

Les contenus présentés dans ce document sont également en ligne dans la section [Réponses aux questions sur le coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) de Québec.ca.

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Transmission

1. Can the COVID-19 virus be transmitted through food?

Transmission of the virus by ingesting food has been ruled out. In addition, the coronavirus cannot grow on food.

It is possible to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object where the virus is found and then bringing your hand to your mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not the primary means of transmission.

It is important to always follow the basic rules of hygiene, which include washing your hands thoroughly before eating and cooking, washing food thoroughly before eating, as well as coughing or sneezing into your elbow.

Consumers

1. How can someone 70 years of age or older buy food?

To obtain food, it is recommended to people 70 years of age or older that they use home delivery services or ask a friend or relative to do the shopping for them.

If this is not possible, they can go to the site while always following the health instructions that apply to the entire population. People 70 years of age or older should go shopping during low-traffic hours or take advantage of the reserved time slots offered by certain merchants.

2. As a consumer, can I do anything to support the agri-food sector?

Québec consumers are urged to buy local. By doing this, they support local producers, processors and businesses and contribute to economic vitality and ongoing activity in the sector.

Consult the [Le Panier bleu](#) website.

Together, through their choices, businesses and consumers promote the diversity of Québec's slate of food products.

3. What can I do to contribute to Québec's food autonomy?

- Choose products from Québec when making your purchases. Various markings make it easy to identify these products in store. You can find out more on the [Aliments du Québec](#) website;
- Shop in local grocery stores or directly at local agricultural or food processing businesses. [Le Panier bleu](#) is a new reference platform that helps you locate local businesses. You can also visit the [Savourez votre région](#) page.
- Make local products more interesting by trying new recipes using local produce. Find some examples on the [Aliments du Québec](#) website.
- Do not waste food at home. Find some tricks and tips on the [Gaspillage alimentaire : comment l'éviter?](#) section.
- Help a community organization ([Je bénévole.ca](#)), agri-food businesses ([Centre d'emploi agricole](#)) or food establishments and retail companies ([À table! Emplois](#)). You can work there, but you can also volunteer your time

if you wish. Contact organizations and businesses in your community for more information.

- Treat yourself or your loved ones. Many companies are offering delivery or take-out services during the lockdown. Ask your sugar shack, restaurant, bakery, chocolate store or any other business you like. Many have launched some great initiatives at the moment.
- You might be tempted to increase your self-sufficiency by turning to a garden or a private farm. You can also find out about community gardens. To get started, consult the [Guide de l'agriculture urbaine](#).
- If you like the idea of keeping urban chickens ([poules en ville](#)) or any other animal species, never act on a whim. Chickens, like all other farm animals, require constant care to ensure their welfare. This type of farming is sometimes permitted by municipalities, you must be well informed before embarking on such a project, particularly with regard to the applicable regulations, the animals' specific needs, and the availability of veterinary care in your region for the species you intend to keep. Before you start planning, you can consult the [Guide de l'agriculture urbaine](#).

4. Should an increase in food prices be expected?

The food industry is facing significant challenges right now. The government is in daily talks with all stakeholders in the agri-food chain.

In the exceptional circumstances we are experiencing, it is possible that food product prices will fluctuate.

We wish to underscore that there is no food or sanitary product shortage in sight.

5. How can I limit the spread of the disease while grocery shopping in store?

Instructions to follow when consumers go to retail stores are available on the website of the [Retail Council of Canada](#).

Although it is possible to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object where the virus is found and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes, this is not the primary means of transmission.

Many viruses from the coronavirus family can survive on surfaces for a duration ranging anywhere from two hours up to nine days, depending on the type of surface and the environmental conditions (temperature, humidity, etc.). However, you do not need to wash all your purchases. The key is washing your hands

often, once you return home and after you have put your groceries away. As always, you should wash your hands before cooking and before eating.

For more information, watch the [Hygiene tips at the grocery store and for fruits and vegetables](#) video.

