

Adapting agricultural and primary production operations during COVID-19

Guidance on how to work safely in the agricultural sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This guidance is to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely in the agricultural sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guidance from the Food Standards Agency focuses on the hygiene processes and requirements you must follow to safely operate your food or feed business.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with [Working safely during COVID-19](#) and wider government advice on COVID-19. This will give you a practical framework to identify what you need to do to continue, adapt or restart operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk assessment and review

In line with [wider government advice](#), you should make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19, using the [government's social distancing guidance](#) to inform your decisions and control measures.

You should review your normal Food/Feed Safety Management for the protection, safety and hygiene of your products. This will protect them from contamination in-line with relevant legislation. You may need to adapt these practices in respect of changes in workforce and procedures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure they remain sufficient and can be implemented effectively.

Staff handling foodstuffs must be in good health. This means they must not be suffering from, or carrying, an illness or disease that could cause a problem with food safety. During COVID-19, staff who are displaying symptoms of the disease should follow the government's [Stay at home](#) and [Staying safe outside your home guidance](#). Public Health England have published guidance showing the [return to work process for a symptomatic worker](#) once they have been tested for COVID-19.

You must make sure that staff understand your Fitness to Work policy and are aware of any updates that have been made in relation to COVID-19. You may wish to consider any appropriate changes to your visitor questionnaires to address COVID-19 exposure risks.

Primary production

Primary production relates to the production of food and animal feed. It means the production, rearing or growing of primary products including harvesting, milking and farmed animal production prior to slaughter. It also includes hunting, fishing and the harvesting of wild products.

Farming

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has produced [guidance and resources for farmers](#)

. This includes information on combinable crop and potato deliveries, collections, and advice for farmers and seasonal workers. Farmers may also be required to meet updated customer specifications during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [government has published advice for seasonal agricultural workers](#) coming to England to work on farms, and for their employers. [Advice for seasonal workers from the Welsh government](#) and for [agricultural workers situated in Northern Ireland](#), is also available

Dairy

Dairy operators who had not previously been providing raw drinking milk must contact their Dairy Hygiene Inspector (DHI) before they supply unpasteurised drinking milk to the public. Your DHI will be able to guide you through this process.

This is a high-risk product and specific controls apply to its production and distribution. Further advice and guidance on these controls can be found in our [guidance on raw drinking milk](#).

Animal feed production

Where a business has to change their standard feed formulations or production sites, alternative permitted approaches may be used under the criteria detailed in our [Legal clarifications on reformulation and animal feed production establishments](#) guidance.

Stock control

Businesses should ensure that any feed additives or feed materials that have passed their use-by date are disposed of appropriately. You should also inspect stocks for damage as well as temperature control records (where applicable). You should not use feed additives or feed materials where the integrity of packaging is not intact or where temperature records indicate feed safety may have been compromised.

Availability of feed additives and feed materials

You should check that you can obtain your usual feed additives and feed materials so that your product specifications can be met. Ensure any new suppliers or contractors meet your [requirements](#) and that traceability is maintained.

If a new supplier is not based in the UK or European Union, check whether they have a Third Country Representative. If appropriate, you should make an application. We have further guidance on [Third Country representation for animal feed businesses](#).

Availability of consumables

You should check that you have adequate stocks of suitable cleaning chemicals and that they are in-date. This also applies to other essential consumable items such as disposable gloves.

Fishing

Fishermen that may not have sold direct to the public previously may be changing their business practices at this time. Whether sales are made to another business or to the public, fishermen are required to be registered as a food business with their local authority.

This is in addition to registration with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). If you are

already registered but are changing your practices, you need to contact your local authority to tell them about this change.

The public body Seafish have provided further [guidance for fishermen who are starting to conduct sales and deliveries to the public](#).

Staff training

You should reconsider training needs for your staff, including any changes made to procedures, formulations, and the need for more frequent handwashing or social distancing measures.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the food and feed industry can be for the protection of workers, and where appropriate to prevent the contamination of food/feed during production. The current situation should not change these requirements.

You should continue to ensure that the use of PPE is as set out in your Food or Feed Safety Management System (FSMS). You should:

- stress the importance of more frequent handwashing and maintaining good hygiene practices in food preparation and handling areas. Employees should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- ensure that objects and surfaces that are touched standard, are frequently cleaned, and disinfected using your standard cleaning products.

Gloves

The Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene legislation requires that you provide safe food and feed and have appropriate hygiene procedures in place. Some businesses may implement a glove-use policy but the wearing of gloves by personnel handling food or feed is not a legal requirement.

The best way in which food and feed handlers can maintain good personal hygiene is by frequently washing their hands. Gloves can be used as an aide to good food and feed hygiene practice but should not be considered a substitute for a thorough regime of effective hand washing. The COVID-19 virus (and other viruses as well as bacteria) can contaminate disposable gloves in the same way it gets onto workers' hands.

If gloves are used, they should be changed as often as you would wash hands and you must wash your hands when changing or removing gloves. Gloves must be changed after carrying out non-food or feed related activities, such as opening and closing doors by hand, handling money and emptying bins. Food and feed workers should avoid touching their mouth and eyes when wearing gloves.

Face masks

There may be situations where you provide face masks to protect high-risk foods/feeds or where workers are exposed to airborne risks. If so, you should continue to follow your current policies on the use of face masks.

Follow your established procedures for use of PPE in the working environment. You should also

take into account [social distancing guidance](#).

Face coverings

The government has published [guidance for businesses on wearing face coverings](#).

From 24 September, it is compulsory in England for retail, leisure and hospitality staff to wear a face covering in areas that are open to the public and where they come, or are likely to come, within close contact of a member of the public. This includes shops, supermarkets, bars, pubs, restaurants, cafes, and the public areas of hotels and hostels.

Inappropriate use and handling of face coverings could present a risk to food safety and hygiene as well as to the health and safety of staff. The government has provided guidance on [how to wear a face covering](#) and the hygiene requirements for safe and effective use, maintenance and disposal.

Where it is compulsory for your staff to wear face coverings in the workplace or where your staff choose to wear face coverings to travel to work, you should put procedures in place to enable your staff to follow this guidance.

For other indoor settings, employers should assess the use of face coverings on a case by case basis depending on the workplace environment, other appropriate mitigations they have put in place and whether reasonable exemptions apply.

Different rules exist in different parts of the UK. You can find out more on the use of face coverings in [Wales](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [Scotland](#).

Social distancing

It will not always be possible to keep a distance of 2 metres. In these circumstances both employers and employees must do everything they reasonably can to reduce risk.

[Working safely during COVID-19 when working outdoors](#) contains more guidance on how to implement social distancing at work and steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus.