COVID-19 Updates for Maryland Farmers

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Slides courtesy of:
Betsy Bihn, PhD
PSA Director

Wes Kline, PhD
Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Angela Ferelli, PhD
University of Maryland
Acknowledgements & Contacts

Dr. Christopher Walsh
University of Maryland, College Park
cswalsh@umd.edu

Deanna Baldwin
Maryland Department of Agriculture
(410)-841-5769
produce.safety@maryland.gov

Dr. Angela Ferelli
University of Maryland, College Park
(302) 353-7159
angfer@umd.edu
@AMCFerelli

Molly Gillingham
Maryland Department of Agriculture
(410)-841-5769
Molly.gillingham@maryland.gov

Carol Allen
University of Maryland, College Park
(240) 994-5043
callen12@umd.edu

Alec Loranca
Maryland Department of Agriculture
(410)-841-5769
alecj.loranca@maryland.gov

Sarah Everhart, Esq.
University of Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative
(410)-458-2475
severhart@law.umd.edu

Dr. Shauna Henley
University of Maryland Extension
(410)-887-8090
shenley@umd.edu
@FoodSmartUME
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COVID-19 in 2021

• Likely going to impact growing season
• Likely to impact markets
• Many lessons learned last year; use this information

• Focus on communication
  – Communicate farm priorities and processes to all employees
  – Do this often!
  – Make certain everyone knows about COVID-19 transmission and prevention strategies
  – Actions both inside and outside of work matter!
Overview on COVID-19 Transmission

• COVID-19 **most commonly** spreads during close contact.
  • “Infections occur mainly through exposure to respiratory droplets when a person is in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.” (Maryland.gov)

• COVID-19 **can sometimes** be spread by airborne transmission.
  • “There is evidence that under certain conditions, people with COVID-19 seem to have infected others who were more than 6 feet away within enclosed spaces that had inadequate ventilation.” (Maryland.gov)

• Touching surfaces is **not thought to be a common** way that COVID-19 spreads, but could be possible.
  • Respiratory droplets on surfaces could infect someone if a person touches a surface with virus on it and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes. (CDC)

• COVID-19 is **not** known to spread from food.
  • “…we have not seen epidemiological evidence of food or food packaging as the source of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to humans.” (FDA Statement, Feb 2021)

https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/faqs/#trending
COVID-19 Actions

• Vaccinations will be an option
  – Encourage employees to get vaccinated
  – Help and support employees who want to get vaccinated
• Many will be vaccinated but must maintain:
  – Wearing face coverings (nose and mouth)
  – Social distancing
  – Sanitation practices
  – Isolating sick employees
• Take advantage of testing options

[Links to resources]
Vaccinations in Maryland

Why should you get the vaccine?

- **Protective**: The vaccines provide protection from serious COVID-19 illness.
- **Promising results**: Early clinical trials show the vaccines are highly effective in preventing serious illness.
- **Pandemic-ending**: The vaccines are the best path forward to ending the pandemic.
- **Minimal side effects**: Most of the participants in clinical trials had minimal side effects. The most common were soreness at injection site, fever, or body aches.


COVID-19 Actions

• Important to review your whole operation and think about how you will manage COVID-19 on the farm
  – Incoming workers; testing; quarantining
  – Development of cohorts for living, working, transportation
  – Housing; How to manage ill workers and those under quarantine; reducing risks in housing
  – Sanitation practices
  – Getting necessary resources
Protective Business Practices

Available here: news.maryland.gov/mda/category/covid-19/

- Mask Policy
- Social Distancing
- Handwashing
- Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Practices
- Best Practices for transport and delivery
- Best Practices for worker housing and bunk areas
- Screening for Symptoms
- Leave and Absence policy
- Best practices for quarantining sick workers
- Signage to encourage these good practices
COHORTING OF WORKERS

WORKERS CAN BE GROUPED/COHORTED BY HEALTH STATUS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 TO HEALTHY WORKERS.

- Consider creating groups of workers that house, transport, and work together, but stay apart from other groups of workers.
- Consider keeping migrant farm workers who live on the farm’s labor camp, migrant workers who live in off-farm housing, and local workers separate from one another to limit potential spread to and from the farm and community.

- **Group 1:** Workers that are COVID-19 positive, whether they have symptoms or not, can be isolated together.
- **Group 2:** Workers exposed to COVID-19, but do not show symptoms, tested negative or have not yet been tested, can be quarantined together away from positive cases.
- **Group 3:** Workers not exposed to COVID-19 and not showing symptoms can remain together with no need of isolation or quarantine.
RETURN TO WORK

WORKER WHO HAD COVID-19 SYMPTOMS IN ISOLATION CAN BE RELEASED FROM ISOLATION AND RETURN TO WORK ONLY UNDER THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES

Workers with symptoms who test positive for COVID-19 must remain in isolation until after:

• at least 3 full days (or 72 hours) have passed without a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications AND

• other symptoms are greatly improved and

• at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first started.

