



Guidelines for Horticulture Essential Service businesses

Version 2, 24th March 2020

Essential businesses

Essential businesses, and those that support them, will continue to provide the necessities of life for everyone in New Zealand. This means that food, medicine, healthcare, energy, fuel, waste-removal, internet and financial support will continue to be available.

Entities and their workers carrying out the following services are considered essential. This also includes entities in their supply chains (e.g. those providing IT and data infrastructure to an entity providing an essential service).

This list will evolve over time. It was last updated at 8 pm, 23 March 2020.

Primary industries is included in the list:

Primary industries, including food and beverage production and processing	Any entity involved in the packaging, production and processing of food and beverage products, whether for domestic consumption or export
Lead agency: Ministry for Primary Industries	Any entity involved in relevant support services, such as food safety and verification, inspection or associated laboratory services, food safety and biosecurity functions
	Any entity providing veterinary services
	Any entity whose closure would jeopardise the maintenance of animal health or welfare standards (including the short-term survival of a species)

The entities listed above will continue working, but will put in place alternative ways of working to keep employees safe, including shift-based working, staggered meal breaks, flexible leave arrangements and physical distancing.

Horticulture as an Essential Service

All food and beverage producers and processors, and their supply chains, are deemed to be essential services. Which essential businesses are included in the definition of the supply chain is still being discussed with MPI.

Requirements for operating as an essential service

All orchards, packhouses, cool stores and export entities are essential services. You can continue to operate, but there will be strict rules in place that allow you to continue to do so.

A key message is that “we can’t change the virus to suit your operational needs; but we can change your operational needs to suit the virus”. The expectation is that you must change the way that you operate (if you haven’t done so already) to minimise the risk of spreading the virus. There must be nowhere in your supply chain that will facilitate the spread of the virus.

All businesses will be required to register with MPI and provide answers to these questions unless both of the following apply:

- There are 5 or fewer people (including the owner) working at each business site, **and**
- social distancing of at least 2 metres between staff at each business site can be achieved—including travelling, to and from work. Production chains must achieve these limits of separation.

The online registration system can be found at <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/covid-19-essential-primary-sector-service-registration/registration-form>

To complete the form and remain open for business you **must** be able to address the following key questions:

- How do your processes protect your workers and the public by reducing the potential spread of COVID-19?
- How are you ensuring that workers and others at work are observing social distancing to and from work, during work and during rest breaks?
- What personal hygiene steps have you put in place for workers to reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?
- What existing, or additional personal protective equipment could you introduce that would reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?
- What steps are you taking to limit access to your plants apart from essential workers?
- How are you isolating staff, or parts of your workplace, so that virus spread would be contained should it occur?
- What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any illness and remove themselves from work?
- What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any suspected exposure to COVID-19?
- What actions would you take should a staff member be suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19?
- How do you ensure that staff at particular risk of COVID-19 identify themselves and are isolated from work?
- How will you ensure that your workers observe ‘stay at home’ rules at the conclusion of each working day?

Meeting the requirements for operating as an essential service

Requirement	Suggestions
How do your processes protect your workers and the public by reducing the potential spread of COVID-19?	Our hygiene practices (including handwashing and hand sanitisation), education of employees through signage, social distancing practices and availability of PPE will help to protect our workers and the public by reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19.
How are you ensuring that workers and others at work are observing social distancing to and from work, during work and during rest breaks?	Increase signage. Ask employees to sign a document stating that they understand the regulations. Signage - https://covid19.govt.nz/resources-and-translation/resources-2/
What personal hygiene steps have you put in place for workers to reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?	Increase wash hands signage – increase handwashing requirements. Have hand sanitiser available in close proximity to work spaces.
What existing, or additional personal protective equipment could you introduce that would reduce the likelihood of virus spread at work?	Have face masks and disposable gloves available in the event that someone becomes ill. Have hand sanitiser available in close proximity to work spaces.
What steps are you taking to limit access to your plants apart from essential workers?	Have signage stating that only employees of the site may enter the workplace. Maintain logs of anyone entering the workplace.
How are you isolating staff, or parts of your workplace, so that virus spread would be contained should it occur?	Limit meeting sizes to as small as possible, and provide this information to all staff. Have signage and meetings to educate staff on the 2 m rule, and include that this must be maintained during breaks. Stagger breaks to ensure that there is sufficient space in the break room to maintain this distance. Only allow staff to enter parts of the workplace where they are required to work, and record where staff are working.
What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any illness and remove themselves from work?	Use an incident reporting system to report illness. Have face masks and disposable gloves situated at known locations around the premises. Educate staff about the location of the PPE and to use it immediately if they feel unwell.
What arrangements have you put in place for staff to report any suspected exposure to COVID-19?	Use an incident reporting system to report exposure. Have face masks and disposable gloves situated at known locations around the premises. Educate staff about the location of the PPE and to use it immediately if they feel unwell.

<p>What actions would you take should a staff member be suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19?</p>	<p>Create a document outlining the steps your business will take, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The immediate use of PPE (face mask and disposable gloves) by a staff member feeling unwell and any staff who have been working in close contact with this person. • Any staff member feeling unwell being sent home. • All equipment used by the unwell staff member being disinfected immediately
<p>How do you ensure that staff at particular risk of COVID-19 identify themselves and are isolated from work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask all staff over 70 or at risk of infection to identify and isolate themselves.
<p>How are you ensuring that your staff observe the stay at home rules at the end of each working day?</p>	<p>Increase signage. Ask employees to sign a document stating that they understand the regulations. Signage - https://covid19.govt.nz/resources-and-translation/resources-2/</p>

References:

NZ Avocado - https://industry.nzavocado.co.nz/covid19-update/?utm_source=Avoconnect+ALL&utm_campaign=a8834585b3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_23_02_43&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_45583aa24f-a8834585b3-192478801

NZ Government - <https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-level/>

Horticulture New Zealand - <https://www.hortnz.co.nz/news-events-and-media/media-releases/covid-19-update-for-horticulture/>