



# COVID-19: Guidance for preventing transmission of COVID-19 within food businesses

## Updated guidance

### SUMMARY

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Current data indicates that neither food nor food packaging is a pathway for the spread of viruses causing respiratory illnesses, including SARS-CoV-2. In other words, SARS-CoV-2 is not a direct food safety concern. However, it is important for the food industry and authorities regulating the food industry to protect all workers from person-to-person spread of these viruses by providing a safe work environment, promoting personal hygiene measures and providing training on food hygiene principles. These measures should be risk-based and proportionate to the level of expected food business worker exposure to SARS-CoV-2: In communities where SARS-CoV-2 is not actively circulating, practices consistent with effective food safety management systems may be sufficient. In contrast, as the prevalence of COVID-19 increases in the community, the prevention measures adopted should also increase.

The purpose of these guidelines is to highlight measures needed to control COVID-19 in food operations, so that the safety of workers is protected, and the safety of the food supply is preserved. These measures should not compromise traditional food safety controls and food safety management, but should complement ongoing food safety practices. Whilst COVID-19 is a global pandemic, the occurrence of the virus may vary greatly within and between countries. Thus, this guidance should be read in conjunction with the guidelines and advice from national and local public health authorities. Updated with new evidence, this Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) guidance replaces the FAO/WHO interim guidance, COVID-19 and food safety: guidance for food businesses: Interim guidance (dated 7 April 2020).

### BACKGROUND

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The world is facing an unprecedented threat from the COVID-19 pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2. First and foremost, COVID-19 is a risk for public health generally, as well as an occupational safety risk for workers in any type of business or industry where individuals work in close proximity to one another. However, SARS-CoV-2 itself is not viewed as a direct food safety hazard. Many countries are following the advice from the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding the introduction of physical distancing measures as one of the ways in which transmission of the disease can be reduced (WHO, 2020a). The requirement of physical distancing has caused the closure of many businesses and schools and resulted in restrictions on travel and social gatherings. For some people, working from home, teleworking, and online

or through internet discussions and meetings are now more common practice than before the pandemic. However, many food industry employees do not have the opportunity to work from home and are required to continue to work in their usual workplaces. Multiple outbreaks of COVID-19 have indeed occurred among workers on farms and in food processing facilities, likely due to aspects of their work environments that make it challenging for them to keep to strict physical distancing.

For the purpose of this guidance, food workers include all people working in the food business who touch food or food contact surfaces. This includes explicitly also all people who are physically present in the vicinity where food is processed, packaged, or handled. The term can therefore apply as well to managers, cleaners, maintenance contractors, delivery workers, food inspectors and others. Ensuring the safety and well-being of all food workers is of paramount importance. A healthy and sufficient workforce is critical to maintain supply chains operational. In addition to this document, food businesses also need to keep up-to-date with food regulations and any additional advice from competent authorities on other measures that must be implemented as a result of the pandemic. These efforts are essential to maintain trust and consumer confidence in the safety and availability of food.

## UNLIKELY TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 THROUGH FOOD

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It is highly unlikely that people can contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging (Goldman, 2020; ICMSF, 2020; NZFSSRC, 2020). Evidence to date does not indicate that food or food packaging is an important pathway for the spread of human respiratory illnesses, including SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 is primarily transmitted during close contact among people through respiratory droplets and aerosols generated by activities such as coughing, sneezing, shouting, singing and speaking (WHO, 2020a). Alternatively, some respiratory droplets may land on surfaces surrounding the infected person. Coronaviruses cannot multiply in food or on inanimate surfaces; they can only multiply in humans and certain animals. Once in the environment, viruses degrade and becomes less infectious.

Several research reports have described the persistence of the SARS-CoV-2 on different surfaces, for instance documenting that the virus can remain viable for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, up to four hours on copper, and up to 24 hours on cardboard (van Doremalen, Bushmaker *et al.*, 2020). Other studies have investigated the stability of the virus on surfaces kept at different temperatures or varying other parameters (Kumar, Singh *et al.*, 2021). While all these investigations add to our understanding of the persistence and survivability of the virus, they have typically been conducted under laboratory conditions, with controlled relative humidity, temperature and other factors, and should therefore be interpreted with caution when considering virus stability under actual conditions of the often cool (or freezing) and humid food processing and transportation environment. It is important to note that, although the detection of virus or viral ribonucleic acid (RNA) remnants on foods and food packaging provides evidence of previous contamination and is not disputed, there is no confirmation of SARS-CoV-2, or any other respiratory illness-causing virus, being transmitted by food or food packaging and causing illnesses in people who touch the contaminated food products or packaging.

The virus responsible for COVID-19 is susceptible to most commonly used disinfectants and sanitizing agents used in the food processing environment. Standard cleaning and sanitizing procedures, as outlined in the food business operator's (FBO) food safety management system (FSMS), should therefore be effective at disinfecting the food processing environment. Alcohol-

based sanitizers/surface disinfectants should be used as per manufacturers' instructions for cleaning purposes. In general, alcohol-based disinfectants (ethanol, propan-2-ol, propan-1-ol) have been shown to significantly reduce infectivity of enveloped viruses like SARS-CoV-2. WHO recommends sanitizers with greater than 70 percent alcohol with sufficient contact time for decontamination (WHO, 2020b). Common disinfectants with active ingredients based on quaternary ammonium compounds and chlorine also have virucidal properties. Whilst microbiological environmental sampling has a role in verifying sanitation protocols, the testing for SARS-CoV-2 in food processing facilities or on food packaging is costly, time consuming and does not aid in risk-based decision-making processes for consumer protection and is therefore not recommended.

## ROLE OF FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS AND FOOD WORKERS

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All FBOs are expected to establish corporate measures that aim at the safety of their products and the protection of its workers. FBOs should have food safety management systems based on the hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) principles in place to manage food safety risks and prevent food contamination. While not designed specifically for prevention of COVID-19 transmissions, FSMS are underpinned by prerequisite programmes that include good hygiene practices, cleaning and sanitation, zoning of processing areas, supplier control, storage, distribution and transport, personal hygiene and fit for work assessments – all the basic conditions and activities necessary to maintain a hygienic food processing environment. If a food business has a FSMS and/or HACCP team established, the members of these groups need to be included in relevant discussions and training to ensure that new measures or interventions aimed at minimizing any person-to-person spread of COVID-19 do not compromise the integrity of the FSMS or of the effectiveness of HACCP measures. Several functions in food businesses (e.g., occupational health; human resources) will be responsible for selecting and implementing appropriate measures and, where necessary, gather advice from public health authorities. In addition, the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene lay down a firm foundation for implementing key hygiene controls at each stage of the food processing, manufacture and marketing chain for the prevention of food contamination (WHO, 2009).

Every FBO should have appropriate plans in place to prevent disease transmission within their operations and to ensure compliance with these measures to protect workers from contracting COVID-19 and to prevent exposure to or transmission of the virus. Such plans will typically include policies that encourage workers to stay home when ill, the introduction of operational and structural controls to increase physical distancing between workers, provide separation or barriers between workstations, and compliance with stringent hygiene and sanitation measures to promote frequent and effective handwashing, mask wearing, and sanitation at each stage of food processing, manufacture and marketing (LeJeune and Grooters, 2021). These strategies are particularly important in food businesses with operating environments conducive to viral transmission between workers, for example, those with limited ventilation or air filtration, noise (requiring shouting to communicate), and close spacing for long periods (greater than 15 minutes).

Intervention and prevention strategies should be applied, to the extent possible, across the entire food production chain, not only on processing lines, but also in other areas where workers may congregate, such as in meeting rooms, locker or break rooms, dining areas, as well as in employee housing and group transportation provided by the FBO and in primary production. The implementation of measures should be risk-based and proportionate to the

level of expected food business worker exposure: Food safety practices outlined in effective FSMS may be adequate to protect food business workers when there are no community cases of COVID-19. In contrast, the requirement for additional intervention and prevention measures should be increased with increasing prevalence of human COVID-19 cases in the local community.

## General principles of worker protection

### Physical distancing

Physical distancing is very important to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The probability of COVID-19 transmission decreases as distance between individuals increases. Where there is intracommunity spread, all food businesses should follow physical distancing guidance as far as reasonably possible. WHO maintains the distance between workers should be at least one meter (circa three feet). Country guidelines or regulations may require greater distances and these should be complied with. Where the food production environment makes it difficult to do so, employers need to consider what additional measures can be put in place to protect employees.

