

# COVID-19 FOOD SAFETY FOR SPECIALTY CROP FARM OPERATORS



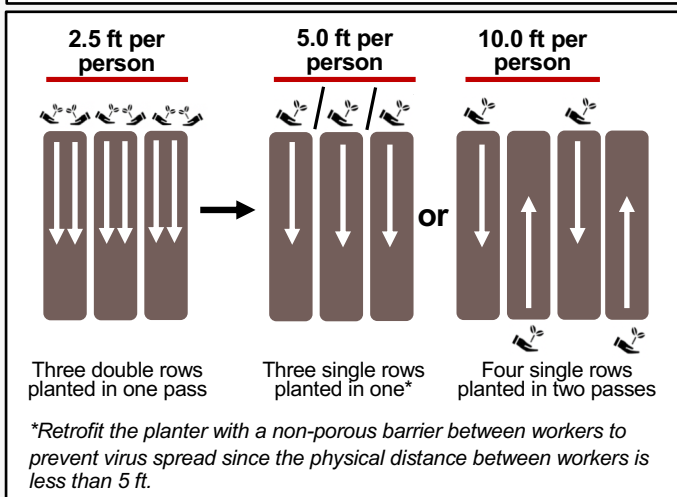
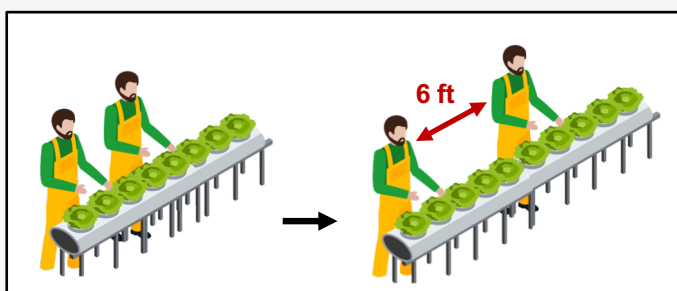
## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS?

**COVID-19 is not a foodborne illness.** The virus causes illness through respiratory transmission, not eating. There have been no reports that anyone has become sick from COVID-19 by eating food.

COVID-19 transmission occurs when people are physically close to a person who has the virus. The virus is transferred from one person to another through droplets that are produced when an infected individual coughs or sneezes, or through close contact such as a handshake, hug or other physical types of greetings.

COVID-19 can also transmit by touching an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching the mouth or eyes before washing the hands.

**Change production and handling practices to allow for a minimum of 6 ft physical distancing**



## KEEP PHYSICAL DISTANCE

When many people come together in one location the virus spreads quickly.

Practice physical distancing while conducting routine production and handling practices. This may mean that you will have to do things in a different way.

**The minimal recommended distance between people to reduce the risk of transmission is six feet.**

- Limit the number of people riding in a farm vehicle to one or two members of the same family.
- Decrease the number of people working during a shift. To maintain productivity, shorten but increase the number of shifts in a day.
- Change the flow of workers in the greenhouse and field so that activities (i.e., seeding, transplanting, crop maintenance) are done in isolation and/or workers are separated by at least six feet.

## CLEAN AND DISINFECT

Because COVID-19 persists on surfaces for a few hours and up to several days, cleaning is critical.

- Increase the frequency of surface cleaning and disinfection.
- Food grade detergents and disinfectants must be used on food contact surfaces.
- Frequently disinfect high-touch surfaces daily including doorknobs, railings, counters, steering wheels, light switches, tables, tools and equipment. At a minimum disinfect every 4 hours or between shifts.
  - Lysol Brand Heavy Duty Cleaner Disinfectant concentrate is an effective sanitizer in the greenhouse and for equipment.
  - Bleach may be used to disinfect surfaces, but a concentration of 5 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water is required to kill COVID-19.
  - Additional disinfectants that may be effective against COVID-19 are available on the [EPA Pesticide Registration List](#).
  - Additional cleaning and disinfecting guidelines are available on the [CDC website](#).

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## WORKER HEALTH POLICY

Procedures that facilitate isolation, monitoring worker health and providing paid sick leave should be implemented to ensure worker behaviors that will minimize the spread of COVID-19.

- **Develop and implement a COVID-19 worker health policy.**
  - Workers with a fever should not come to work and should self-isolate for two weeks.
  - Monitor worker's temperature at specified intervals during the day.
  - Workers who develop a fever at work should stop working, go home, and self-isolate for two weeks.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a single use tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear face masks to limit transmission of the virus (see Personal Protective Equipment below).
- Launder clothes at the end of each workday and wear clean clothes to work.
- Provide additional handwashing stations and keep them fully stocked.
- Maintain all regular food safety activities.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Wear standard personal protective equipment while conducting activities with more than one person.
- Wear clean gloves, face masks, and eye protection. Disposable gloves and effective masks (N-95) are in short supply and are needed for the medical community. Acceptable substitutions include:
  - Rubber gloves. Clean and disinfect after using the gloves.
  - Homemade cloth masks made using double layered cotton, or other fabrics, with a pocket to fit a 2.5-micron furnace or vacuum filter. Masks will encourage hygiene by helping to minimize directly touching one's nose and mouth. They will also reduce the dispersal of droplets containing COVID-19.
  - Safety goggles, face-shields, and masks.

## TRANSPORTATION AND MARKETING

Operators should continue to implement best food safety practices for transporting and marketing product. The following practices should be added to your current food safety program:

- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, containers and vehicles used to move or transport product.
- Stop using reusable containers until the outbreak is over.
- Post signs or verbally inform customers of new or modified policies.
- Minimize the amount that the product is handled between harvest and it reaching the final point of sale.
- Practice a no touch/no interaction policy at deliveries.

Additional information for farmer's markets, food banks, and U-pick operations on COVID-19 and food safety are available at [producesafety.osu.edu/covid-19](https://producesafety.osu.edu/covid-19).

## LONG TERM PLANNING

Hybrid seed is produced globally. All hybrid tomato and pepper seed comes from countries that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, a recent (November 2019) Federal Order was issued that limits the importation of tomato and pepper seed and requires testing restriction due to tomato brown rugose virus or ToBRFV. **A disruption in the seed supply for 2021 and beyond can be expected.**

- If you do not have a supply of seed that will get you beyond the 2020 field season, contingencies for self-produced seed may be necessary. Please contact an OSU Extension Specialist or Educator for further discussion.
- Additional information on the Federal Order for restricting ToBRFV is available on the [APHIS website](https://aphis.usda.gov).

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