

# Best Practices to Minimize COVID-19 RISK While Harvesting Fresh Produce



Currently, there is no evidence that food or food packaging has been associated with the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. The new coronavirus causes a respiratory illness — not a gastrointestinal illness — and foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission. However, it is important to follow food safety practices to help protect workers and customers from this virus.

## BEST PRACTICES

### *Health policies*

Review your farm's health policies and procedures as written in your food safety plan. Now is a good time to emphasize and enforce them.

1. Encourage sick employees to stay home.
2. 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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 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.
3. Practice social distancing. Limit or prohibit farm visitors. Avoid handshakes and close contact with other personnel on your farm. This will reduce the risk of your produce coming into contact with an ill person before it goes to market.

4. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper sleeve or the crook of your elbow. Discard the used tissue immediately after use.

### *Hand hygiene*

1. Signage with handwashing procedures should be posted in appropriate locations to promote hand hygiene.
2. Remember, gloves are never a substitute for washing your hands.
3. Wash your hands properly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when arriving at work, after blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing, after going to the restroom, and before and after eating. Also, wash your hands properly before putting on gloves when working with produce, and after contact with animals.
4. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.



5. Adequately stock hand-washing stations with basic supplies, such as a disposable paper towel, toilet paper, hand-washing soaps and hand sanitizers.

### ***Cleaning and disinfection***

1. Clean and disinfect the food and food contact surfaces, which include your harvesting tools, refrigerators, packing containers and distribution van, using EPA-registered sanitizer products. Follow all the instructions on the label.
2. Clean and disinfect restrooms regularly.
3. Clean and disinfect the break room areas, including tables, chairs, doorknobs, counters and lockers at least once daily.

### **REFERENCES:**

[FDA. Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\).](#)

[CDC. Coronavirus \(COVID-19\).](#)



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