Agricultural Workers in Crop and Livestock Production

COVID-19 Preventive Measures in the Workplace
Interim recommendations

These measures apply when sustained community transmission has been confirmed by public health authorities. Based on current knowledge, it is known that the disease can be transmitted by asymptomatic people who are carriers of the disease. Therefore, preventive measures are recommended at all times.

Any resumption of non-essential services must be carried out in such a way as to control the transmission of COVID-19. In order to avoid a resumption of transmission, several conditions described here must be met.

The preventive measures recommended by the government for the general population and the basic recommendations for all workplaces [in French only] apply, unless more restrictive measures are specified.

Special attention must be given to pregnant workers and to workers with certain health conditions. Please refer to the following recommendations:

- Pregnant or nursing workers
- Immunosuppressed workers [in French only]
- Workers with severe chronic diseases [in French only]

Adjustment of work methods and schedules

To protect the health of employees and others in the workplace, employers and workers are asked to adhere to the isolation guidelines (returning from travel, COVID-19 cases, case contacts) and to take into account other constraints (voluntary school attendance, limited public transit, etc.):

- Encourage teleworking.
- Allow flexible hours.
- Review tasks and arrange for them to be carried out alone, with a small team or in accordance with the new distancing criteria.
Triage of symptomatic workers

- Advise workers not to come to work if they present symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (see text box below). A symptom questionnaire can be completed before the start of each work shift for all workers.

- Systematic temperature taking prior to workplace entry is not recommended. If carried out, this measure should be used cautiously and with full knowledge that its ability to detect cases of COVID-19 is limited, for the following reasons, among others:
  - Not every case of COVID-19 presents with fever;
  - Fever fluctuates greatly throughout the day, creating a risk of false negatives;
  - Taking fever-reducing medications (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen) or consuming cold or hot drinks may falsify results;
  - Some temperature measurement devices, such as non-contact devices, may have a significant margin of error;
  - In addition, the personnel taking temperatures must be adequately trained and protected (gloves, procedural mask and protective eyewear);
  - It is also necessary to advise clients not to enter workplace areas if symptoms are present.

- If a worker or client starts experiencing symptoms in the workplace:
  - Have them wear a procedural mask and isolate them in a room designated for this purpose;
  - Call 1 877 644 4545 for instructions;
  - The symptomatic person should consult the [Self-Care Guide](#) for further details. Leave a hard copy of the guide in the isolation room.

- Workers who have been in contact with the symptomatic person should self-monitor for symptoms while waiting for public health instructions and call 1 877 644 4545 if they develop symptoms.

### COVID-19 Symptoms

If you have the following symptoms, call 1 877 644-4545:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 of these symptoms</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>2 of these symptoms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onset or worsening of a cough</td>
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<td>A general symptom (muscle pain, headache, extreme fatigue or significant loss of appetite)</td>
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<td>Fever (temperature of 38°C or higher, taken orally)</td>
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<td>Sore throat</td>
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<td>Difficulty breathing</td>
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<td>Diarrhea</td>
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<td>Sudden loss of sense of smell without nasal congestion, with or without loss of sense of taste</td>
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Hand hygiene

- Promote and practice hand hygiene by providing workers with all necessary supplies (running water, soap, hydroalcoholic solutions, touchless trash cans, disposable tissues or paper towels, etc.).
- Wash hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- Use a hydroalcoholic solution (at least 60% alcohol) for at least 20 seconds if soap and water are not available.
- At a minimum, all workers should be able to wash their hands on entering and leaving work, after touching frequently touched surfaces (switches, door handles, microwaves, handrails, etc.), before and after breaks and meals, when using the washroom, and when entering and exiting elevators.
  - Refer to the information provided by Health Canada.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth with hands or gloves.
- In general, wearing gloves to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 is not recommended unless otherwise advised, as it may produce a false sense of security. Gloves can become contaminated and thus contaminate the wearer who touches their face or contaminate the various surfaces touched.

Respiratory etiquette

- Respect and promote respiratory etiquette: coughing into one’s bent elbow or into a tissue and blowing one’s nose into a tissue that is discarded in a lidded trash can immediately after use, then washing hands as soon as possible.