Operational and structural controls to reduce virus transmission include:

- Maintain a physical distance of at least one meter (three feet), or as prescribed otherwise by authorities, between individuals.
- Stagger workstations on either side of processing lines so that food workers are not facing one another.
- Space out workstations, which may require reduction in the speed of production lines
- Erect barriers between workstations.
- Increase air exchanges.
- Stagger break times, where feasible, to facilitate temporal distancing.
- Organize staff into working groups or teams to facilitate reduced interaction between groups; this can also be achieved by establishing different shifts to reduce the number of workers on food business premises at any one time.
- Clean and disinfect contact surfaces, such as handles, doorknobs, equipment, and common water and beverage dispensers, shared utensils, handles, displays and equipment.
- Post visible notices and provide training in languages that are understood by staff to promote good hand hygiene, wearing of masks and physical distancing.

### Personal hygiene

Vaccinations have proven to be effective to lower the severity of COVID-19 and can reduce the risk of transmitting the disease. Where possible and available, FBOs should encourage and enable all food workers to become vaccinated, for example, by providing the necessary flexibility in shift scheduling.

Good personal hygiene is the cornerstone of both communicable disease prevention and food safety. Food businesses need to ensure that adequate sanitary facilities are provided and ensure that food workers thoroughly and frequently wash their hands. Normal soap and warm running water are adequate for handwashing. Hand sanitizers may be used as an additional measure; however, hand sanitizers do not replace handwashing.

Good practices include the following:

- Proper hand hygiene – washing with soap and water for at least 30 seconds.
- Use of hand sanitizers with formulations validated as effective, such as those with a minimum of 60 to 80 percent alcohol (WHO, 2020b).
- Good respiratory hygiene (cough and sneeze into elbow, not hands); when using a tissue, dispose of it right after use and wash hands immediately afterwards.
- Avoiding close contact with anyone showing illness symptoms, especially those with respiratory signs such as coughing and sneezing.

### Protective equipment

The most effective prevention against spreading of respiratory droplets and aerosols is the wearing of sufficiently effective face coverings or masks. Food business operators should provide suitable face coverings/masks and instructions for their appropriate use according to WHO guidelines (WHO, 2020c).

Gloves are not essential for the management of COVID-19 in food: handwashing is a greater protective barrier to infection than wearing disposable gloves. Disposable gloves should not be used in the food work environment as a substitute for handwashing. Viruses and bacteria can contaminate disposable gloves in the same way they get onto workers' hands. Removal of disposable gloves can lead to contamination of hands. Wearing disposable gloves can also give a false sense of security and may result in staff not washing hands as frequently as required. Non-touch alternatives may be implemented instead of those currently requiring use of gloves.

Where masks and gloves are routinely used by food workers, the following measures should be considered that avoid that the gloves worn by workers contribute to virus spread:

- FBOs should provide staff with face masks in addition to all other protective equipment normally worn in a food production environment, including hair nets, disposable gloves, clean overalls, and slip reduction work shoes.
- Masks should be worn to completely cover both the nose and the mouth.
- Mask should be changed when moist. Single use masks should not be re-used.
- Where necessary single-use gloves may be worn, noting that gloves should be changed frequently and hands should be washed between glove changes and immediately after removal of gloves.
- Gloves must be changed after carrying out non-food related activities, such as opening/closing doors by hand and emptying bins.
- Food workers should be aware that wearing gloves can allow microbes to build up on the surface of the hands, so handwashing is extremely important when gloves are removed to avoid subsequent transfer to their eyes or noses.
- Food workers should avoid touching their mouth and eyes when wearing gloves, especially after glove removal, prior to washing hands.

### Food workers: COVID-19 illness in the workplace

The occupational safety and general public health protection programmes of a food business operation should be applied to all staff, contractors, visitors, and maintenance and service personnel. These programmes should include guidelines for reporting and managing staff sickness in food premises, tracking and tracing worker health in line with local governmental privacy policies, as well as policies for return to work when staff recover from illness. Staff working in food premises should be provided with written instructions and training on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, both at and outside of work. Normal routine fit for work

procedures employed by food businesses, as part of their occupational safety and general health procedures, should ensure that confirmed or suspected infected workers are excluded from food premises.

