

The Covid-19 Crisis: Planning for Extra Care on your Small/Mid-Sized Farm



Make a farm health and safety plan for this crisis to reduce worker and customer exposure and make sure everyone on the farm is trained in how to carry out the plan. **Some things to include in the plan:**

***Make sure your workers know about coronavirus, share video and audio information in languages accessible**

to workers including video & audio: Provide workers with accurate and current information on how to protect themselves, their families, their communities, and the farm staff and customers. ([Spanish video explaining coronavirus](#), [Spanish video on how to reduce spread](#) of Covid-19, both by the Farmworker Association of Florida, a UNICEF [video in Spanish on how to effectively wash your hands to prevent spread](#) posted by Project SALUD, a [video on coronavirus in both Maya Mam and Spanish](#) that was posted by the San Antonio Neighborhood Health Center). This google doc of resource collected by the Rural Women's Health Project and others includes links to Covid-19 video, audio, and written info in a number of [indigenous languages](#).

*** Print, post in workplace and employee housing, and distribute written information to workers:** [CDC factsheets and posters](#) (free and downloadable in many languages including Spanish). CDC also provides clear guidance here about preventing infection in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Here is a poster from Florida Health about coronavirus in [Creole](#). Additional virus prevention and safety handouts and instructions available [here](#), including handouts in [Haitian Creole](#) and Spanish.

*** Clean and disinfect your workplace** with special attention to breakroom, drinking fountains, and bathrooms. Clean and disinfect any areas where you and your workers congregate or routinely touch items such as doorknobs and computer keyboards. Clean and disinfect tools and equipment used by the workers, including PPE. Set up daily and weekly cleaning schedules. Keep track of time you spend in case of eventual reimbursement.

***Make sure your workplace is safe** including all necessary protective equipment, cleaning supplies, vinyl gloves and masks, frequent and regular hand-washing breaks, and the required space for physical distancing.

***Provide easy access to clean and sufficient amounts of soap, clean water, and disposable paper towels** near worksites. Do not penalize workers for taking the time to properly wash their hands frequently.

***If you have on-farm housing,** provide guidance on cleaning and disinfecting, including access to washing machines for clothes and bed clothes. Follow to be sure that this happens and consider setting up weekly and daily schedules for cleaning. [CDC guidance for cleaning homes](#). Identify potential quarantine space for workers who may get ill, so they do not have to travel while ill.

***Try to identify a way all workers can have access to free testing, healthcare coverage, and paid sick days** regardless of their legal status.

***Make it really clear to workers that you want them to stay home if they are sick,** especially when they have a cough or feel achy or feverish, and to make sure that they do **provide paid sick days**. Remind them that they are part of a community and that they put their co-workers at great risk of infection if they do not take proper measures to take care of themselves.

***If you have H2A workers** (or migrant workers under the **Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program** in Canada) who become ill with coronavirus, ensure they do not incur penalties for inability to complete their contract with your farm.

***Make a disaster plan** in case you are hospitalized or so many of your farm's workers are sick that the farm work cannot get done. Arrange to share resources with neighboring farms, farmer networks or associations. Reach out to your customers for support in case of emergency.

***Communicate with your direct customers.** Local farms and local food systems are stepping up all over the country to fill in the gaps that are only widening. They are doing what they have always done and the crisis is highlighting how critical this work is (and has always been). See an example from a message from a NY farm below to get ideas. Consider letting your customers know that farmworkers receiving sick leave is not the norm and is essential to a resilient food system and that prices and the business the farm receives contribute to the farm's ability to provide this. Offer weekly video calls for

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer for 20 seconds. Wash after sneezing, coughing or nose blowing, after touching cell-phone and, of course, after using restroom and before handling food.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Stay home when you are sick, especially when feverish or achy and when you have a cough.**
- **Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**

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customers or weekly video farm tours. Set up a donation fund to support sick customers or employees. If you are able to offer on farm produce sales, this is one way your customers may feel more comfortable doing their grocery shopping as it allows for space to practice physical distancing and fresh air. See RAFI's [guidance for farmers market managers](#) wanting to support local farms through this crisis.



To contribute to decreasing vulnerability of workers in this and future crisis situations: Add your voice to the campaigns for paid sick leave and paid family leave to include all farmworkers in the US and Canada regardless of citizenship status. Add your voice to the campaigns for workers to have the right to organize for better working conditions. Add your voice to campaigns for better pricing for farmers to cover these costs of production. See AJP's [Covid-19 resource page](#) for links to petitions and sign-on letters.

An example of one farm's communication to customers regarding the coronavirus crisis:

I hope you're all finding ways to stay safe and healthy. Despite the current situation, people still need to eat, so we're still farming. Finding fresh local food will be more important than ever this year, and personally I'm grateful for the chance to do my part. I wanted to update you all on how we're adapting Mud Creek Farm's operation in response to the virus.

Our first priority is keeping the farm crew healthy. As the greenhouse season starts in a couple weeks, we'll be very careful to avoid physical contact, keeping things sanitized, and monitoring our health. No one will be working sick!

As far as CSA distribution goes, we're hoping things have calmed down by then, but we're preparing for the worst. We'll be switching distribution to "deli style," with a farm staff member packing your share for you as you tell us which things you'd like in the line. (For Abundance members, this will be the same process, except with Peacework member volunteers.) We'll have hand washing stations for staff and members, and staff will be wearing gloves. All bins and surfaces will be sanitized regularly, and farm staff will use best practices while washing and packing veggies from the field. We will need members to be patient, and keep some distance between each other for safety, but we can get through this together!

The u-pick section will still be open. We will ask anyone venturing out there to please sanitize their hands first, there will be a station available. There will also be a bleach solution bucket for scissors used for flowers or herbs. And we'll remind you all to keep distance between each other out there!

Any members who are sick or immunocompromised and need to be more isolated will have a drive-through option. We can pack your share for you and bring it to your car in the parking lot. Once we get closer to distributions, we can work out a way for people who need this option to contact us ahead of time with their preferences on choice items and you-pick items. It's possible we might need to rely on volunteers to help with distribution, or to deliver some shares to people who really can't venture out. We're not at that stage yet, but if any of you are interested in being part of that effort, you'll get a chance to volunteer later in the season.

Additionally, some of you are probably not sure what your financial situation looks like in the coming weeks or months and are unsure if you can pay for a CSA share this year. If that's you, please contact me and we can work out a payment plan that works for you. We all need to eat, and I don't want the full payment deadline to be a barrier for anyone in these turbulent times.

As always, feel free to get in touch with questions, concerns, ideas!

Other resources:

- The Farmworker Support Committee (CATA) in the northeast has a [Spanish website](#) on the latest information regarding the coronavirus and other resources for farmworker communities.
- FDA: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- FSIS: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/17/usda-ensures-food-safety-during-covid-19-outbreak>
- Food Safety Magazine Prevention Recommendations: <https://www.foodsafetymagazine.com/enewsletter/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-and-food-safety-a-time-for-facts-not-panic/>

“The [World Health Organization](#) is now calling the outbreak a global pandemic because it is affecting countries all over the world. People and organizations can still fight coronavirus by taking steps to prevent transmission of the disease, the whole point of widespread cancellation of events is to create “social distancing” [i.e., physical distancing] to lower the infection rate and prevent health care systems from being overwhelmed.” - **Novel Coronavirus Prevention & Control for Farms** from Richard Stup, Cornell Cooperative Extension; Ag Workforce Development.