

# PACKING 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. Packing 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 production 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.gpwnline.co.za/Gazettes/Gazettes/43148\\_25-3\\_COGTA.pdf](http://www.gpwnline.co.za/Gazettes/Gazettes/43148_25-3_COGTA.pdf)

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## 1. COMPOSITIONS OF WORKFORCE

Packhouse that are starting-up, 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: Packhouse teams should be divided into groups, not more than 50 people per group per production 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 production areas (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 coming from other towns or areas.

## 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 Regulation11B (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 the 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.
- The thermometers should preferably be handheld infrared thermometers to prevent contamination through contact. This must be sanitized after use.

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- 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 masks.
- Allow enough additional time for the 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 allocated points in the packhouse, 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 packhouse operation:
  - Where possible ensure that employees are more than 1.5 metres apart. Create zones to prevent people moving through unnecessary spaces to prevent employees encountering each other unnecessarily.
  - Allocated production area per person, and two employees must not be allowed to operate in the same area
- 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 team to prevent encounters with other team employees.
  - Each worker must bring their own food container and sharing containers are not allowed.
- Distancing at receiving of raw material (Fruit), packaging, or post-harvest chemicals
  - The receiving employees should always wear disposable gloves and mask when receiving raw material, packaging and chemicals.
  - The truck driver should not be allowed to leave the vehicle during this process.
  - Any paperwork that the driver must be completed, should be done with the driver's pen.
  - Clipboards and pens should be sanitized after each use.

## 6. CLEANING MEASURES OF PACKHOUSE

- The cleaning and disinfection program covers should cover the following areas, utilities, and equipment:

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- Storage facilities (Carton area, Final product, Chemical Room and cages, De-Greening rooms; Compressor room,)
- Food handling areas, equipment, and utensils
- Cleaning equipment and cleaning utensils
- Staff facilities (Toilets, changing facilities, Canteen, Hand wash area)
- Waste area, Maintenance area
- Grounds and site perimeter
- Offices, door handles, light switches
- Production personnel adhere to the “Clean as You Go” practice during production hours.
- Only cleaning chemicals that are SABS 1828 or SABS 1859 are used for cleaning tasks.
- Cleaning chemicals need to be suitable for the intended use.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and include a sanitation step after production.

## 7. MEASURES TO PREVENT FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF PACKHOUSE EMPLOYEES

- 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.
  - Packhouse employees are not allowed to visit town areas during the resting 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 or packhouses 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.
- No visitors from neighbouring farms or town are permitted in the packhouse.

## 8. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES REGARDING POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES IN THE PACKHOUSE OPERATION

- 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 packhouse should identify quarantine and self-isolation area on the farm/ premises 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 issued 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,

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

Hereby certify that:

<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Full Names</b>	
<b>Identification Number</b>	

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_, on this the \_\_\_\_\_ day of 2020

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Head of Institution