Staff who are unwell or who have symptoms of COVID-19 should not work in food businesses. Prerequisite programmes and other occupational safety and general health programmes must ensure that COVID-19 infected (symptomatic individuals and confirmed asymptomatic carriers) workers and their contacts (those with exposure to confirmed cases) are excluded from food premises until sufficient time has passed or specific testing has occurred to confirm they are no longer infectious. A procedure to allow staff to report illness by phone (or email) or app should be established, so that workers with early stages of COVID-19 can be recognized and receive reliable information and be quickly excluded from work environments. This is imperative because an infected worker can infect co-workers, may contaminate the food production and processing environments, and may contaminate food or food materials (e.g. packaging, etc.), that may potentially precipitate unjustified trade restrictions, even though it is not a food safety hazard.

Staff working in the food sector need to be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19. Food business operators need to produce regularly updated written guidance for staff on reporting such symptoms and on exclusion from work policies. The most important issue is for staff to be able to recognize symptoms early, so that they can seek appropriate medical care and testing and minimize the risk of infecting fellow workers. The signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are varied and may include (Huang, Wang *et al.*, 2020):

- fever (temperature of 37.5°C or above)
- cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- fatigue
- loss of taste or smell
- minor nasal congestion
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- conjunctivitis (also known as pink eye)
- sore throat
- headache
- muscle or joint pain
- skin rash
- nausea or vomiting
- diarrhoea
- chills or dizziness.

However, it is important to recognize that infected individuals may be pre-symptomatic or remain completely asymptomatic and may not be aware that they are contagious and capable of spreading the virus (Pan, Chen *et al.*, 2020; Tong, Tang *et al.*, 2020). This underscores the need for all personnel, regardless of their apparent health status, to use appropriate equipment and practices to prevent disease transmission. As tools to identify potentially affected workers or asymptomatic workers (such as temperature monitoring, rapid PCR or antigen tests) become more widely available, they may be used to aid in the detection and exclusion of infected individuals from the workplace.

Nevertheless, it is necessary for the FBO (e.g., the human resources or occupation safety function) to develop a plan of action to manage a situation of a staff member, contractor, or other visitor becoming ill while on the premises. Emergency medical services should be

provided immediately for individuals experiencing life-threatening symptoms. Individuals with mild symptoms should be removed to an area away from other people, until they can safely depart the premise. Where possible, it is advised to isolate such person behind a closed door, as may be found in staff offices. Care should be provided while taking measures to avoid COVID-19 spread. Where possible, it is advised to improve ventilation in that room (e.g. by opening a window).

While waiting for medical advice or to be sent home, the person who is unwell should put on a mask immediately, if they are not already wearing one, and avoid any contact with other people. They should avoid touching people, surfaces, and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket and then dispose of the tissue in a bin with a lid, always washing their hands afterwards. At best, dedicated bins are made available for (potentially) contaminated materials, such as tissues, uniforms, work wear, gloves, etc., that need to be disposed of, laundered or otherwise treated. If tissues are not immediately available, one should cough and sneeze into the crook of the elbow. Sick individuals needing to go to the bathroom while waiting for medical assistance, should use a different bathroom than that used by the majority of workers, if available. SARS-CoV-2 has been detected from stool samples of infected patients (Tang, Tong *et al.*, 2020). Handwashing after using the toilet is always an essential practice, especially when working with food.

All persons should wash their hands thoroughly for 30 seconds with soap and water after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection. In addition, all surfaces that the infected person has or may have directly contaminated should be cleaned and then disinfected, especially any surfaces and objects visibly contaminated with body fluids/respiratory secretions, and all high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, and telephones.

If an employee, contractor, visitor, etc. is confirmed to have COVID-19 all applicable national reporting and isolation protocols shall be strictly followed. A return-to-work policy for staff who have been infected and recovered from COVID-19 should be in place and should be based on country regulations or guidelines, where these exist. In addition to avoiding COVID-19 and virus spread at the workplace, food businesses should take appropriate measures such as informing and otherwise supporting workers to prevent illness and spread amongst workers and between workers and their families, especially for those workers that live in shared accommodation (e.g., field workers and factory operatives) or those who commute to work together.

