

Hello all:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to develop and while food and food packaging has not been identified as a source or spread of infection, it is important to follow guidance from public health experts to prevent the spread of this virus.

Agriculture and agriculture operations are critical essential activities and Essential Businesses which are permitted to continue operations in the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” proclamation signed by Gov. Jay Inslee. However, Essential Businesses must still implement social distancing and sanitation measures. WSDA understands that this is challenging for many food processing facilities, such as beef packing plants, poultry processing facilities, and fruit and vegetable packing sheds. Production lines are typically fixed facilities with configurations and operating speeds that can make it difficult to provide full distancing among workers, for example.

What you can do

The challenge being asked of the ag community is to do what they can in difficult circumstances. Some of the practices that ag operations are currently implementing include:

- Bilingual educational posters in high traffic areas and handouts that promote hand washing and other hygiene habits.
- Encouraging workers to stay home if they are sick and self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- Increased cleaning and disinfecting of facilities with EPA- approved disinfectants.
- Increased hand wash stations, ventilation, and access to tissues, hand sanitizers, soaps, disinfectants, and disposable towels.
- Cancelling large face-to-face meetings and using emails or texts to communicate with staff.
- Maintaining separation of truckers, vendors and other visitors from employees.

These measures are meant to protect workers, the public and prevent the spread of COVID-19, while still continuing essential operations. Be sure to let your workforce know what you are doing to follow public health recommendations.

Below are several resources that will help you assess your company’s operations to ensure you are doing what you can to join in the fight against this contagious and potentially fatal disease. Please review these materials and contact the agency that created the guidance if you need clarification or have questions.

- [COVID-19 and Food Storage Warehouses](#) [PDF][[Spanish](#)] – WSDA publication
- [COVID-19 and Food Production](#) [PDF] [[Spanish](#)] – WSDA publication
- [Recommendations for Temporary Worker Housing](#) [PDF] – Department of Health publication
- [Educational posters in English and Spanish](#) – Benton-Franklin Health District
- [Coronavirus.wa.gov](#) – State website with additional resources in multiple languages
- [Agr.wa.gov](#) – Ag-specific COVID-19 resources available

WSDA’s role is to regulate food safety laws. If you have questions or concerns regarding food safety, contact us at foodsafety@agr.wa.gov or 360-902-1876. State laws pertaining to public and worker safety are administered by the state departments of Health (DOH) and [Labor & Industries](#) [[Spanish](#)]. Contact those agencies with questions related to public and worker safety.

Thank you for your attention to this important public health matter.

Sincerely,

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