

Western Growers Industry FAQs
COVID-19
UPDATED 3/19/2020

While FDA has a [Q&A page](#) that addresses commonly asked questions relevant to the food industry, below are some questions we've been receiving from the farming community. The answers are based on official recommendations and include suggestions that address the fact most workers on a farm cannot telework or apply social distancing. Currently, California's county shelter-in-place orders universally declare farming/food production an "essential activity," which exempts farming businesses and employees.

Do we adjust our visitor policy?

Not allowing non-essential visitors into fields and facilities may be a wise policy at this time.

How is COVID-19 going to impact future inspections and audits?

LGMA's

As of March 19, 2020, the Arizona and California LGMA's are proceeding as usual, but they are discussing potential changes, including remote oversight.

If you experience any issues with LGMA auditors or audits, please contact:

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FDA

FDA has issued a [temporary policy](#) regarding Preventive Controls and FSVP:

- Most notably, the temporary suspension of onsite audits as a verification activity for the FSVP
- Mission-critical inspections (class 1 recall, FBIO, etc.) will be prioritized over routine surveillance inspections
- The majority of FDA audits will be announced vs. unannounced

[Click here](#) for FDA food safety-related information.



USDA

Inspection and grading services will [continue as usual](#).

Farm work is different than other types of work, so how do we adjust? Most of our workers cannot work remotely. What if one worker gets COVID-19, what actions do we take?

NOTE: None of the general guidance supersedes FSMA rules and other mandated requirements (e.g., state marketing agreements)

It is important to monitoring worker health. The most common, typical symptoms are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may also include fatigue, muscle pain and headaches.

FDA Guidance on [COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

- 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 CDC's [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

Employers should consult with the [local health department](#) for additional guidance.

OSHA Guidance on [Control and Prevention](#)

- Two sections are applicable to the produce industry:
 - General guidance for all U.S. workers and employers
 - Interim guidance for most U.S. workers and employers of workers unlikely to have occupational exposures to COVID-19

NOTE: Section divisions within the webpage are not very prominent and most of the information pertains to occupations **likely** to have exposure to COVID-19.

OSHA Guidance on [Preparing Workplaces for COVID-1](#)

CDC Guidance on Personnel in Critical Infrastructure Positions (Food and ag are considered "critical infrastructure" by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

Some personnel (e.g., emergency first responders) fill essential (critical) infrastructure roles within communities. Based on the needs of individual jurisdictions, and at the discretion of state or local health authorities, these personnel may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (either travel-associated or close contact to a confirmed case), provided they remain asymptomatic. Personnel who are permitted to work following an exposure should self-monitor under



the supervision of their employer's occupational health program including taking their temperature before each work shift to ensure they remain afebrile. On days these individuals are scheduled to work, the employer's occupational health program could consider measuring temperature and assessing symptoms prior to their starting work.

CDC Guidance on [Contacts of Asymptomatic People Exposed to COVID-19](#)

CDC does not recommend testing, symptom monitoring or special management for people exposed to asymptomatic people with potential exposures to SARS-CoV-2 (such as in a household), i.e., "contacts of contacts". These people are not considered exposed to SARS-CoV-2.

Is the use of masks at fresh cut produce facilities something to consider (if available)?

At this time, masks do not seem to be an effective and practical way to protect workers; there is a shortage of masks that are needed for medical providers and sick patients.

CDC [Recommendations Regarding Facemasks](#)

If you are NOT sick: You do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Facemasks may be in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers.

FDA [Information on Surgical Mask and Gown Shortages](#)

What other actions besides good hygiene and work health practices can a company take to prevent ill works in fresh produce areas?

Here are some examples of what some produce industry companies are doing:

- Keep office and production staff separated
- Minimize contact among workers on separate shifts
- Minimize touchpoints i.e., any item or surface that is touched by multiple people; for example, instead of having multiple people touch a doorknob – have one person open and hold door, hand out smocks, etc.
- Increase distances between personnel – i.e., stagger entry and exit times into and out of production area for breaks, shift changes, etc.
- Increased cleaning and sanitation of frequent touchpoints (e.g., door handles, time clocks, table and counter tops, etc.

Source: [LinkedIn Industry Group](#)

Is anyone thinking about business continuity and availability of supplies for agriculture and the continuance of the food chain?

Issues that may impact logistics along the supply chain may be addressed by contacting FEMA's [National Business Emergency Operations Center \(NBEOC\)](#).

