



EHPEA

SUPPORT • CONNECT • EXCHANGE

COVID-19 WORKPLACES PROTOCOL



Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person and having contacts with different surfaces that might have contamination with coronavirus. Coronaviruses cause respiratory infections - from the common cold to more severe diseases. The COVID-19 outbreak began in China late in 2019. Since then, it has spread rapidly to all parts of the world, within three months WHO officially announce the virus a pandemic. Nowadays at the global level including Ethiopia struggling with the pandemics to control and to get the treatment mechanisms. It is affecting millions of people and has led to the death of a hundred thousand. It is taking a huge toll on families, societies, health systems, and economies around the world, and for as long as this virus threatens any country, the entire world is at risk.

Thus all sections of our society –including businesses and employers –must play a role to stop the spread of this disease. This guideline focuses on how the horticulture sector company can prevent and/or reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, established in 2002, having 120 members who are all legally registered businesses engaged in the production of flowers, cutting, planting materials, ornamental plants, fruits, vegetables and herbs for the export market. The sector creates a job opportunity for more than 200,000 employees of which more than 75% are female. The mission of EHPEA is to promote the competitive position of the Ethiopian horticulture sector in the global market.

EHPEA, as a business membership organization, has been working for the development of the sector through overall supporting members in the doing business climate. Among the key intervention, areas are supporting and promotion of socially and environmentally responsible production practices among its member farms through low-cost measures. You can help prevent the spread of infections in your workplace, such as colds, flu, and stomach bugs. This will protect your customers, contractors, and, not least, your employees. This way, your company reduces absenteeism due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19.

Hence, EHPEA outlined this guideline to specifically highlight the importance of strong OHS systems in the workplace, particularly concerning COVID-19 prevention and containment measure. Likewise, a solid gender-sensitive response

is important, since a virus outbreak affects women and men differently - and is typically accompanied by a state of high mental stress, leading to increased levels of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

1.1. Objective:

- The protocol has been developed to prepare a working guide on prevention and control of COVID-19
- To create a system for workplace prevention mechanisms on the sector
- To assist companies to build strong, resilient, and healthy workplaces.
- To implement precautionary in the prevention of COVID-19 and promotion of best practices

1.2. The Business Case of Investing on Employee's Health

Investing time and resources in promoting employee health will contribute to

- Healthy and more productive employees
- Reduced absenteeism due to illness
- Improved employee motivation, creativity, and innovation
- Decrease health care expense
- Increased product quality
- Stronger financial performance
- Enhanced ability to attract and retain skilled and talented employees
- Better risk management and due diligence
- Fewer workplace conflicts and less risk of litigation
- Stronger brand and reputation
- Increased ability to attract new customers and orders
- Resilient local communities, allowing for fewer disruptions in business activities

To implement a successful COVID-19 strategy, top management should

- Follow the guidelines of relevant updates by national ministries of Health and Public Health institute
- Prioritize and set aside the funding necessary to implement the strategy

- Cooperate closely with the OHS/Gender Committees and peer educators/SRHR champions on the key steps recommended on the following page
- Appoint a contact person in your business that workers can talk to about any concerns
- Ensure adequate training of peer educators, possibly in cooperation with relevant local organizations
- Set up ways to communicate with workers minimum group, online with frequently communicate interval.
- Provide information to workers about the support available to them, for example through an employee assistance program.

2. Protocols to be followed by Farms

2.1. Plan ahead

- Establish the COVID-19 task force to facilitate safe practices in the workplace and teach their colleagues the proper procedures listed below.
- Develop a plan to ensure business continuity if there is a suspected or confirmed outbreak of COVID-19 in your workplace.
- Consider what you will do if one of your workers is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, including how you will support that work and what you need to do to ensure the workplace remains safe for other workers.
- Consider if you have appropriate cleaning products and personal protective equipment available to disinfect your workplace following an outbreak. If you do not, consider options for hiring a cleaning company or local government Health offices to do this work.

2.2. Maintain social distancing

Social distancing also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing

- Maintain at least 2 meters (6 feet) distance among the employees.
- The social distancing implemented everywhere inside the site and special focus is given on areas where there are crowds, different signs with at least 2 m distance are placed
 - Working places
 - Hand wash & Canteen area
 - Entrance & Exit places
- Ensure the established task force monitor the worker's social distancing practices.