6. Is it risky to buy unpackaged produce?

No. However, fruits and vegetables must always be washed before being eaten, as you would normally do. All you need to do is wash the produce with water and scrub the surfaces. There is no need for detergent.

In fact, packaging of fruits and vegetables increases the amount of handling by food establishment operators, which is not something we want. Consumers must also follow the respiratory etiquette concerning unpackaged food such as fruits and vegetables.

7. Why not recommend using soap or another detergent for washing fruits and vegetables as well as for hand washing?

Using soap to wash hands has proven its usefulness, whereas this is not the case for fruits and vegetables.

Studies on fruits and vegetables involve even more variables like the type of fruit or vegetable, the type of detergent used, the type of targeted contaminants (chemicals like pesticides or microbiological contaminants). Consequently, the results of these studies are rarely unequivocal.

The theory that applies to washing hands with soap may also be appropriate for washing fruits and vegetables (among other things, because of the surface tension effect or wetting power of soap, which dislodges dirt and contaminants) There is a risk of leaving soap or detergent residues on fruits and vegetables especially those with rough or porous surfaces or if the peel is eaten, which is undesirable. Unlike dishes, fruits and vegetables are porous and residues can easily stay on them.

Ultimately, if we compare the risks and benefits, it is wiser to only rinse and scrub fruits and vegetables, when possible, whereas washing hands with soap is advisable.

8. Are there any special precautions I should take before eating take-out food or food for delivery?

The coronavirus is transmitted through respiratory droplets or by touching surfaces or utensils that may be contaminated with droplets. It is possible to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object where the virus is found and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not the primary means of transmission.

Whenever possible, avoid handling packages while eating (or after washing your hands). Wash your hands when there is a risk of contamination. The following steps are therefore recommended (this is just one example of the many possible types of meals to be delivered):

1. Pick up the delivery boxes and place them on a counter;
2. Open the boxes;
3. Wash your hands;
4. Using utensils, transfer the food onto plates. Even if this is not possible and the packaging is not handled (e.g., cardboard plate), the risk of contamination is still reduced;
5. Dispose of delivery boxes (recycling, garbage or compost);
6. Wash and disinfect the counter;
7. Wash your hands before eating.

It is also important that good hygiene practices, food safety practices and safe cooking be followed. These practices generally minimize the risks of contamination or transmission of foodborne illnesses.

9. Are community fridges still allowed?

Yes. Firstly, it's important to follow the general precautions for donating food. There are also additional precautions required.

For people donating food:

You can prepare food for others by ensuring that normal hygiene measures are followed (washing hands and surfaces before cooking, washing fruits and vegetables, etc.). It's also important to pay attention to containers and other objects that the recipient will handle. For example, using a container straight from the dishwasher or a new bag is preferable. This will ensure that the containers have not been handled in the meantime.

For more details on donating food, consult the page [Dons d'aliments](#) (French only).

For those in charge of the community fridge:

You must monitor fridge traffic and set up a way to manage lines, if necessary. Hand sanitizer must also be available nearby, which donors and users should be encouraged to use.

You must disinfect handles and doors, as well as any other surface that is frequently touched. Lastly, you must ensure regular rotation of the food placed inside the refrigerator and clean the inside of the appliance according to the frequency of use.

10. Is it recommended to make a household bleach cleaner at home?

To clean household surfaces, a solution of 0.1% sodium hypochlorite is recommended. That means 4 teaspoons (20 ml) of domestic bleach in 1 litre of water. It is best to prepare a new diluted solution every day and not to mix bleach with any other cleaning products.

A 0.1% hypochlorite solution is sufficient to eliminate viruses such as coronavirus, which is less resistant than other pathogenic microorganisms.

This is in line with current scientific literature on coronavirus and complies with recommendations from the CDC ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)).

In the current context and according to the available scientific data, the proportions usually recommended (1:200) must be increased to 1:50 (equivalent to a 0.1% solution of sodium hypochlorite) as a precautionary measure. When a solution of 0.1% sodium hypochlorite is used on food contact surfaces, those surfaces must also be rinsed off to limit the risks of chemical hazards.