Physical distancing and minimization of contacts

The more contact between different persons, the greater the risk that one of these contacts will be with a contagious person and, therefore, the greater the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Thus, minimizing the number, frequency and duration of contacts, as well as respecting a physical distance of two metres at all times between all persons are the most effective measures and must be prioritized:

- Opt for teleworking.
- Reduce activities to those deemed essential.
- Keep the number of workers present on site to the absolute minimum required.
- Limit the number of persons in the workplace (workers, clients or any suppliers or subcontractors) by reorganizing work and services.
- Opt for small work teams that remain consistent over weeks or even months, to avoid the multiplication of interactions:
  - Always keep the same work teams – have as few workers as possible on these teams;
  - Keep the same workers at the same workstations in so far as possible and ensure that workers are assigned to a single worksite;
  - Avoid direct contact (handshakes, hugs).
Reorganize physical workspaces and work activities so as to respect the minimum two-metre physical distance between persons:

- Modify work methods;

- Avoid in-person meetings and gatherings. Opt for alternative methods such as videoconferencing, or pre-recorded telephone or video messages. If meetings are absolutely necessary (e.g., for security reasons):
  - Reduce the frequency and duration of in-person meetings to the minimum necessary in a space large enough to respect the two-metre distance between individuals at all times.

Limit exiting and moving about to what is strictly necessary.

If possible, restrict or prohibit the presence in the facility of individuals who are not on active duty in the plant (visitors, fishermen, etc.).

**Note:** Passing by someone without contact, in a corridor or on a staircase, for example, represents a low risk.

**Pay particular attention to the following situations**

**Bottlenecks**

- Pay particular attention to areas acting as bottlenecks (e.g., entrance to production areas, cafeteria entrance, areas where time stamps are located, etc.):
  - Avoid lineups of people standing close together in these areas;
  - If necessary, slightly stagger work, break and meal schedules.

- Install easily accessible hydroalcoholic solution dispensers in open areas to avoid installing them where they will create other bottlenecks.

- Turn off the buzzer (bell, chime) announcing the beginning and end of work shifts and breaks.

**Breaks and meals**

- Ensure that physical distancing measures are applied during breaks and meals (e.g., avoid gatherings).

- Remove non-essential objects (magazines, newspapers, knick-knacks) from common areas.

- Ensure workers have access to rooms large enough to allow a minimum two-metre distance between each of them. Arrange for additional rooms if necessary.

- If no other room is available, modify meal time schedules so as to have a limited number of workers in the dining room at all times or ask personnel who can eat at their desks to do so.

- Ensure that the same groups of workers eat at the same time, in the same room, day after day. If workers eat outside the facility, ensure that they respect the minimum two-metre distance between each person.

- Do not share food or objects (e.g., cigarettes, pens or pencils, cell phones, coins or bills). If objects are shared, make sure they are cleaned between users.

- Do not exchange cups, glasses, plates, or utensils; wash dishes in hot water with soap.
Working less than two metres apart

For tasks where it is impossible to maintain a minimum two-metre distance from anyone for more than 15 cumulative minutes in a single work shift (for instance, for crop production areas: harvesting and/or processing of fruits and vegetables, or for livestock production areas: enclosures/buildings where workers are positioned less than 2 metres apart or are in direct contact with one another) adjustments must be made:

- Install an adequate physical barrier to separate the worker from other workers when the two-metre distance cannot be respected: refer to the recommendations of the IRSST for details on physical barriers [in French only].
- If it is impossible to implement distancing measures or a physical barrier or while waiting for this to be done:
  - Wearing a quality procedural mask and protective eyewear (goggles with side protection or visor) is recommended;
  - Wearing a quality procedural mask (or PPE) alone is permitted if all colleagues working within two metres of each other also wear the same type of mask and when there is no contact with clients. Otherwise, workers must add protective eyewear.