• Workers with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had ANY symptoms may discontinue isolation when at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and if they continue to have no symptoms.

• Possible exceptions when large number of asymptomatic positive workers: have them work together with face coverings and/or social-distancing
Handwashing and Personal Hygiene Practices

• Handwashing stations encourage good hygienic practices.

• Place the stations strategically.
  • At the entrance of work area, at entrance of customer areas.

• Good handwashing stations have soap, single use paper towels, running water, and a place to store the grey water.

• In addition to hand washing stations, you can provide hand sanitizers with at least 60-95% alcohol in various locations such as in the field, cooking and eating facilities and sleeping areas.

• Best practice: schedule handwashing breaks every hour
Example Worker Training
Items to Emphasize

What this document covers
• Definition of COVID-19
• How COVID-19 Spreads
• Symptoms of COVID-19
• Workplace Prevention

Example discussion questions to address with your workers
• Can you name some ways that the virus spreads?
• What are some ways you can protect yourself from COVID-19?
  • While working with customers
  • While on break eating lunch
  • After work

COVID-19 Guidance: AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE TRAINING

All training should be provided in the native language of workers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has guidance and signs available in multiple languages.

Definition of COVID-19: How it Spreads; Symptoms
1. Introduce the topic
   Say: Today we are going to talk about the new coronavirus, also called COVID-19, how it spreads, symptoms, how you can stay safe, and how we will keep you safe at work.

2. Discuss how the virus spreads
   Say: COVID-19 is a virus that mainly affects the lungs and spreads from person to person. When someone with the virus sneezes, coughs, or speaks, droplets with the virus can be breathed in by people nearby (at least 6 feet or 2 meters). Droplets can also land on surfaces like tables, handles, or tools. If you touch a surface and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands, the virus can enter your body.

3. Discuss the symptoms of the virus
   Say: COVID-19 can look and feel like the flu. The most common symptoms of the virus are fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath. Difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, a loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting diarrhea.
   Say: Symptoms may occur 2-14 days after you’ve been close to someone who has the virus or touched a surface that had the virus on it and touched your face with unwashed hands. Some people may never show symptoms.

   ショウエンウイルスが体調を崩すか否かは、病状が3-14日後に現れることがあります。最近に近かった人と接触した人、または手を汚れて顔を触った人には、体調の変化は見られない場合も考えられます。

   Call your healthcare provider first for instructions, before you go to the clinic, doctor’s office, or hospital. Call emergency services (9-1-1) if you have difficulty breathing. Consider providing numbers for local health centers or share this link as a resource:

   Do not come into work if you start to feel symptoms while working, tell your supervisor immediately.
   • Isolate yourself from other people as much as possible.
   • Thoroughly clean and sanitize all surfaces in your bunk, living area and/or home.

4. Review
   Ask: How do we review? Can you name some ways the virus spreads? Wait for responses.
   Possible responses:
   • When someone with the virus sneezes, coughs, or speaks.
   • When droplets land on a surface and then touch your face.
   • When you touch a surface and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.

   Ask: What should you do if you have symptoms? Wait for responses.
   Possible responses:
   • Call your healthcare provider.
   • Wear a mask (if available).

   Say: Scientists are learning more every day about how COVID-19 spreads. As information changes, we will update you.

General Prevention; Workplace Prevention
1. Introduce the topic
   Say: Now we are going to talk about how to prevent COVID-19 and how we will reduce your risk at work, and also reduce the risk to your family, friends, and coworkers.

2. Discuss personal prevention methods
   Say: The best way to prevent getting sick is to avoid being exposed to the virus.
   Some ways you can stay safe are:
   • Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the time it takes you to sing “Happy Birthday” or “The Macarena” twice). Wash in between your fingers and on the backs of your hands. Soaps and water are best, but if they are not available, use hand sanitizer and rub hands until dry.
   • Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
   • Avoid close contact. Stay at least 6 feet/2 meters away from others when possible. This includes locker areas, break areas, rest rooms areas, areas where product is sorted/bunched up, or palletized.

   Possible responses:
   • When someone with the virus sneezes, coughs, or speaks.
   • When droplets land on a surface and then touch your face.
   • When you touch a surface and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.

