

HARVESTING GUIDELINES DURING THE COVID-19 PERIOD

Version1.0:

Date 26.03.2020

INTRODUCTION

During January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) a global Emergency and in March a global pandemic. On Monday 23 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced measures to put the nation under lockdown except for food production and food supply services. COVID-19 require all businesses to act swiftly, responsibly and with calmness during this period to contribute to flattening the curve of COVID-19 infections.

The health and safety of employees during this period is the business owners' responsibility. The [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy working environment, and the COVID-19 outbreak/pandemic obliges employers to manage the risk of contamination in the workplace. Harvesting teams used during the citrus season are likely to be more vulnerable to the Corona virus (COVID-19) outbreak due to the fact that the harvesting teams work in close proximity and may act as a source of infection, amplification and spread of infection beyond the operation.

It should be emphasized that during this uncertain period vulnerable employees may feel threatened by the loss of employment and may see it necessary to 'hide' symptoms. Given this, employers must do everything in their ability to have the trust of their employees and give a sense of assurance that they are there to keep them safe and healthy, yet continue with business operation as far as possible for the benefit of all.

The following measures should mitigate the risk of contamination:

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It is essential that you safeguard your employees as far as possible, by implementing the measures set out in this document. The common purpose is to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks.

All amendments in terms of the Disaster Management Act 2002 has been published in the Government Gazette on Wednesday 25 March 2020. http://www.gpwonline.co.za/Gazettes/Gazettes/43148_25-3_COGTA.pdf

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1. COMPOSITIONS OF WORKFORCE

Due to the increasing number of employees during harvesting, the risk of COVID-19 infections increases, and this risk should be minimized as far as possible. The following measures on assembling of the workforce is important:

- Team set-up: Harvesting teams should be divided into groups, not more than 50 people per group per harvesting area.
- Each team must be assigned to a specific work area and people must avoid moving between locations (areas) to prevent contact between groups and employees.
- Groups/teams should also remain the same where possible during harvest (do not mix employees on different days – keep the same employees grouped for the remainder of the season). This is very important to isolate smaller groups in the event where infections are reported.
- If possible, employees transported to the workplace, should work separate from the employees who are staying on the farm.

2. TRANSPORTATION OF EMPLOYEES

Transportation could be a source of contamination, therefore the following measures should be considered when transport is used:

- It is important that the driver of the vehicle is being permitted in accordance with Regulation 11B (3) to perform an essential service. See Annexure C below
- Transportation of employees, who are categorized as essential services, will only be permitted between 05h00-09h00 and 16h00-20h00.
- Vehicles used should not transport more than 50% of the licensed capacity. It is advisable that maximum number of workers be indicated on the vehicle.
- Deep cleaning of transportation vehicle used should be performed before and after use.
- Keep record of the daily cleaning of all vehicles used for transport
- The following chemical agents could be used for cleaning of transportation vehicles:
 - Sodium Hydroxide Composition Cleaning Agent
 - Spore kill
 - X-treme XF
 - Unique 100
 - Sani soap
 - Chlorine based cleaning agent
- All workers' temperatures should be measured before they get on to the vehicle.

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- The thermometers should preferably be handheld infrared thermometers to prevent contamination through contact. This must be sanitized after use.
- Employees with a mild fever (*37.3 C or more*) should not be allowed onto the vehicle and must be sent home.
- No-one can board the vehicle if not monitored.
- After the temperatures have been recorded, make sure that all employees sanitize hands (alcohol % >70%) before getting onto the transport. The driver and supervisor of the transport should be equipped with disposable gloves and disposable mask.
- Allow enough additional time for collection of employees.
- Employees should adhere to the strict pick-up and drop off times set out by management.