Tasks already requiring the use of respiratory protective devices

For tasks that already require the use of respiratory protective devices (RPDs) to protect against aerosols or dust, these should continue to be used and should not be replaced by a procedural mask as they are adequate to protect against COVID-19. However, the following measures must still be applied:

- If the work is carried out within two meters of people not wearing a RPD or procedural mask, add protective eyewear or a visor covering the face up to the chin, if they are not already worn.
- RPDs must be worn in accordance with a respiratory protection program and fit tests must be carried out.

Tasks that already require the use of gloves

- Wear gloves when they are usually used for the task.
- If gloves are not usually worn, it is not necessary to wear them to protect against COVID-19 (except for contact with a confirmed case or a symptomatic person). Gloves are generally not recommended to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 unless advised otherwise, as they may cause a false sense of security. Gloves can become contaminated and thus contaminate the persons wearing them or surfaces they touch.

Tasks that already require the use of protective clothing

- Wear the protective clothing usually worn for the task.
- If no protective clothing is usually worn, it is not necessary to add one to protect against COVID-19 (except for contact with a confirmed case or a symptomatic person).

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1 Ideally, masks with compliance testing (ASTM) should be preferred. For details on quality standards and for criteria to help the employer choose the right masks in situations of real or apprehended shortages: document du comité sur les infections nosocomiales du Québec and the document sur le choix des masques de procédure [in French only].
Safe removal of personal protection equipment (PPE)

- Remove gloves (if worn).
- Wash hands with a hydroalcoholic solution.
- Remove protective clothing (if worn).
- Wash hands with a hydroalcoholic solution.
- Remove protective eyewear or visor.
- Wash hands with a hydroalcoholic solution.
- Remove the procedural mask (or RPD) handling it by the elastics.
- Dispose of the mask in a trash can, ideally without contact.
- Disinfect reusable equipment (protective eyewear or visor, RPD) with a product suitable for this equipment.
- Dispose of the bag containing non-reusable protective equipment.
- Ensure that hands are washed with soap and water or use a hydroalcoholic solution.

Measures for workers using vehicles (e.g., trucks, agricultural machinery, company vehicles)

General instructions

- Opt for individual transport in so far as possible.
- Always assign the same workers to the same seats in the vehicle for each trip.
- Remove non-essential objects from the vehicle (e.g., magazines, newspapers, knick-knacks).
- Ensure that work tools remain in the truck box and not in the cabin.
- Do not set the ventilation system to recirculation mode inside the vehicle, but ventilate well by opening the windows, whenever possible.
- Provide workers with a hydroalcoholic solution of at least 60% alcohol or with disinfectant wipes so they can clean their hands when there is no access to soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched vehicle surfaces at a minimum on every work shift and when there is a change of driver or passenger, using the usual cleaning and disinfectant products (dashboard, steering wheel, gear stick, interior and exterior door handles, interior mirror, etc.).

For close contact (that is continuous and unavoidable) between two workers in a vehicle

- Limit the number of drivers in the cabin if possible and opt for consistent teams (avoid frequently changing or rotating workers on a work team) in order to limit the multiplication of interactions. In so far as possible, respect the minimum two-metre distance.
- If it is impossible to respect the minimum two-metre distance between workers in the cabin:
  - Opt for consistent pairings of workers to avoid the multiplication of interactions, i.e., paired workers who work together continuously for weeks, or even months.
• Maintain the same position, driver or co-pilot, for the entire work shift, in so far as possible.
• If consistent pairings are not possible, wear a quality procedural mask.\(^2\)

**Recommendations when transporting more than two workers in a vehicle**

• Arrange the space to avoid any physical contact between workers and, whenever possible, respect the minimum two-metre distance between them. Examples:
  • Block the use of some seats;
  • Leave every other seat empty;
  • Provide for more frequent transport to reduce the number of workers per transport vehicle or consider using a larger vehicle.

• If the minimum two-metre distance cannot be respected, opt for the installation of **physical barriers** between persons that adhere to the safety standards of the SAAQ [in French only]. Refer to the INSPQ information sheet and the IRSST guidelines [in French only] for further details.

• If it is not possible to install a physical barrier, limit the number of workers to one per seat and ensure that all transport users wear procedural masks.

**Agency workers**

• An employer using the services of a personnel placement agency must apply the same protective and preventive measures to these workers as to all workers in their organization.