We are monitoring the scientific data on the subject.

11. Can I bring my reusable bags and reusable boxes to the grocery store?

You can bring your reusable bags to a retailer, but you must pack up your own purchases.

To limit handling and the spread of the virus, the INSPQ recommends not offering packing or bagging services in general.

A company can choose to offer packing or bagging services using only the bags or boxes they have in-store. This has the effect of limiting worker contact with

potentially contaminated objects, all while expediting customer service and limiting the time customers spend next to the cash registers.

Likewise, boxes that are brought in by consumers should only be handled by them. Thus, depending on the nature of the business and the facilities on site, companies may choose to suspend the practice of allowing the use of personal boxes to prevent undue risk of exposure to whomever handles them.

12. Do the restrooms of take-out restaurants remain accessible to customers?

Restaurants offering food or meals for takeout can choose whether or not to make their washrooms accessible to the public.

If they do so, operators must then implement and execute a thorough cleaning procedure for surfaces most exposed to the public. It is not recommended to make restrooms meant exclusively for staff available to the public.

13. Can we cook for others in this time of pandemic?

The coronavirus is transmitted through respiratory droplets. It is also possible to contract COVID-19 by touching a surface or object where the virus is found and then bringing your hand to your mouth, nose or eyes, but this is not the primary means of transmission. Therefore, as a precautionary measure, persons who are symptomatic or in preventive isolation should avoid handling or preparing food for others.

Alternatively, we can prepare food for others by ensuring that normal hygiene measures are followed (washing hands and surfaces before cooking, washing fruits and vegetables, etc.). We should also pay attention to containers and other objects that the recipient will handle. For example, the use of a container from the dishwasher or a new bag is preferable. This will ensure that the containers have not been handled in the interval. The dish can be placed on a surface when delivered to the recipient's residence and the recipient can then pick it up later. As always, the person should wash their hands before eating.

These rules are the same for everyone, regardless of the age of the recipients.

Owners or custodians of animals

1. Can an animal get the coronavirus and transmit it to me?

The COVID-19 pandemic is associated with virus transmission from person to person. There is no indication that animals play a major role in the spread of the disease. At present, we know that cats, ferrets, hamsters and mink can be infected. Reported cases of animal infections are generally associated with the virus being transmitted to the animal from its human owner. However, it is likely that mink, infected by people, in turn infected employees at affected farms in the Netherlands. There have been no reported cases of virus transmission from a pet to a human.

The risk of being infected through contact with an animal is generally considered low. Application of the following measures reduces the risks of virus transmission between humans and animals:

- [Recommendations of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux](#)
- [Biosafety measures](#)
- [Hygiene measures relating to contact with animals](#)

Certain situations call for specific measures:

- People with symptoms of COVID-19 and those following public health authority [self-isolation instructions](#) must avoid contact with animals.
- Professionals who cannot avoid contact with animals belonging to infected owners must follow the applicable recommendations, relying on the [measures for veterinary care workers](#), for example.

2. Can I get my animal tested for COVID-19?

Because COVID-19 is spread from person to person, it is not currently recommended to have animals tested, except in exceptional circumstances or in the context of research activities.

If you are concerned about your animal's health, call your veterinarian. Discuss your concerns with them, but also other known illnesses that can affect animals. There is limited knowledge about which animals are likely to be infected with SARS-CoV-2.

Veterinarians with specific questions about animal health or public health can get more information by calling 1-844-ANIMAUX.

3. Can I adopt or purchase an animal?

Yes, you are allowed to purchase or adopt animals. However, there are many aspects you need to consider before bringing a pet into your home. Dogs live for 12 years on average, and cats for 15. So you will be responsible for it for many years. The MAPAQ website offers [many tips on responsible pet adoption](#).