### Primary production

Common food producing animals (cattle, swine, sheep, goats, poultry, etc.) and fish do not naturally become infected with SARS-CoV-2 and contact with these species, either as live animals, or from their derived food products, is not considered a risk factor in acquiring COVID-19. However, some wild animal species (e.g. certain bats, monkeys, shrews and pangolins) and some domestic animals (cats, dogs and mink) can become infected with SARS-CoV-2.

Transmission of COVID-19 from susceptible species to humans is possible. As such, individuals should protect themselves from potential inoculation with aerosols or droplets generated by these animals or their environment by the use of masks, other protective equipment, and by practicing good personal hygiene. As with any other stage of production, the largest concern in primary production is person-to-person transmission and any activity in primary production of animals or vegetables that requires or results in close proximity to other workers (transplanting,

weeding, harvesting of vegetables, indoor congregation in milking parlour, or breakrooms) requires risk reduction strategies as described below.

### Food processing

Raw agricultural food products and packaged foods are unlikely sources of SARS-CoV-2 exposure to workers in food processing. Instead, like other areas of the food value chain, the largest risk for COVID-19 acquisition is through contact with infected co-workers. Food processing establishments are particularly likely to serve as a superspreader sites as workers often work long hours in very close proximity to others under cool and humid conditions (LeJeune and Grooters, 2021). Indeed, clusters of COVID-19 have been linked to processing facilities for meat, poultry, fish, fruits and vegetables, and even pet food. Specific prevention strategies are those listed above with emphasis on physical distancing, the use of masks, and personal hygiene.

### Food transport

As part of effective FSMS based on HACCP principles, many food businesses already have measures in place to control the delivery and transport of products to and from the facility as part of food safety assurance plan. The primary focus of any additional COVID-19 control measures involving hygiene and sanitation measures implemented by food businesses is on keeping the COVID-19 virus out of their business premises. It is most likely that the main route for the virus to enter business premises is via an infected person (staff, contractor, visitor, etc.) that enters the premises.

All non-employees, including delivery drivers, contractors and visitors, entering the premises of an FBO, should strictly adhere to all other COVID-19 control measures before and during their entering the facility. For example, drivers delivering to food premises should be aware of the potential risks involved in person-to-person as well as contact transmission of COVID-19.

The FBO should inform and instruct people accordingly prior to arrival, post appropriate signage, and provide the necessary support. Where intracommunity spread is occurring, enhanced measures, including physical distancing, mask use and personal hygiene are critical.

A surface contamination of items brought into a facility may also be possible, but unlikely, route of introduction when an infected person contaminates items immediately before they are brought into the premises (Lewis, 2021). Although the risk of acquiring COVID-19 through surface contamination is very small, it is prudent that all non-employees, including delivery drivers, thoroughly wash hands, sanitize or use a hand sanitizer before entering premises and, for instance, passing delivery documents to food premises staff. All non-employees (including delivery drivers) need to be given easily accessible and near-by access to handwashing facilities, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, or a disinfectant, and disposable paper towels. Disposable containers and packaging are best used to avoid the need for cleaning of any returns. In the case of reusable containers, appropriate hygiene and sanitation protocols should be implemented. A mechanism for dealing with all used disposable materials in a dedicated way should be in place to avoid unnecessary exposures. To further avoid any potential additional transmission risks, increased sanitation of frequently-touched surfaces such as steering wheels, door handles, mobile devices, etc., and proper hand hygiene, may be advisable.

## Food retail

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the food retail sector has been facing significant challenges in maintaining the highest standards of hygiene, protecting staff and customers from the risk of infection, maintaining physical distancing when dealing with large numbers of customers, remaining open, and ensuring that adequate supplies of foods are available daily. Although some customers may believe that there is a risk of COVID-19 infection resulting from open food displays, there is currently no scientific evidence confirming that food or food packaging is associated with transmission of the COVID-19. To ensure general food hygiene around open food areas, all workers and consumers need to follow strict measures designed to control person-to-person transmission of the virus causing COVID-19 between workers and customers, as well as to observe good hygiene practices.