3. SCREENING OF EMPLOYEES

- It is important that employees who may be carrying the virus are identified before they start work at the workplace.
- The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are the following:
 - Fever
 - Tiredness
 - Dry Cough
 - Sore throat
- Supervisor, team leader and management must be trained on identifying the symptoms.
- Handheld infrared thermometers aid at identifying those with a fever (one of the first symptoms of COVID 19).
- Screen employees before entering the place of work and send those with fevers (*37.3 C or more*) home.
- Screening procedure to use when transporting of employees:
 - All worker's temperatures should be tested before they get on to the vehicle.
 - There must be strict controls to ensure no-one can board the truck if not monitored.
 - Allow enough additional time for collection of employees.
 - After the temperatures have been recorded, make sure that all employees sanitize hands (alcohol % >70%) before getting onto the transport.

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4. HYGIENE MEASURES TO FOLLOWING DURING WORK HOURS

- Ensure that regular information is available to management, supervisors and employees about COVID-19.
- Train employees regularly on the symptoms of COVID-19 and record these.
- Promote frequent handwashing with soap, running water and use paper towels to dry hands.
- Make sure employees have access to places where they can wash their hands with **Soap** and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Hands should be washed:
 - Before the start of every shift
 - After going to the toilet
 - After eating
 - After smoking
 - After breaks
 - Before entering an area where there is contact with the product. Example: harvesting site, packaging area, loading zones
 - After sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose
 - After handling refuse
- Remember to also regularly clean and disinfect the tap where hand washing takes place.
- Display posters on promoting the correct method to wash hands.
- Hand sanitizer should be available from all the harvesting team leaders, which should be applied at least every hour to the employees' hands.
- Personal contact between employees should be restricted, which include shaking hands, hugging etc.
- Each worker should bring their own water bottle or container to work, sharing of water bottles are not allowed.
- Drinking water directly from the tap is not allowed.
- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace:
 - The employees should be aware to cover their nose or mouths when coughing sneezing with a tissue or flexed/bend elbow
 - Display signage regarding good respiratory hygiene
 - Ensure that face masks/ paper tissues are available at the workplace along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of the mask or tissues.
- Brief employees that if infection of COVID-19 start spreading in the community or if employees are displaying any mild symptoms, they should stay at home.

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5. DISTANCING MEASURES TO FOLLOWING DURING WORKING HOURS

- Distancing when reporting to work
 - Where possible, avoid using the biometric clocking systems – according to the centre for disease control and prevention, it is possible for a person to get COVID-19, by touching a surface that has COVID-19 virus on it. Where this measure could not be prevented, hands should be sanitized before clocking and after clocking.
 - It is preferred that smaller groups (50 and less employees) be present at the point of attendance.
 - Pens should not be shared.
 - Where possible ensure that employees are more than two (2) metres apart.
- Distancing during harvesting:
 - Where possible ensure that employees are more than two (2) metres apart. Create zones to prevent people moving through unnecessary spaces to prevent employees encountering each other unnecessarily.
 - One tree should be allocated per person, and two employees must not be allowed to harvest from the same tree.
- Distancing at tractors with bins:
 - Where possible ensure that employees waiting at bins are more than two (2) metres apart.
 - The supervisor/ tractor drivers should be equipped with disposable mask and gloves.
 - No comingling is allowed at this area. Keep this a strict rule.
 - Encourage 'route planning' when employees come to empty bags at the bins and try to avoid 'crossing paths'.
- Distancing during resting periods, lunch or breakfast:
 - Workers should not be allowed to rest in confined spaces and must be at least two (2) meters apart from each other.
 - Allocate different resting areas per team to prevent unnecessary encounters with other team employees.
 - Allocate different break/ lunch times for each harvesting team to prevent encounters with other team employees.
 - Each worker must bring their own food container and sharing containers are not allowed.
- Distancing during sanitation (picking up fruit) practices after harvest:
 - Allocated a block to different employees, who will be responsible for that specific block all season.
 - Where possible ensure that employees are more than two (2) metres apart.

