



## News Release

### ***COVID-19 testing encouraged for all agri-food employees***

For immediate release

Guelph ON, June 17, 2020 – Ontario's fruit and vegetable farmers continue to work closely with the Ontario government and health authorities to protect all essential, front-line, agri-food employees on Ontario farms during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of these efforts, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) is recommending all agri-food employees get COVID-19 testing.

To support testing of agricultural workers, and address concerns workers may have about testing, the OFVGA is launching the following 5-point plan:

- Work with government so that testing be made available on-farm, to decrease the risk of spread amongst workers congregating at central testing locations.
- Work with government to develop and distribute culturally appropriate communications that address stigma and fears associated with COVID-19 and positive status so that workers feel comfortable being tested.
- Work with government, public health officials and growers to distribute communications to workers that make it clear that no worker is at risk of being sent home if they test positive or develop symptoms.
- Work with government to ensure all employees that test positive or are required to isolate have access to WSIB or equivalent wage replacement coverage.
- Work with government to increase the use of active temperature screening of agriculture workers before work begins each day as a best practice by employers.

Based on information available on recent COVID-19 outbreaks on farms, it has come to OFVGA's attention that growers employing workers through provincial recruitment agencies can face an increased risk of an outbreak amongst their workers due to a lack of quarantine and public health protocol enforcement by some agencies. If growers choose to work with recruitment agencies, they should ensure that the agencies are strictly enforcing all quarantine and public health requirements.

"The industry is recognizing that there is a significant gap in oversight with respect to contract workers that move from farm to farm," says OFVGA Chair Bill George. "The OFVGA is prepared to immediately work with government to develop regulations for how these recruitment agencies operate to ensure workers are protected and public health protocols are being enforced."

The OFVGA also strongly recommends that growers implement policies to create separate teams of agriculture workers to those residing on farm and those who do not.

During these challenging times, the OFVGA will continue to work with governments and public health officials to ensure the protection of essential agriculture workers so they can continue to



ensure we have a secure, domestic food supply. The OFVGA continues to work with government so that agriculture worker testing and public health protocols mirror other essential service industries like health care.

More information about Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Programs for agriculture, including employer compliance, can be found on [Economic and Social Development Canada's website](#).

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association is the voice of Ontario's 3,500 fruit and vegetable producers on issues affecting the horticulture sector. Visit [www.ofvga.org](http://www.ofvga.org).

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