

Guidelines for Apple and Pear Organisations Operating as Essential Businesses

Purpose

- These guidelines provide advice to apple and pear businesses on the kinds of measures New Zealand Apples & Pears believes members ought to have in place, and to enforce, if they are to be granted and maintain “essential business” status under [COVID-19 Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 4](#).
- This guidance is likely to change given the speed of developments, MPI has not been able to review or confirm these guidelines. Check the [NZAPI website for our latest guidance](#).

“Essential Business” Exemption

- On 23 March 2020 the Prime Minister announced that New Zealand’s COVID-19 Alert Level will be raised to Alert Level 4 on 25 March 2020 for a period of at least four weeks.
- Additional restrictions imposed in Alert Level 4 include:
 - People instructed to stay at home
 - Travel severely limited
 - Businesses closed except for essential businesses and lifeline utilities

Food production operations are classified as “essential businesses”

The Government has confirmed that:

- Orchards, packhouses, coolstores, and all related parts of the food production supply chain such as distribution of fruit may remain open as “essential businesses”
- However, all exempted businesses must be accepted for registration with the Government, and will be expected to prove that they can protect their workers and the public from COVID-19.
- Compliance will be checked, and defaulting businesses will be closed.

Operating as an Essential Business.

To be registered, and maintain registration, essential businesses must give confidence to MPI that they have systems and protocols in place to minimise the risk of COVID19. The registration system is available here <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/covid-19-essential-primary-sector-service-registration/>.

We have provided below **sample** protocols that NZAPI considers would likely satisfy the requirements. **Not all of these measures will be applicable to all growers and/or packers**, and each business will need to adapt requirements to its own situation. They are indicative of the level of measures that we consider are likely to be required in order to guarantee low risk of COVID-19 transmission.

You will need to respond to the questionnaire with honest answers of how your business meets the requirements.

Question 2 asks for your NZBN number. You can find this on our registration database under your company details, or this link: <https://www.nzbn.govt.nz/>

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Question 3 on the MPI site asks you for your Food Act FCP/NP ID. This can be found on the MPI Food Act portal <http://mpiportal.force.com/publicregister>

Industry Wide Certified Systems

GLOBALG.A.P. & British Retail Consortium (BRCGS)

The New Zealand Apple & Pear industry deploys the [GLOBALG.A.P.](#) Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) system throughout its orchards and packhouses. GLOBALG.A.P. is an independently audited commercial GAP system and businesses are certified annually. GLOBALG.A.P. approved operations can be found in the [database](#). The New Zealand Apple & Pear industry use [BRCGS](#) as their Good Manufacturing Practice food safety system. MPI recognises the food safety elements of GLOBALG.A.P. and BRCGS under the requirements of the Food Act.

These two independently audited and certified systems form the structures within in which worker safety and hygiene protocols operate.

Version control

This is a live document. All edits (excluding formatting) to this document will be highlighted green on the day of the edit, and the version with the date will be in the footer of the document.

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Questions and Answers

Note: NZAPI provides these answers as guidance only. You will need to choose what you are able to implement and be prepared to be checked by MPI. Question numbers 1-8 are based on your business details. For questions 8-19 we have given guidance below

How do your production processes protect your workers and the public by reducing the potential spread of COVID-19?

- Businesses should have a COVID19 manager who oversees systems and protocols minimising the risk of spreading COVID19.
- Essential Businesses have a critical role in feeding New Zealand and overseas communities with health nutritious food. Through remittances RSE workers are also supporting their communities. It is critically important to maintain business continuity. Protocols must be taken very seriously, and any deliberate non-compliance will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.
- Meetings will be conducted digitally, however when necessary to have a group meeting, the groups will only be the pre-arranged teams and conducted outside under cover, whenever possible, and numbers of attendees are kept small.
- Each shift starts with brief meeting reviewing procedures, issues, risks, and solutions.
- Training and education about what the household isolation and work isolation means and how it works
- Internal audits at regular frequencies, verifying staff understand are implementing the isolation rules.