2.3. Hand washing and hygiene

Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors, and customers and make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water

- Have clean water and soap and/or sanitizer stations at entry and exit points and around the workplace.
- Ensure bathrooms are well stocked with hand wash facilities (water and soap)
- Put up posters with instructions on how to hand wash/hand rub.
- Instruct workers on other ways to limit the spread of the virus, including by not touching their face, sneezing into their elbow, and staying home if feeling sick.
- Instruct your workers to limit contact with others– no shaking hands, hugs, or touching objects unless necessary.
- If possible, accept only cashless transactions. (E.g. salary payment can be through the bank)
- Increase access to closed bins in your workplace.
- All employees wash should their hands at the farm gate, eating area, toilet, and other areas inside the compound at different working areas frequently.
- Ensure the established task force monitor the worker's social distancing practices.

2.4. Cleaning and disinfection

- Ensure any areas frequented by workers or others (e.g. visitors to your premises) are cleaned at least daily with detergent or disinfectant.
- Instruct workers to wear gloves when cleaning and wash their hands thoroughly with soap or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after wearing gloves.
- Clean frequently touched areas and surfaces several times a day with a detergent or disinfectant solution or wipe. This includes office equipment, elevator buttons, handrails, tables, countertops, doorknobs, sinks, and keyboards.
- Instruct workers to clean personal property that comes to work, such as sunglasses, mobile phones, and iPads with disinfectant, such as disinfectant wipes.

Clean and disinfect offices, changing room, Clinic, kit boxes, all cars, Canteen at least once a day with disinfectant solution, particularly special focus has been given for surfaces that are touched by many people (lunch tables, office tables, equipment's, GH and office door handles, etc.)

2.5. PPE for COVID-19

As per the state of emergency to reduce the spread of the virus, every worker must use a facemask in the workplace.

- Ensure the provision of standard facemask and consistently and properly worn when required.
- Regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced, as necessary.
- Properly removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of, as applicable, to avoid contamination of self, others, or the environment.
- Employers are obligated to provide their workers with PPE needed to keep them safe while performing their jobs.
- The types of PPE required during a COVID-19 outbreak will be based on the risk of being infected with COVID-19 while working and job tasks that may lead to exposure.

2.6. Support vulnerable workers

- While COVID-19 can make anyone sick, some employees are more at risk of getting an infection and developing severe complications due to their health circumstances.
- The identified vulnerable workers include:-
 - ✦ an older adult
 - ✦ medical conditions (e.g. heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases)
 - ✦ Pregnant women
- We need to take action helping to prevent these workers from getting or spreading the COVID-19 virus.
- These risk group better to stop working for an unspecified period by giving them annual leave

2.7. Monitor symptoms

- Put up signs about the symptoms of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Ensure Daily temperature check for workers at the farm gate
- Direct workers to stay home if they are sick, and if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 ask them to call the National Coronavirus hotline. National COVID-19 hotline: 8335/952.
- Instruct workers to tell you if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, have been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19, or have been tested for COVID-19.

- Remind staff of their leave entitlements if they are sick or required to self-quarantine.
- Treat personal information about individual workers' health carefully, in line with privacy laws.
- Facilitate working from home, if possible, for staff who are required to self-quarantine but are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

2.8. COVID-19 cases incidence Action plans

The COVID-19 committee, coordinated by company SHO officer and company management, monitors the daily status of employees.

If there is any employee who has a sign of sickness or any one of the symptoms signs of COVID-19:

- He/she will be advised to stay at home to isolate him/herself.
- The clinic nurse/ company OSH officer will follow up the health status
- The employee advised to take care of himself & others and keep on communicating his status to the nurse and/Company OSH officer
- The plan should cover putting the suspected person in a room or area where they are isolated from others in the workplace, limiting the number of people who have contact with the sick person, and contacting the local health authorities.
- The plan Consider how to identify persons who may be at risk, and support them, without inviting stigma and discrimination. This could include persons who have recently traveled to an area reporting cases or other personnel who have conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. diabetes, heart and lung disease, older age).
- Consider how to Move potentially infectious people to a location away from workers, customers, and other visitors. Although the need to have specific isolation rooms, designated areas with closable doors may serve as isolation rooms until potentially sick people can be removed from the worksite. (Consider basic facilities like a clean room, toilet, bed, food, sanitary materials and separate from other farm facilities)
- After All these precautions and prevention measures are being practiced, for any worst-case scenario that might emerge, the company will take the following actions;
- In case of any suspect happen with the symptoms of COVID-19;
 - The company will report to town/woreda COVID-19 task force and Health Bureau for assistance for isolation screening and follow up.
 - The company HSO officer will communicate the health center for further investigation of the case