• The employer must also ensure that the agency complies with public health measures. For more details on the recommendations made to personnel placement agencies, refer to the INSPQ information sheet [in French only].

• For group transport of agency workers, refer to the information sheet on fly-in/fly-out and drive-in/drive-out work [in French only].

**Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW)**

• Refer to the following document: Public Health Recommendations That Must Be Applied to the Reception of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) to Support Agri-Food Activities in Québec in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Accommodations**

**Room arrangements**

• Whenever possible, have only one person per room.
  • If this is absolutely impossible, limit the number of persons to two per room to allow for a two-metre minimum distance at all times.

\(^2\) Ideally, masks with compliance testing (ASTM) should be preferred. For details on quality standards and for criteria to help the employer choose the right masks in situations of real or apprehended shortages: document du comité sur les infections nosocomiales du Québec and the document sur le choix des masques de procédure [in French only].
Restrict each bed to a single user (avoid changing users).
- If this is impossible, make sure sheets and pillowcases are changed, and clean and disinfect the headboards/footboards/sideboards of beds with the usual product between each user.

Ensure proper ventilation:
- If there is a mechanical ventilation system or a centralized air exchanger: operate it continuously in exchange mode with an increased flow rate.
- If possible, air out rooms and dormitories by opening the windows frequently.

The use of CPAP devices (sleep apnea devices) during periods of community transmission of COVID-19 is not recommended (except in single rooms) because of the aerosols produced. However, in the opinion of the attending physician, certain medical conditions may make its use necessary.
- Refer to the following information sheet for more details [in French only].

**Maintenance of rooms and dormitories**

- If possible, encourage each person to clean their own personal space (e.g., headboard, bedside table).
- If housekeeping is done by housekeeping staff, have them perform their tasks when no occupants are in the room or make sure they stay a minimum of two metres from the room occupants.
- Clean with the usual products, paying particular attention to frequently touched areas (switches, door handles, etc.).
- When occupants change, thoroughly clean the room or dormitory and disinfect the bathroom after cleaning.
- Refer to the information provided by the INSPQ [in French only].

**If an occupant has symptoms associated with COVID-19**

- Do not proceed to clean the room as usual and whenever possible, provide the occupant with the materials needed to clean the room themselves before leaving.

**After they leave:**
- Close off the room and wait at least three hours.
- If possible, open the outside windows to increase air circulation in the area before starting to clean and disinfect.
- Refer to the following information sheet [in French only].

**Common areas**

- Respect the minimum two-metre distance.
- Limit the number of workers present at the same time.
- Restrict access to common rest areas.
- Install hand washing stations (with trash cans).
Handling of objects and signing of documents

It is recommended that a protocol for the safe handling of documents be established. Whenever possible, minimize the exchange of hardcopy documents (e.g., sign contracts and delivery slips electronically).

Where hardcopy documents are required:

- Hand over and retrieve documents by placing them on a clean surface, while maintaining the two-metre distance between individuals.
- Do not share pens with others; they must use their own pen.
- Set out pens for clients to keep if they did not bring their own pen to sign documents.
- Clean the pen with a damp cloth and mild soap as needed or with pre-moistened wipes, when soiled.
- When retrieving documents, place them in an envelope and transport them in a document carrier. When submitting the contract, inform the client of the preventive measures that must be respected.

Portable air conditioning and ventilation

- When conditions require it, stand-alone air conditioners and fans can be used with care while respecting certain measures outlined in the following information sheet [in French only].

Cleaning and disinfection of areas and surfaces

- Clean with commonly used products, in accordance with usual maintenance procedures.
  - Refer to the information provided by Health Canada and by the INSPQ [in French only].

Dining room

- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces or when they are visibly soiled (e.g. tables, chairs).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the dining room after each meal period (tables, chairs, fridge handle, faucets and taps, counters, microwaves, coffee maker, etc.).
- Disinfect the dining area at least once a day.