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6. CLEANING MEASURES OF HARVESTING EQUIPMENT

- Clippers/ Scissors
 - Clippers/ scissors should be placed in sanitising solution at the end of a workday.
 - The responsible person issuing the clippers/scissors should be wearing disposable gloves.
- Picking Bags
 - Picking bags should be issued to an individual worker for the full harvesting period and not be mixed.
 - At the end of the week the picking bags should be washed with cleaning agent and sundried. Document these cleaning measures.
- Ladders
 - The ladders should be numbered, one ladder must be issued to the same person during the harvesting period.
 - Ladders should be sprayed daily with sanitizing solution after use.
- Bulk Bins and Picking Trailers
 - Bulk bins should be cleaned with a chlorine solution before use and sundried.
 - The tractors should be sprayed with sanitation solution after each use.

7. ACCOMMODATION MEASURES

- General Living Facilities
 - Housing must be safe and hygienic.
 - There should be a separated bed and mattress for each worker.
 - The minimum space between beds/ mattresses should not be less than 1.5 meters.
 - Employees must be informed on cleaning practices for their homes to prevent contamination.
- Hostels:
 - The hostels should be deep cleaned with sanitizing solution.
 - There should be an average of five (5) square meter space per person in the communal area.
 - There must be enough beds for employees living in communal rooms.
 - There should be a separate bed and mattress for each worker.
 - The minimum space between beds/ mattress should not be less than 1.5 meters.
 - Where double bunks are used there should be enough clear space (at least 0.7 meters) between the lower and upper bunk of the bed.
 - Each worker should be provided with their own lockable storage unit.
 - Allocate teams together in the hostel.
 - Toilets in the Hostels
 - At least 1 toilet per 8 males and 2 toilets per 8 females

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- Sanitation solution should be made available for the employees to spray the area after each use
- Handwash facility should be near the toilet

8. MEASURES TO PREVENT FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF EMPLOYEES

LIVING ON THE FARM

- For the period of lockdown
 - Every worker must be confined to his/her place of residence, unless for the purpose of going to work, collecting a social grant, or seeking emergency or chronic medication.
 - No gatherings are allowed during this period
 - Movement of employees between provinces are not allowed, so teams may not be recruited from outside the province and workers may not be allowed to return to other provinces during the lock-down period
 - Movement to neighbouring farms are not allowed.
 - Opportunity to collect food, or go to shops must always be controlled and monitored – following screening protocols
 -
- If the situations arise that there is a funeral during this period, it must adhere to the following:
 - Limited to 50 people
 - Safety measures must be in place.
- Arrangement for obtaining essential goods or seeking medical attention:
 - Only one person from a household should be allowed to go to town
 - No children will be allowed to go to town
- Gatherings (Sport, prayer, church going, socializing) are prohibited on the farm.
- No visitors from neighbouring farms or town are permitted on the farm.
- No comingling with neighbours.
- The sale of alcohol during this time is prohibited.
- The use of alcohol in public spaces is prohibited.

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9. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES REGARDING POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES ON THE FARM

- The management/worker should contact the Government on the COVID-19 hotline - 0800029999 - to report a possible positive case so that the government can take steps for testing.
- Management should support the employee to follow protocol and get tested as soon as possible.
- It is the obligation of each one to report illness and self-quarantine for 14 days, if suspected that he/she might be infected with COVID-19.
- The farm should identify quarantine and self-isolation area on the farm that meet the necessary hygienic standards for people who cannot isolate or quarantine in their homes.
- Identify a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms, can be safely isolated until sure that the symptoms are not related to COVID-19.

Stay safe, look after the elderly and vulnerable, and good luck with the season.

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Annexure C: Permit to Preform Essential Service

Please note that the person to whom the permit is issues must at all times a form of identification to be presented together with this permit. If no Identification is presented the person to whom the permit is issued will have to return to his/or her place of residence during the lockdown.

I,

Surname				
Full Names:				
Identification Number				
Contact Number	Cell nr:	Tel Nr(W)	Tel Nr(H)	Email address
Physical Address of Institution:				

Hereby certify that:

Surname	
Full Names	
Identification Number	

Signed at _____, on this the _____ day of 2020

Signature of Head of Institution