- Besides, other employees who have close contact with the suspected individual will be advised to the taker of his/her self and others and follow up on his/her health condition.
- An employee who is on leave, or isolates himself because of any other sickness should follow up his/her health condition
- In case of any visible symptoms while on leave, isolation the employees are advised to report to the Clinic officer (HSO), town/woreda COVID 19 task force, health center, or to call to 8335 to get assistance.
- In case of any confirmed COVID-19 positive result of an employee
 - The company will do all necessary assistance for the patient with the support of health workers
 - All other workers who can be in close contact to the confirmed case will be isolated fast with the collaboration to the town health bureau & task force
 - The company in consultation with the town task force and health workers will decide isolated employees and suspected workers where to send them and to quarantine. The town administration & task force prepare quarantine places.

2.9. 10 Key Steps for All Workplaces to Take In Response to COVID-19

2.8.1. Prioritize workplace sanitation to reduce the risk of spreading the virus

- Clean workplace facilities carefully twice a day, like. Objects and surfaces
- Install hand-sanitizers at all entries to the workplace, clothe changing area, lunch areas, and toilets, changing room, at the farm gate, entering to transport service
- Provide access to water and soap in all workplace toilets, lunch area, changing room, at the farm gate, entering to transport service
- Place posters at toilets to remind staff of the need for good personal hygiene, production area, packing area, notice board and at changing area

2.8.2. Allow employees to work from home and stop non-critical business traveling

- Employees who work from home, reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19
- For some groups of employees, this will not hinder business operations – e.g. employees in certain administrative or non-essential business functions
- Support the provision of home-based internet/workplace stations, if possible

- Follow the guidance of the relevant national authorities regarding traveling

2.8.3. Maintain a 2-meter working distance between employees in the workplace

- Where work from home is not an option, redesign the workplace to allow for the required working distance
 - e.g. divide working areas by plastic partitions
- Reduce business operations, so fewer employees enter the factory premises

2.8.4.. Provide relevant, quality PPEs to staff – e.g.

- Ensure to provide for employees, wherever the minimum working distance is not possible
- Masks, incl. instructions incorrect use, for employees as recommended by national health authorities - pay due respect to the global shortage of masks and other PPEs

2.8.5. Provide salary and workplace insurances to all employees, including employees sent home

- The effect on individuals and the national economy of sending staff home with no salary or insurance can be fatal to people and your business - demand decreases and markets collapse
- If possible, continue payment of salaries and insurances

2.8.6.. Provide safe transportation for employees, especially for women

- Public transportation is affected by COVID-19 – provide safe alternatives
- This is important at all hours, but crucial if employees work evening or night shifts
- Employees should never need to sleep at the company premises to remain safe. Female employees that sleep at the workplace are especially vulnerable to abuse

2.8.7. Ensure access to grievance

- Establish an effective complaint mechanism for staff to voice concerns regarding the company's COVID-19 response.

2.8.8. Establish a process for how to handle employees infected by COVID-19

- Have a clear action plan in place for how to handle a situation if employees become ill and show COVID-19 symptoms, incl. immediate steps to inform the relevant health authorities.

2.8.9. Communicate the above steps to all employees to support awareness

- Print posters, flyers and stickers for employees in English as well as in local language (e.g. Amharic and oromic language) – place them at strategic, visible places throughout the workplace
- Where relevant, use social media to support the required employee awareness
- Be the lighthouse - demonstrate visible, honest and hope to provide leadership

2.8.10. Follow the COVID-19 control measures recommended by the relevant authorities

- At all times make sure, the company continuity plan is in full compliance with the pandemic control measures recommended by the national authorities Ministry of health, Ethiopian Public Health Institute, and by WHO.