When you adopt an animal, make sure that all parties concerned follow social distancing rules, and inquire about other hygiene instructions recommended by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux (MSSS).

4. While I have COVID-19 symptoms or while I am self-isolating according to public health authority instructions, how can I share a home with my pet while following the instructions?

With an animal free in the house, it can be challenging to avoid contact with it and to respect hygiene measures regarding it as you would with people around you. However, you must avoid direct contact like petting it, allowing it to lick you, carrying it or letting it sit on your lap. You must also avoid sharing food, your bed and the bathroom.

To make following these self-isolation instructions easier, you can put your animal in a cage or crate suitable for it or keep it in a room designated for it alone. Otherwise, you can restrict its access to the bedroom and bathroom by keeping the door closed behind you and picking up your food and dishes as soon as you finish eating or drinking.

5. Once the self-isolation period is over in accordance with public health authority instructions, is my animal allowed interact with other animals or people again?

If you followed the self-isolation instructions, your animal may interact with other animals and people again.

However, if you came into direct, unprotected contact with your animal during your self-isolation period, continue to limit contact between your animal and other animals or people for a period of 14 days after this contact. If possible, keep your animals indoors. Outdoors, use a leash or a private, fenced space.

6. Since wearing face coverings is recommended under certain situations in public areas, should the same be true for animals?

No. Having an animal wear a mask for face covering is unhelpful and could cause them stress or other problems. This recommendation is for people only. It aims to reduce the risk of the person wearing the face covering of transmitting COVID-19 to others.

7. Is there any financial assistance available for businesses needing to provide care for pets or animals for leisure activities which they own or keep?

The government has implemented a variety of economic measures to support business and commerce, including those that are considered nonessential. Some of these measures could therefore apply depending on the activities concerned.

8. What can an animal owner do if he or she is no longer able to provide the necessary care due to job loss or the closure of the business where he or she previously worked?

The current health crisis could have repercussions on pets and animals for leisure activities. Despite this context, it is essential that pets and animals for leisure activities continue to receive the basic care to which they are entitled (e.g., sufficient and proper nutrition, adequate shelter).

If an animal's owner is no longer able to provide this care or if he is unable to pay for the care provided by his animal's caretaker (e.g.: boarded horse), he/she must act and make responsible choices to limit the negative effects of his/her situation on his/her animal.

Animal shelters (e.g. animal services, SPA or SPCA) are considered as providing essential services. They can be contacted by owners needing to give away their pets.

Shelters must also provide the required care for the animals in their care. However, their care capacity may be reduced due to the current crisis. Cooperation on the part of all stakeholders is needed to limit cases of euthanasia of animals where alternatives are available.

9. Is it possible to access veterinary services?

Yes. Although veterinary services are priority activities, veterinarians should follow guidelines established by their professional association and use their professional judgment to resume their activities gradually while taking into consideration the potential impact on public health. Contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns about your pet or if you wish to use his or the services.

It is important to adopt preventive measures during the visit, such as:

- minimizing the number of people present on the premises when the veterinarian is working,
- respecting the rules of social distancing,
- making available the items necessary for effective disinfection of instruments and people (clean location, water, etc.).

10. Can my farm business access artificial insemination services for my farm animals?

Yes. Grouping inseminations (by synchronizing timing) at a set time of the week is recommended, when possible, in order to limit visits.

The hygiene measures recommended by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux and the [Interim Recommendations for Agricultural Workers in Crop and Livestock Production](#) of the Institut National de Santé Publique du Québec (INSPQ) should be implemented.

Resumption of on-site catering services

1. Can restaurants resume their operations?

Yes. Restaurant owners can open their food service premises, including dining rooms and terraces. The premises must be organized to ensure that customers remain 2 metres apart except in the case of the occupants of the same private residence or if a physical barrier that limits the contagion separates them.

To obtain additional information on the protective measures that must be implemented to protect the health of the population during restaurant visits, please visit [Directives de santé publique concernant la réouverture des salles à manger et des autres lieux de consommation du secteur de la restauration](#).