Common spaces and workspaces

- Clean frequently touched surfaces (tables, counters, door handles, telephones, computer accessories, pencils, etc.) at a minimum on each shift, or when a new user takes over the workspace, with the cleaning product normally used.
- **For production lines**, respect the usual hygiene and food safety recommendations of the MAPAQ (scroll to the bottom of the page for links to English versions). Pay particular attention to:
  - Manual controls on production lines (e.g., levers, control handles, buttons).
  - Tools and other devices handled in the course of production activities.
- **For handling activities** (reception and shipping of merchandise), pay close attention to forklift truck controls and pallet truck handles.
Washrooms and changing rooms
- Clean at least every shift.
- Disinfect at least once a day.

For crop and livestock production areas
- Respect the usual hygiene and food safety recommendations of the MAPAQ (scroll to the bottom of the page for links to English versions). Pay particular attention to:
  - Manual controls in the production line (e.g. levers, handles, buttons);
  - Tools and other devices manipulated in the course of production activities.

For tools and work equipment
- At the beginning and end of every shift, clean and disinfect all shared tools and work equipment.

Wearing gloves
- Wearing waterproof gloves is recommended to protect hands from being irritated by the products used.
- Avoid touching the face while wearing gloves.
- When removing gloves, discard them or, if reusable, clean them and allow them to dry properly. Wash your hands immediately afterwards.

Cleaning and disinfection of work areas and rooms used for temporary isolation that have been occupied by infected (confirmed cases) or symptomatic workers
- Close off the work area and the room.
- Clean and disinfect the work area and the room used by the person.
- If possible, open the outside windows to increase air circulation in the area in question.
- Allow sufficient contact time with the disinfectant to inactivate the virus (according to the manufacturer’s specifications).
- Once disinfection is completed, the work area and the room can be reopened.

Washing clothes
- Wash clothing worn at work at the end of each workday in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, using the hottest water setting suitable for these articles of clothing and the usual detergent.
- Avoid shaking dirty clothing.
- This clothing does not have to be washed separately from other clothes.
- Ensure proper drying.
- Ensure that work clothing and gloves are always used by the same worker if they have not yet been washed. Consider increasing stores of spare replacement equipment so it can be washed more frequently.
Dishwashing

- Whenever possible, each user should wash their own dishes (while respecting the minimum two-metre distance).
- Dishes and utensils must be washed with hot water and the usual dish soap.
- A dishwasher can also be used.
- Whenever possible, avoid using spray heads (chef-style faucets) to dislodge food to avoid splashing the face; instead, use pre-soaking or dislodge food residue with a cloth or sponge.
- Wash your hands after handling dirty dishes.

First-aid workers in the workplace

- For more details on the recommendations made to first-aid workers in the workplace, refer to the following information sheet.

Information – promotion – training

- Place posters reminding people of the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing in strategic areas.
- Have a plan for informing and training workers and managers with regard to protective and preventive measures.
- Follow the available online training courses on preventive and protective measures to be taken in relation to COVID-19: COVID-19 et santé au travail [in French only].

Psychological health and prevention of psychosocial risks at work

- In addition to controlling the risks of transmission of COVID-19, it is recommended that attention also be paid to ensuring a psychosocial work environment conducive to psychological health and to taking the necessary actions to prevent worker psychological distress directly or indirectly related to the pandemic.
- Refer to the INSPQ information sheet and the IRSST guidelines [both in French only].

Pandemic contingency plan

- Have a pandemic contingency plan adapted to the specific context of your workplace and see to its implementation: https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/en/document-000969/.

Other references

- Hygiene and food safety FAQ from the MAPAQ (scroll to the bottom of the page for links to English versions).
- Information from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).
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AUTHORS
SAT-COVID-19 Working Group
Direction des risques biologiques et de la santé au travail de l’INSPO
Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail

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GRAPHIC DESIGN
Valérie Beaulieu

LAYOUT
Marie-Cécile Gladel
Direction des risques biologiques et de la santé au travail

TRANSLATION
Nina Alexakis Gilbert
Karl Forest-Bérard, scientific advisor
Nektaria Nicolakakis, specialist scientific advisor
Mylène Trottier, occupational physician, medical advisor
Direction des risques biologiques et de la santé au travail

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