

General Guidelines for Agricultural Workers during of COVID 19 pandemic

The ongoing health crisis around COVID19 (Coronavirus Disease-2019) pandemic has affected people from every corner of the globe. This disease has infected millions of lives and claimed thousands of people around the world and their numbers are growing rapidly as time passes. Till date, about 4.5 million of people are infected with this virus and 321 thousand people have lost their lives. Also, millions of people are working as CORONA warrior for protecting lives of people suffering from the disease. Many nations have swung into the action and declared nationwide lockdown for containment of the outbreak of the disease. Similarly, India has declared a three-week nation-wide lockdown and restricted the movement of people till mid-April in the initial phase, which was subsequently extended for achieving satisfactory containment of the virus spread. After the rabi crop harvesting, the farmers are preparing for sowing of kharif crop within a month's time as soon as monsoon arrives in different parts of the country. Farmers across the country are expecting government to ensure uninterrupted resumption of agricultural operations for the next crop.

During these challenging times, agriculture is essential for a safe and reliable food supply. Making the food grains, fruits and vegetables and other essential items available to consumers, both in rural and urban areas, is the most critical challenge for Government machinery during the lockdown period and post lockdown under corona threat. For this, Indian government has relaxed all agricultural and horticultural activities which will remain fully functional, such as farming operations by farmers and farm workers in field, agencies engaged in procurement of agriculture products, including MSP operations. But, while doing all these activities, there is possibility of infection flow due to personal contact/ material handling. Therefore, while ensuring availability of workers for critical farm operations, their safety (from any COVID infection) and their welfare needs to be prioritized. In order to minimize the workers exposure to COVID-19 at work, the safe work practices need to be implemented, which are as follows:

Social distancing during work

- Ensure that only workers, who are essential to the farm activity are present at the workplace and minimise the presence of third parties.
- Plan the work (agricultural operation) properly; arrange the requisite items at the work place (field). Ask workers to follow personal hygiene, such as washing hands.
- Proper sanitation and cleanliness of machines such as manually operated tools, tractors, ploughs, harrows, sowing and planting devices, plant protection equipment, irrigation equipment, threshing and harvesting machines, etc. to be maintained especially when machines are shared and used by farmer

groups. Copious washing of machine parts frequently touched with soap is advised.

- Work in staggered manner for maintaining safe distance between the workers.
- In case of manual field operations of weeding, harvesting/ picking, accomplish the operation in 1.5-2 m spaced strips assigning one strip to one person. This will ensure adequate spacing between the engaged labours.
- Maintain safe distance of 1.5-2 m during rest, taking of meals, transfer of produce at collection point, loading/unloading, etc.
- Work with only familiar persons to the extent possible and after reasonable enquiry as to avoid the entry of any suspect or likely carrier during field activity.
- Prefer mechanized operations over the manual wherever feasible. Only the essential numbers of persons should be allowed to accompany the machine.
- The collection of the produce may be done in small heaps spaced at 1.5-2 m and field level processing should be assigned to 1-2 persons/heap to avoid crowding.
- Ask vulnerable workers, such as older people and those with chronic conditions such as hypertension, lung or heart problems, diabetes etc and pregnant workers, stay at home. Those workers having symptoms of general cough, cold, sore throat, muscle pain, loss of taste, etc. should not be asked to work till they are cured.
- Avoid chewing tobacco or gutkha and spitting during work.
- Arrange the timing of meal breaks to reduce the number of people sharing a common place or room or kitchen.
- Workers should download AAROGYA SETU APP and register in it, if workers have android mobile phones. If a particular person have met someone in the last two weeks who has tested positive, the app calculates its risk of infection based on how recent it was and proximity, and also recommends measures.