Food workers in retail premises should not report to work when sick. Retail food workers, like those in food processing, need to be aware of symptoms of COVID-19 and inform their employer and seek medical advice if they think they have symptoms of the disease. All retail food workers should follow standard, good personal hygiene practices that can help reduce the risk of transmission of other foodborne illnesses. Where intracommunity spread of COVID-19 is occurring, food workers need to adhere to the necessary specific additional COVID-19 measures prescribed by local or regional authorities such as physical distancing and mask wearing. FBOs should stress to employees and customers the importance of avoiding crowds, especially in confined or indoor spaces, physical distancing, mask wearing, frequent handwashing and maintaining good hygiene practices, and of frequent cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that are touched regularly.

Practical measures to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission that may be used by retailers in areas with intracommunity spread of COVID-19 include the following:

- placing signs at entry points to request customers not to enter the shop if they are unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms;
- regulating the numbers of customers, contractors and visitors who enter the retail store and back offices to avoid overcrowding and providing instructions on measures to adhere to while on the premises;
- managing queue control and restricting the number of people who can be in a space consistent with physical distancing advice, using for instance floor markings or a prior reservation/visitor scheme;
- using floor markings inside and outside the retail store to facilitate compliance with the physical distancing requirements, particularly in the most crowded areas, such as serving counters and tills/cash registers;
- introducing plexiglas (or comparable) barriers at tills/cash registers and counters as an additional level of protection for staff;
- assigning retail staff members to regularly cleaned and disinfected frequent-touch points associated with the operation's premises (e.g., shopping trolleys, baskets, door handles, and weighing scales for customer use);
- providing hand sanitizers, spray disinfectants, wipe sanitation, and disposable paper towels at store entry points for use by customers for personal hygiene and to clean, for instance, the handles of shopping trollies and baskets;
- increasing airflow in buildings by keeping doors, windows, etc. open where possible
- encouraging customers to use contactless ordering and payment; and
- posting notices and using audio notices in the food retail premises (shops, outlets, supermarkets) reminding customers and others of the measures to adhere to.

## Food services and restaurants

Recommendations for food service providers such as restaurants and institutional cafeterias should also apply to food take-away providers, delis, and workplace canteens in essential frontline businesses, such as food processing and food retailing establishments. Key recommendations for COVID-19 prevention in this sector include the following:

- Food service workers should not report to work when sick.
- Food service workers need to be aware of symptoms of COVID-19 and inform their employer and seek medical advice if they think they have symptoms of the disease.
- Provide information to patrons of the premises' COVID-19 mitigation policies, such as adequate hygiene, physical separation and proper face mask wearing.
- Train food preparation and waiting staff in strict personal hygiene, physical distancing, mask wearing and applicable sanitizing practices.
- Train waiting staff in patron interaction and recognizing signs of illness.
- Require wait staff to frequently clean and sanitize contact surfaces, including counters, frequently-touched points, serving utensils and condiment containers.
- Make available hand sanitizer for customers on their way in and out of the food premises.
- Introduce no-touch ordering and payment for patrons.
- Use floor markings inside and outside the retail store to facilitate compliance with the physical distancing requirements.
- Wash and frequently sanitize items such as ladles, tongs, and condiment holders.
- Maintain a low density of patrons and staff, e.g. through pre-ordering, seating time slots, restriction of party size.
- Introduce physical barriers in seating area and offer outside seating where possible.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and use externally sourced fresh air for air conditioning.
- Deal with disposable equipment (masks, gloves, etc.) and other materials in a dedicated way.
- Stagger staff work and break times to reduce staff numbers in a canteen at any one time or by having extended hours of operation.
- Post visible notices promoting hand hygiene and physical distancing for staff and customers.
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures for frequently-touched contact surfaces, such as handles, doorknobs, equipment, common water and beverage dispensers, shared utensils and displays, as well as all necessary precautions for the delivery of foods need to be suitably incorporated in the FSMS of the FBO and appropriately enforced.

## CONCLUSIONS

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Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 on worker health and capacity, food safety practices in food premises should continue to adhere consistently to all applicable food hygiene standards, HACCP plans and all essentials of other pre-requisite programmes in line with the established FSMS for the individual facility.

FAO continues to monitor the situation closely for any changes that may affect this guidance. Should any factors change, FAO will issue a further update. Otherwise, this guidance document will expire two years after the date of publication.

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