How are you ensuring that workers and others at work are observing social distancing to and from work, during work and during rest breaks?

- Workers should drive to work and from work individually or should only share transport with others from th
- Designated working groups that are not to come into contact with other working groups (if RSEs designate working groups with workers from the same accommodation).
- Teams have an identifier i.e colour codes as arm bands or vests.
- Always working 2m from others where possible. Where more than 2 required for a task only from the same working group.
- Social distancing when moving between rows and blocks.
- Limiting number of pickers to individual rows, pickers at an orchard bin one at a time to maintain distance
- Use barriers where 2m cannot be maintained (packhouses in France and Italy use clear plastic screens to isolate packers)
- Breaks to be staggered between working groups to ensure 2m distance is maintained at all times.
- Smoko room tables/chairs surfaces are cleaned before and after each break. Cleaning times documented and audited.
- COVID-19 signage displayed in all accommodation common areas and in sleeping quarters

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- Accommodation quarantine/isolation areas well signposted
- Increased supervision and verbal reinforcement of procedures and compliance.
- Designated shoppers elected from residential groups.
- Workers to bring packed lunch to minimise trips to convenience stores and dairies.
- Lunch provided to workers to minimise trips to convenience stores and supermarkets.
- Vending machine for purchase of food on site.

What personal hygiene steps have you put in place for workers to reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?

- GLOBAL GAP procedures for personal hygiene, hand washing and facilities.
- Signage on protocols for limiting spread i.e. coughing or sneezing into elbows.
https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/COVID-19_Key-Message_A4-Posters_Protect_English.pdf
- Strict hand washing procedure. Hands to be washed with soap and water or sanitiser when arriving at work, before and after going to the toilet and before and after eating food.
- https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/COVID-19_Key-Message_A3-Posters_Wash-Hands.pdf
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- Use barriers where 2m cannot be maintained (packhouses in France and Italy use clear plastic screens to isolate packers).
- Ensure that all equipment, surfaces and facilities touched by workers are regularly cleaned
- Individual gear to be allocated i.e. Picking bags, secateurs, ladders. If this isn't possible, it will need to be sanitised between use.
- Restrict drivers to one per vehicle e.g. tractor, forklift.
- Sanitise surfaces in vehicles or equipment at the end of a shift or between use.
- No sharing of food, lighters, vapes, smokes, drink bottles, cups or plates
- All personal gear should be taken home at the end of each day i.e. lunch boxes, clothes.

What existing, or additional personal protective equipment could you introduce that would reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?

- If you have access to masks and gloves please use these as appropriate
- Where appropriate, physical barriers between employees

What steps are you taking to limit access to your workplaces apart from essential workers?

- No visitors on site unless providing an essential service – i.e. transport, maintenance.
- Signage and access notifications as per Global Gap protocols.

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- Physical closing of orchard and packhouse gates, with the introduction of entry and access controls
- Maintain a record of all personnel on every site, visitor or employee. Date, time and contact details
- Any visitor to the site (as an essential service) must meet all criteria outlined in 'Social Distancing'
- Assigned drop off location and register for deliveries/pickups. Phone notification by text/photo to eliminate contact.
- Use of electronic access technology and monitoring.

How are you isolating workers, or parts of your workplace, so that virus spread would be contained should it occur?

- Non-essential personnel have been required to stay home.
- Essential personal that are able to work from home, will do so.
- Essential personnel have been split into separate teams with functions spread amongst teams to reduce staff density on-site
- Each team wears a colour visible identifier (Red / Green / Blue) so they are immediately identifiable.
- Team's avoid close contact with members of different teams.
- Teams use separate vehicles, have breaks and lunch at different times from other teams, and in different places.
- Equipment is assigned to be used by specific shift workers only and all control surfaces sanitised between operator usage.
- If any individual were to become COVID-19 positive then their team would be isolated.

What arrangements have you put in place for workers to report any illness and remove themselves from work?