3. Role of on Farm and EHPEA COVID-19 Task Forces

3.1. Role of Farm COVID-19 task force

- Updated best practices for conducting social distancing with OSH officer/COVID focal person
- Create linkage with local government COVID task force and update the information
- Conducting daily health checks with farm nurse and OSH officer/COVID focal person
- Conducting a hazard assessment of the workplace and OSH officer/COVID focal person
- Encouraging employees to wear cloth face in the workplace, and to wash their hand at all critical handwashing time
- Implement policies and practices for social distancing and other spread mechanisms in the workplace
- Train the committee members and make sure all employee has trained and raise the awareness
- Make sure all the COVID spread mechanisms are implemented properly
- Conduct the record and document on COVID daily activities and report to the management
- If there is any points need improvement to take corrective action with the advice of management
- Follow up and coordination of the cleaning and disinfection of the compound

3.2. Role of EHPEA COVID-19 Task Force

- Establishment of COVID-19 coordination support task force
- Develop Protocol to mitigate the COVID prevention on the sector
- Development of Training manuals and the IEC materials for farm support

- Awareness creation for EHPEA staff and farm community
- Organize a media engagement
- Farm follow up the implementation progress
- Create linkage with farm management on the COVID pandemics
- organize mechanisms to document and report progress to stakeholders through EHPEA

4. COVID-19 Interventions Knowledge Management

EHPEA will create a data mining platform from farms to EHPEA. These data will be developed to share with the EHPEA board, members, media, development partners, and leading actors in the supply chain.

4.1. Action to be taken for Continuous Knowledge Management of the Farms' COVID-19 Response:

- EHPEA will set up a platform so that member farms' COVID-19 focal persons will share information with EHPEA.
- EHPEA will agree with Member Farms what indicators need to be reported regularly and how. (Annex Data that needs to be tracked by farms COVID-19 committee)
- The collected data need to be filed-out at farms. Besides, those data should be shared with EHPEA through the arranged platform every Friday.
- Farm COVID Committee will regularly conduct meetings and share pertinent findings of the meeting to EHPEA through the arranged platform.
- EHPEA and the farm will consider the focal person's access and ability to use specific mobile technologies for rapid data collection/monitoring of activities.
- EHPEA will train the farm committee members on the data collection formats and the reporting platform.
- The developed data collection forms (annexed) are flexible to be changed as per feedback from farm COVID officers, and also develop new as the need arises.
- Collected and analyzed data will be shared with external stakeholders as per EHPEA's media engagement plan as well as report to development partners. Ongoing progress challenges of the intervention will be reported to EHPEA management on a weekly basis and to board member on a monthly basis for remedial and follow up purposes.

5. Media engagement; sector mitigation on COVID-19 pandemic

The media can reach populations rapidly and at scale, connecting citizens, experts, and emergency responders to promote member farms' best practice in mitigating COVID-19 pandemic. It can provide people with critical information from trusted sources so that they know what is happening, how to protect themselves, and when and how to seek treatment and support.

There is also an indication that the media can play an important role during public health crises by providing reassurance, promoting calm, and motivating people to take action to improve their situation.

Accordingly, EHPEA member farms must provide maximum transparency to keep the public and media fully informed about ongoing developments as per the Association COVID-19 strategic preparedness and response protocol plan. Having a professional media engagement through digital technologies plays a bigger role in the global fight against the pandemic. Effective communication within the association and the farms can help to prevent or reduce the spread of unjustified panic that could worsen the situation.

In this section the COVID-19 media engagement outlines the following two side of communication approach (Promoting farms best practice to the public and Promoting smooth communication on applying the protocol plan);

5.1. Step one: Communication production center establishment

- Establishment of the communication production center where all related resources gathered produced for publication with a key role such as; (Media and community engagement; Monitoring and evidence generation; Documentation; Impact assessment); Human resources for risk communication within EHPEA.
- Communicate with farms to assign a focal person on each farm to report/communicate with the communication production center team.
- Start building contacts with emergency responders in each horticulture clusters, health organizations, and experts who are good communicators now. Cultivating these relationships can help to ensure that media and communication are part of the emergency response and will make it easier to achieve the other steps listed in this manual.

