDA](#)).

There is a list of EPA-registered disinfectant products for COVID-19 [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 list](#) that have qualified under EPA [emerging viral pathogen program](#) for use against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

FDA will refocus mission and alter expectations in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

FDA will focus mission-critical or for-cause inspections within the United States during the COVID-19 crisis. FDA will postpone routine surveillance inspections. In most cases, FDA plans on preannouncing their domestic inspections. They are delaying all foreign inspections through April and will determine the future approach on a case-by-case basis for mission critical or for-cause foreign inspections ([FDA](#)).

Additionally, FDA announced on March 17th that they were halting the requirements for an on-site audit, for supplier verification activities under the Preventive Controls for Human and Animal Feed as well as Foreign Supplier Verification programs for Importers of foods for humans and animals ([FDA](#)).

Who can I contact if I have questions?

Questions to the FDA may be submitted at www.fda.gov/fcic

Washington State Department of Agriculture Produce Safety Program may be reached at ProduceSafety2@agr.wa.gov or at (360) 902-1961

Any logistical challenges to maintaining your supply chain may be submitted to FEMA at nbeoc@fema.dhs.gov

If a worker shows symptoms of COVID-19, notify your local health department
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions>