

1. BE PROACTIVE - PROTECTING YOUR WORKFORCE

A **REMINDER** to all that COVID-19 poses a significant threat to the sector and it is **CRITICAL** that any employee who is exhibiting or has disclosed symptoms, and/or has been in contact with a positive case, be **IMMEDIATELY** isolated and that the health unit or other healthcare provider be contacted. Do not wait to see if symptoms resolve. The longer employers wait, the higher the chance that COVID-19 is spread between workers.

2. GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS / RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS

WSPS COVID-19 Agriculture landing page

To help Ontario get back to work safely, WSPS launched a new COVID-19 microsite: <https://covid19.wsp.ca/>. All COVID-19 resources like checklists, webinars, articles, e-Courses etc. is categorized based on three unique segments found in the workforce today:

1. Businesses open and operating
2. Businesses operating remotely/virtually
3. Businesses preparing to open/returning after shutdown

In addition, resources and information can now be searched and filtered based on a number of different factors including sector, topic, language and more. The following additional resources from WSPS might be of interest as well.

[WSPS Guidance on Health and Safety for Transportation of Workers to Work Locations](#)

[WSPS COVID-19 and Agriculture](#)

[WSPS General H&S Resources for Agriculture](#)

[COVID-19 best practices for farm employers](#)

[Farm visitor COVID-19 screening form](#)

[E-learning course on making your business COVID-19 ready](#)

[Pandemic preparedness checklist](#)

Ontario Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc (OHCOW)

To support employers and migrant farm workers, OHCOW has compiled the following two resources to list available workplace posters and guidance documents. Many posters and resources are available in multiple languages (English, French, Spanish).

1. [Ontario Specific COVID-19 Safety Posters and Sector Documents Relevant to Farming Operations](#)
2. [International COVID 19 Resources for migrant farm workers](#)

Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) Guide to prepare for and manage COVID-19 on your farm

The Canadian Horticultural Council has developed a comprehensive guide summarizing important practices for growers to follow during the pandemic: [Preparing for and managing COVID-19 on your farm](#) (click on the link, or see attached).

Given the recent outbreaks, LICC would like to draw your attention to the following section of the guide:

1. Consider creating cohorts, a.k.a. “teams” or “bubbles” that live, work, take breaks, and transport to and from locations together, thereby limiting interaction to those within the same team or bubble. Cohorts of workers are like a family unit. They can help limit virus spread among a workforce and be valuable if public health agencies need to trace close contacts where COVID-19 positive case(s) are identified.

The implementation of cohorts/teams/bubbles could be a best practice in reducing the risk of spread amongst all workers on a particular operation. This particular approach may also be useful to limit community spread from workers that travel to and from the farm to those living on-farm. Limiting exposure between groups could potentially limit the need for mass isolation of a farm’s workforce.

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) Inspections and Reminders

All growers should consider the following when preparing their workplace to reduce the spread of COVID-19. MLTSD will be inspecting these items during their random audits which are ongoing.

1. Information/Education of workers/visitors
 1. Signs, meetings, policies, training
2. Physical distancing measures
 1. PPE/barriers where not possible, staggered shifts/breaks
3. Screening Measures
 1. For all workers and visitors: symptoms, contacts, travel
4. Cleaning and Disinfection
 1. With an emphasis on high touch
5. PPE
 1. Ensure appropriate supplies in place

You should consider these items in the context of the workplace (field/greenhouse and packing shed), bunkhouse and during transportation.

Post your policies: All employers need to post and communicate COVID-19 policies to workers. These policies should cover how the workplace will operate, including, but not limited to:

- the sanitization of the workplace
- how workers report illnesses
- how to ensure physical distancing
- how work will be scheduled

- screening measures

If an employer is advised that a worker has tested positive for COVID-19 due to exposure at the workplace, or that a claim has been filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the employer is required to notify:

1. the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in writing within four days - this can now also be done by email to mltsd@occillness.notices@ontario.ca ;
2. the workplace joint health and safety committee or a health and safety representative
3. a trade union (if applicable)

If employers have any questions or concerns about what to do, what to send or how to do it, they can call the Ministry's Health & Safety Contact Centre toll-free at 1-877-202-0008. Or send an email to mltsd@occillness.notices@ontario.ca.

The MLTSD COVID-19 website has resources available for farm employers: [Agriculture health and safety during COVID-19](#)

Ontario Min of Health Congregate Housing & Testing Guidance

Employers with bunk housing may find valuable guidance from the Ontario government's guidelines and checklists for congregate housing.

Public Health Ontario: [COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Congregate Living Settings – June 1, 2020](#)

Ont Min of Health: [COVID-19 Guidance: Congregate living for vulnerable populations – May 28, 2020](#)

Ont Min of Health: [COVID-19 Quick Reference Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance – May 28, 2020](#)

3. GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS FOR TFWs

ESDC New Guide for Temporary Foreign Workers

On Thursday May 28, ESDC released a “COVID-19: A Guide for Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada”. Customized for Temporary Foreign Workers and Seasonal Agricultural Workers under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the Guide provides information on: how the disease spreads, what TFWs should know before coming to Canada, rights and responsibilities of TFWs during the mandatory 14-day quarantine period (including employer responsibilities) and post-quarantine, how to access health care and related information, income supports for TFWs in Canada, and contact information for government authorities related to health care, TFW Program compliance, Employment Standards, and Occupational Health and Safety.