5.2. Step Two: Develop Communication Protocols

- Production of communication or data collection material will be produced by IEC production center team in EHPEA
- The assigned focal person of the farms will send a report/update on the implementation of the protocol on a weekly bases based on the provided data collection material
- Information verification and monitoring will be conducted by the team

- Story/news development
- Selection of media to publish and broadcast the best practice of the farm and the association

5.3. Step Three: Create media engagement activities

- Motivate farms and other stakeholders to cope with the challenges they face by:
 - Showcasing positive stories of related COVID -19 mitigation results
 - sharing experiences and learning from other farms
 - Create a platform to give interviews on media to share their coping strategies by involving the regional health experts, emergency responders or political leaders
 - Inviting trusted figures to offer reassurance and guidance to the farms
- Counter dangerous rumors and misconceptions about the pandemic crisis by:
 - Providing verified facts from trusted voices
 - Identifying and correcting misconceptions and misinformation
 - Invite government institutions who are responsible for awareness creation of the pandemic to brief the workers
 - Managing expectations about what can and cannot be achieved, to avoid anger and disappointment later
- Liaise with other media program, international and local organizations as well as government actors to promote the sector best practice response towards the pandemic.

Annex

Farm Audit Check List

Item	Present☐/*	Action Needed	Person Responsible	Action Completed
1. Information				
Up-to-date information about local COVID-19 activity from public health officials.				
All the necessary Information about COVID-19 communicated to farm works				
Does the farm is working in line with the local authorities guidance, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Encourage your workers with suspected symptoms of COVID-19 not to come to the workplace and ✦ To follow the guidance of the local authorities. 				
Posters posted in the farm				
Emergency contact list prepared				
2. Prepare for possible illness				
Isolation Room is prepared with full facilities on the farm (water, soap, detergent, food item,)				
Responsible personnel assigned (COVID officer, COVID Committee)				
Hand Washing facility and detergents prepared and changed whenever necessary				
3. Every day preventative steps				
Workers wash their hands frequently.				
Workers Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.				
Workers Stay home when they are sick.				
Workers cover their mouth and nose while cough or sneeze with a tissue or elbow				
Workers have access to handwashing facilities water with soap and/or disinfectant at least at farm gate, eating area, toilet, office				
The face mask is provided for Workers to use at the workplace, including the training on how to use and handling of the mask				
Frequently touched objects are cleaned with the proper detergent				
All the required standard PPE is given for the genitors(waterproof glove, apron, boots, and mask)				
Daily temperature check for workers performed				
Any suspected cases reported?				
Any confirmed cases reported in the farm?				
4. Reporting and records				
All records of training available for reference				
All records of the incident available for reference				
All records for provision of PPE, cleaning materials and other input used for COVID prevention				
5. Qualitative data that can help inform messages and activities				
The reaction of workers on posters				



Fidelity of COVID committee training material contents				
Rumors and misunderstandings on messages and training				
Unintended interpretations of messages				
Barriers at farms to adopting the desired behaviors				
Behaviors that aggravate COVID-19 incidence at farms				
The information need of the farmworkers				
The reaction of workers to the emergency and the communication activities				
Application skill of the COVID officer on mobile application				

Coronavirus Suspected Employee Recording Form

I. Personal information

Name	
Work Title	
Gender	
Nationality	
Emergency Contact	<p>Full name:</p> <p>Relationship:</p> <p>Contact number:</p> <p>Address:</p>

II. Employee Time Spent at the Farm Isolation Room:

1. Mitigating Actions taken to prevent the spread of virus:

2. Results of the Employee:

Name: Signed: Date:

Farms Best Practice Collection Form

<p>1. Company Profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A brief introduction of the company
<p>2. COVID-19 intervention Conducted in the Farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What challenges were being faced? - In response to this challenge, what was the strategy used to tackle the problem?
<p>3. Change Brought Out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief description of the change (state what change observed as a result) - What has improved
<p>4. Aspiration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the changes brought through the intervention, what will the farm plan to do, or aspire towards the same endeavor in the future?

General Note:

- **Support your Story with PHOTO/S!**
- **Kindly only include stories that reflect COVID-19 related challenge, intervention, and success with best practices only .**





Farm COVID-19 Committee Lead: _____ Signature: _____



Frequently check for updates
From the official National government Ministry of Health Website

<http://www.moh.gov.et>

and <https://www.ephi.gov.et/>

National hotline number: 8335 or 952

Regional hotline:

- **Oromia: 6955**
- **Amhar: 6981**
- **SNNP: 6929**
- **Tigray: 6244**
- **Dire Dawa: 6407**