- Workers are encouraged to pay careful attention to their wellbeing and that of their colleagues at work, and any worker member feeling unwell while at work will be sent home with illness and exposure procedure.
- COVID19 manager will follow up and monitor well-being and support.
- Any workers member who suspects they may have been exposed to COVID-19 should stay home (or if at work, leave immediately), and immediately report to the COVID-19 manager by phone to a specified number, and to contact Healthline 0800 611 116.
- Procedure for screening workers to identify if they are unwell or showing any sign of illness each morning, record in a workers register and report to COVID19 manager.
- Signage for signs and symptoms.
- Call Healthline 24/7 on 0800 358 5453.
- Take extra precautions to isolate affected working group.
 - <https://covid19.govt.nz/help-and-advice/for-everyone/understanding-covid-19/>

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What arrangement have you put in place for workers to report any suspected exposure to COVID-19?

- Workers should be asked for their travel movements in the past 14 days. If they have entered the country in the past 14 days, they need to be in self isolation and cannot be actively employed
- Workers should be asked if they have any signs of illness frequently (i.e. daily), and a register taken
- If workers are presenting Covid-19 related symptoms they be sent home immediately and Healthline advised. If they have used any facilities, these should be isolated and sanitised before letting other workers use them
- Workers who have been sick should not return to work without medical clearance
- Workers to notify and not come to work if they have come into contact with members outside their immediate household/isolation circle for more than 15 minutes. This question should be asked daily as workers arrive at work. If they have been in contact they will need to be stood down for 14 days before returning to work

What actions would you take should a workers member be suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19?

- Workers with suspected or confirmed COVID19 should be isolated from others they live with in an isolation room or separate accommodation site.
- Refer to a register/log of all contacts to the orchard, day, time and duration
- Stand down affected working group. Self-isolation at home for two weeks.
- Call Healthline 24/7 on 0800 358 5453

How do you ensure that workers at particular risk of COVID-19 identify themselves and are isolated from work?

- Workers with a compromised immune system should not be actively employed during the period of Level 3 and Level 4.
- Exemptions will only be made if they can guarantee that the workers can work on tasks in isolation from others or with members from their own household.
- All businesses should have a record of staff age and medical conditions
- Workers over the age of 70 should be given the option to finish work and go home.

How will you ensure that your workers observe 'stay at home' rules at the conclusion of each working day?

- Provision of food in the workplace.
- Signage and verbal reinforcement of requirements by supervisors and senior production workers multiple times throughout the day.

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Good and Services Access

Goods and Services includes but is not limited to:

- Plant protection product suppliers – Fruitfed/Farmlands
 - Sample collection for maturity and residue testing
 - Forklift leasing and tyre repair companies
 - Maintenance companies
 - Couriers
 - Packaging manufacturers e.g. fruit/pack labels, cartons, pallets, fruit bins
 - Hygiene contractors, rodent controls.
 - Forklift leasing and Tyre repair companies.
 - Smart Fresh operators.
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- All goods and services will be pre-arranged via phone conversation
 - Where possible, any services that can be provided without visiting the site will be completed remotely
 - A drop-off point will be arranged for goods - eliminating person-to-person contact

 - Only services essential to the operation of the business will be allowed on site
 - Any services requiring workers for an outside organisation will be briefed in the initial phone call of how and where to arrive. All hygiene procedures, PPE requirements and a 2m minimum distance rule will be strictly adhered to for the duration of the visit.
 - Any repairs and maintenance that can be completed in areas with lowest traffic of permanent workers will be done so.
 - Essential service providers will not visit any areas of the business other than those necessary to carry out their work. All surface/equipment will be wiped down once the work has been completed.
 - Any employees of good and services providers that have been unwell will be refused entry from the premises.
 - All visitors will follow the normal sign in/sign out procedures – any further detail regarding specific locations in the workplace and any personal interaction will be recorded to ensure contract tracing can be made efficiently.
 - All logbook/visitor information will be available immediately on request of authorities.

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