Personal hygiene:

- Follow government guidelines for personal hygiene, including using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol or washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when workers arrive at work and before they leave work, before and after eating or using the toilet, after close interaction with other persons, after contacting shared surfaces or tools, touching food products, handling animals, etc.
- Learn coughing and sneezing etiquette, including covering a cough or sneeze with a tissue or a sleeve instead of hand.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth frequently.
- Avoid sharing of the towel, beds, food etc with others.
- Hand-washing facilities must be located at or near the work area.

- Wash your cloths after return from work and dry in open sun. Don't keep wearing same cloth in home that was worn during work.
- Seek medical attention if the symptoms become severe including persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, or bluish lips or face.

Use of personnel protection equipment (PPE)

FACE MASK

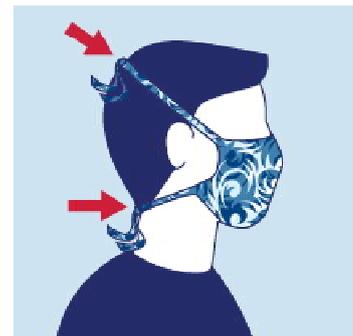
- Workers should use simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and to help people who are unaware that they have the virus from spreading it to others (Asymptomatic patients).
- Disposable facemasks act as a protective barrier to prevent splashes, sprays, large droplets, or splatter from entering the wearer's mouth and nose. The protective quality of disposable facemasks varies depending on type of material used to make the facemask.
- When it is not practical for workers to wear a single cloth face covering for the full duration of a work shift, particularly if they become wet, soiled, or otherwise visibly contaminated, a clean cloth face covering (or disposable facemask option) should be used and changed as needed.
- Review information provided on how to wear and care for cloth face coverings.
- Proper care of the face mask needs to be done, clean the face mask frequently, don't touch face mask, don't use soiled face mask.
- Don't exchange face mask among workers.
- Considerations for use of cloth facemask or coverings:



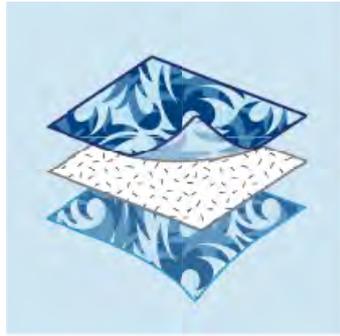
Cover the nose and
below the chin



Fit snugly but
comfortably against the
side of the face



Be secured with ties or
ear loops



Include multiple layers of fabric



Allow for breathing without restriction

- Reusable face coverings should be washed before each daily use.
- Cloths should be washed before each daily use.
- As front of face mask or covering may be contaminated, grasp the mask or covering from with gloved hands while removing and discard in waste container.

HAND GLOVES

- Workers engaged in handling raw produce, semi processed or processed food products like grain, vegetables, fruits, milk, milk products, vegetable products, fruit products etc should wear a proper hand gloves before handling these products to avoid any transfer of contamination.
- Use rubber gloves and properly dispose gloves after use.
- Don't reuse the gloves without proper cleaning and sanitization.
- Don't exchange gloves among workers.
- Put on the gloves and extend it to cover the wrist completely.
- As outside of gloves are contaminated, if hands get contaminated during glove removal, immediately wash hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Use a gloved hand, grasp the palm area of the other gloved hand and peel off first glove. Hold removed glove in gloved hand. Slide fingers of ungloved hand under remaining glove at wrist and peel off second glove over first glove. Discard gloves in a waste container.
- Don't throw used face mask or gloves in open or regular dustbin.
- Dispose it by burning or burying in the soil is recommended.

Precautions to be taken after workers are suspected to have COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID-19:

- Sick workers should stay home or go home if they develop symptoms during the work day.
- Workers who have symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home or go home.

- Sick workers should follow government guidelines and stay isolation. Workers should not return to work until they meet all the criteria to end home isolation, in consultation with healthcare providers.
- Close off areas used by the worker who is sick.
- Collect information about the worker's contacts among co-workers, up to 2 days prior to symptom onset, to identify other workers who could be considered exposed.