



COVID-19 and the Food Supply

March 19, 2020

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of COVID-19. The California Department of Food and Agriculture, in consultation with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

Local environmental health and public health agencies may have additional guidance and/or requirements regarding these operations in their jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND

Food and agriculture is a critical sector in the critical infrastructure of the nation, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, and it is an essential part of keeping supply chains full and people nourished. The food supply is vital to protect against disruptions that would pose a serious threat to public health, safety, welfare, or to the national economy. The entities that make up the food supply are vast and must prepare for possible impacts of COVID-19 and take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other infectious diseases.

We are gaining more understanding of COVID-19's epidemiology, clinical course, immunogenicity, and other factors as time progresses, and the situation is changing daily. CDPH is in the process of monitoring COVID-19, conducting testing with local and federal partners, and providing guidance and resources to prevent, detect and respond to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in California.

FOOD SUPPLY

As defined by the federal government, the food supply makes up [critical infrastructure](#) from farm to table and includes assets, systems, networks, and functions that provide vital services to the nation. It is essential that federal government-defined critical infrastructure and supply chains are protected, and that all elements pertaining to the food supply remain operational, including a workforce that is vital to production of the food supply.

More information is provided in the [National Infrastructure Protection Plan](#) to help further clarify these critical infrastructure systems.

BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES

Food producers and manufacturers have been required by longstanding federal and state laws and regulations to prevent anyone who is sick or has a communicable disease from handling, processing or preparing food for human consumption. Thus, industries handling food and agricultural commodities are well practiced at this important and general principle of food safety and hygiene. It is important to follow recommendations as set forth by the [CDC](#) as well as those outlined below:

- Maintain diligence in good hygiene, monitor for employee illness, and adhere to social distancing guidelines as possible.
- Adhere to your operations Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP), ensuring that those supervising staff and operations are vigilant in their oversight.
- Ensure adequate frequency of cleaning and sanitizing per [CDC Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection guidance](#).
- Adhere to cleaning and sanitizing frequency of restroom and other high contact areas.
- Consider ways for employees to easily identify themselves (business card, company ID badge) outside of business operations for ease in transportation to and from work while adhering to local ordinances.

According to both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) there is currently no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food or food packaging. The CDC is also reporting that, in general, because of poor survivability of the coronavirus on surfaces, there is likely a very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures.

Labor is a vital component to the food supply, from farm to fork. California has among the highest standards for food safety, which includes worker health and hygiene standards supported by [labor](#) laws that are very specific about paid sick leave for those individuals that may be affected by COVID-19 and unable to work.

For additional information and FAQs please visit:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf

<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>