The Guide, available in English, French and Spanish, can be found at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/foreign-worker-rights/covid19-guide.html>.

4. PROGRAMS AND FUNDING FOR EMPLOYERS

WSPS CAP-Funded COVID-19 Consulting and Training for Agricultural Producers

The governments of Canada and Ontario are partnering with the Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS), to provide agri-food businesses, organizations and associations with educational resources, tools and consulting services to help them meet COVID-19 health and safety requirements. Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, WSPS will receive up to \$500,000 to deliver two key services.

First, it will develop and introduce industry-specific COVID-19 resources for farm businesses and provincially-licensed meat plants, including a toolkit to help manage the risks of COVID-19 in these operations.

Second, the WSPS will provide consulting services to Ontario farmers, farm organizations and provincially-licensed meat processors to help them COVID-19 occupational health and safety requirements and guidelines. Their Account Managers are available to help you with the Agri-Food Workplace Protection Program - Agriculture Producers, as well as to address your health and safety concerns. Please reach out to [Customer Care](#) to be connected with an Account Manager today.

Additional details will be made available soon at the WSPS website: http://lp.wspss.ca/covid-19_and_farm_workers.html.

PPE Funding

This program provides cost-share funding available to growers to help offset the cost of personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased after May 14, 2020. Full details and the application process can be accessed at:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/cap/capproducers.htm>.

The provincial government has created a PPE Supplier Directory for businesses to reference: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/how-your-organization-can-help-fight-coronavirus/#find-ppe> (and click on “terms of use”). If you are having issues sourcing PPE, please make your commodity board and/or the OFVGA aware of this issue. Supply issues will be relayed to government to ensure that appropriate supplies are made available to fruit and vegetable farms.

Mandatory Isolation Support for Temporary Workers: Frequently Asked Questions

The following FAQs have been developed by the Canadian Horticulture Council.

Question: Should the growers be applying only for workers that have arrived or all their workers that are planned to arrive within the deadlines? There is a rule in the application that you can only have one application open at a time.

Answer: Yes, growers should complete one application, including all anticipated arrivals up to and including June 30. To be eligible for reimbursement, the temporary foreign worker’s date of arrival shall be no earlier than March 26, 2020, and no later than June 30, 2020, the date on which the current special order under the [Quarantine Act](#) is set to expire. **You must submit your claim(s) to the program by August 14, 2020, as late submissions may not be eligible for payment.** **Note:** Claims can be submitted in intervals along the way, or all at once at the end – whatever the grower prefers

Question: I sent in my application form before getting clarity that one only application form is needed per farm and that all workers expected to arrive June 30 should be listed. Can I add to my existing application?

Answer: Yes. Employers can use the following email address: aafc.MISP-PAIO.aac@canada.ca to inform AAFC about any additional temporary foreign workers that need to be added to their original applications.

Question: Will this program get extended passed June 30th if *the Quarantine Act* is extended?

Answer: This is the intention. AAFC indicated the program budget was built to accommodate a potential extension to the quarantine order.

Question: Are in-kind expenses eligible costs?

Answer: Yes – AAFC is working on written guidance on how applicants can claim in-kind expenses.

Question: Are there alternatives to filling in the PDF form? It is inaccessible for some growers.

Answer: Yes, contact AAFC and they will email a non-fillable form or mail a hardcopy to the applicant. Contact them at: Email: aafc.MISP-PAIO.aac@canada.ca Telephone: 1-877-246-4682

Question: Are all of the fields in the application form mandatory?

Answer: No – Fields that are in the form for statistical information gathering on (e.g. NAICS code) are not mandatory. If a grower is unsure about an answer, they can leave it blank.

Question: Are Canadian workers coming in from other provinces eligible?

Answer: The funding under the Mandatory Isolation Support for Temporary Foreign Workers is specific to temporary foreign workers who are subject to federal quarantine requirements and does not include any support for workers moving from one province to another, even if they are subject to provincial quarantine requirements.

Question: The application process specifies that I need to keep my receipts for seven years. Will I be audited and by whom?

Answer: Treasury Board requirements dictate that a process for audits must be in place in order to disburse funds. Should an audit be deemed necessary, AAFC would carry it out.

OFA summary of financial supports available to farms

OFA has developed an on-line summary of financial assistance available to farms. Employers are encouraged to review it to see if any of the programs would be helpful to their circumstances.

<https://ofa.on.ca/resources/summary-of-government-financial-assistance-for-ontario-farm-businesses/>

5. SERVICES FOR EMPLOYERS

Spanish-Language COVID-19 Support for Ontario Farms

Some farm employers find it challenging to communicate with Spanish-speaking workers. For access to a group of Spanish speakers with experience presenting information to Spanish speaking farm workers that can help your farm with Spanish communication using phone/ video chat, call the Intake Coordinator at 519-761-1074 or email: intake.coordinator.ontario@gmail.com. A flier for these Spanish language services is attached.

Reminder: Contract Workers

Just a reminder that if you are employing contract workers through agency or recruiter you are strongly recommended to do your due diligence to ensure these employees have the appropriate paperwork. You should consult your legal counsel on what you can request but requesting SINs and picture ID may be an option. Keep in mind that SIN cards starting with 9 will also need a valid work permit. Requesting the recruiter to sign off that all employees have the appropriate paperwork may be another option.