   Ask: What should you do if you have symptoms? Wait for responses.
   Possible responses:
   • Call your healthcare provider.
   • Wear a mask (if available).

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   Ask: What should you do if you have symptoms? Wait for responses.
   Possible responses:
   • Call your healthcare provider.
   • Wear a mask (if available).

   Say: Scientists are learning more every day about how COVID-19 spreads. As information changes, we will update you.
Guidance for Customer Interfacing

Plan ahead to protect your farm, your employees, and the public.

Check with county health departments before offering your planned activities this season.

- Contact numbers
- coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/lhd-resources
Guidance for Customer Interfacing

General Best Practices for this season:

• Utilize online shopping platforms / call ahead if possible
• Minimize customer touching product
• Separate customer interaction from the rest of farm activities
• Wash hands after interfacing with customers
Thank you for Wearing your Mask!

Properly wearing a mask is the best defense against infectious COVID-19 droplets.

• Have your mask policy clearly posted online and at customer areas.
• Have masks available for those who forgot.
• Make a plan for servicing those who cannot wear a mask due to a disability (online pre-order, curbside pickup, etc.).
• Ensure all your workers are trained on the mask policy and how or when to enforce it.

Separate, but Together: Social Distancing

- Use directional arrows to encourage flow of customers.
- Provide signage that urges customers to keep a 6-foot distance away from others.
- Discourage groups of 10 or more from assembling together in one area.
- Separate work tasks among workers
  - Ex: one person handles customers, one person stays at the register / packing area

https://cstoredecisions.com/2020/04/03/free-social-distancing-floor-graphics/
Farmers Market Resource: Best Practices to Action

- Farmers Market Food Safety Risk Reduction Checklist.
- Use the checklist to help you organize implementation of food safety best practices.
- The checklist will help you track important information to communicate prior to and throughout the market season.

[Image: Farmers Market Food Safety Risk Reduction Checklist]

drive.google.com/file/d/1hYBKo6SWK5-OhDkpNoIADi8W1c3D4Jqh/view?usp=sharing
Signage for Customers

Keep Farmers Safe & Growing

Secure mask over your nose and mouth while at the market.
WHY: Masks are a barrier so infectious respiratory droplets don't reach others.

Wash your hands before visiting market vendors.
Choose soap and water over hand sanitizer when possible.
WHY: Clean hands help reduce the spread of germs.

Keep your distance to reduce your contact with someone else's germs.
WHY: Masks and distance make it harder for someone's infectious respiratory droplets to get into your body.

Touch what you buy, not what you want.
WHY: The more we touch, the more we may contaminate.

Request resources today!

*Draft*
Follow the Science as it Evolves

• Research and epidemiologic data will continue to be gathered.
• Find trusted sources of information, stay engaged, and make necessary changes.
• Many people working to keep you informed!
• All Executive Orders are still in affect!
• Keep your employees informed!
  – Their actions are key to prevention!
• Sign up for CDC email updates
  tools.cdc.gov/campaignproxyservice/subscriptions.aspx?topic_id=USCDC_2067
Institute for Food Safety at Cornell University (IFS@CU)

https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/food-industry-resources/
Up-to-date Information

- New training materials
  - COVID-19 Training for Fresh Produce Farms and Packinghouses
- Industry office hours for asking questions
  - Every other week
- “COVID Boosters”
  - Short weekly video updates
- New CDC recommendations/Research
FoodCoVNET

- Based at NCSU
- Follow at foodcov.net;
  On social @foodcovnet
COVID-19 PREVENTATIVE MEASURES
CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING

CLEANING REMOVES DIRT

SANITIZING DESTROYS SOME BACTERIA AND VIRUSES

DISINFECTING DESTROYS MORE BACTERIA AND/OR VIRUSES

IMPORTANT INFO
- The virus causing COVID-19 requires disinfecting with compounds found here: go.ncsu.edu/epacovid-19
- Always clean before sanitizing or disinfecting
- Because disinfectants are harsher than sanitizers, they are not always safe for food contact surfaces
- Follow manufacturer’s instructions

Stay informed: go.ncsu.edu/covid-19
Updated April 17, 2020
Take the Time to Find the Right Product for Your Surfaces

cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm

EXAMPLE

Vigorox Liquid Sanitizer and Disinfectant
Food contact surfaces, no rinse.

Sodium Hypochlorite from Clorox
Food contact surfaces, requires a rinse!
COVID-19 Resources for Maryland Farms

• Handwash station
• Distance markers
• Mask signage
• Signage for customers

Order here: https://forms.gle/Rt5o8k65L3VZw5w76