To obtain information on the tools intended for the restaurant industry, please visit [trousse de la Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail \(CNESST\)](#).

2. Can restaurants and food courts in shopping centres, farmers' markets and hotels open?

Yes, as long as they are set up in compliance with the conditions outlined by public health.

3. Are personal chefs allowed to resume their activities?

Yes, assuming applicable gathering rules inside private residences are respected. For more information, please visit the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux website.

4. Can bars open?

The government has announced the reopening of businesses and enterprises to which prohibitions still applied, including bars.

The following measures will be in force in bars to reduce customer traffic and avoid an upsurge in the virus' spread:

- the operating hours of the holders of bar permits issued by the Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux (RACJ) will be restricted. Bars must stop selling alcoholic beverages at midnight instead of 3 a.m. and customers must also have left bars not later than 1 a.m.;
- the reception capacity will be restricted to 50% of the capacity indicated on the liquor licence;
- dancing is prohibited and customers must be seated to consume alcohol;
- bar owners must establish a register that records customers' contact information or have a group of customers designate a person to facilitate epidemiological follow-up in the event of outbreaks. The process will, obviously, comply with privacy rules.

For more information, go to the page [Reopening and maintaining economic activities](#).

5. Which measures are implemented by the restaurant operators as regards self-service areas and appliances (buffets, salad bars, drink fountains)?

Restaurant owners must prohibit access to these areas and equipment unless they are serving customers through an attendant. Retailers must also avoid selling unpackaged self-service food (except for fresh fruit and vegetables), unless enhanced hygiene measures are in place:

- additional physical protection (containers, sneeze-guard, automatic dispenser)
- measures implemented for hand-washing nearby or service by an attendant
- increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of frequently handled or exposed surfaces: directly handled surfaces that are not near a hand washing/disinfecting station should be cleaned between each customer.

Automatic dispensers such as fountain drink, slushie and coffee machines can be used by customers if a hand washing or disinfection station is set up nearby and cups, lids, straws and other items are provided by an attendant. A sign should also direct customers not to reuse cups.

These devices need to be frequently disinfected throughout the day, like other frequently touched surfaces.

6. What measures will restaurant operators implement with respect to shared equipment (e.g. tables, chairs, menus)?

Cleaning and disinfection of tables, chairs and menus should be performed after each customer. Seasonings (salt, pepper, sugar, oils, spices, etc.) or other objects (games, newspapers, etc.) should be removed from the tables.

7. Can the terraces and picnic tables be used?

In order to respect the instructions of physical distance, the use of outdoor areas is to be preferred for eating.

8. Will there be a maximum number of people per table?

Yes, a maximum number of 10 people per table is allowed.

9. Can two people who do not live at the same address have a meal together in the restaurant (inside or on the terrace)? If so, under which conditions?

Yes, it will be possible to eat together, but within a physical distance of two metres.

The tables should be spaced sufficiently far apart to apply the physical distance.

Screens or transparent dividers between the tables could be considered. Benches may also be considered as barriers, provided they exceed the height of the head of the customers when seated. It should be noted that the Association Restauration Québec is aware of these measures and has provided for appropriate arrangements.

10. Will restaurateurs ask their customers for proof of address?

There is no provision for restaurant operators to verify customers' addresses. The guidelines must be followed by everyone, as is the case for other public places.

11. How will the restaurant operator ensure that sanitary standards are met?

The government supports businesses in the catering sector and their workers to ensure that health standards are met.

A [COVID-19 toolkit](#) with a specific health standards guide and checklist has been prepared by the CNESST for the catering sector. This kit provides details on the preventive measures to be implemented to protect the health and safety of personnel, particularly to properly manage contacts between customers and personnel.

In addition, more than 1,000 officers have been deployed since lifting lockdown measures were introduced to raise awareness and provide information on preventive measures to be implemented.

12. Is it possible to file a complaint if the measures adopted to deal with COVID-19 do not seem to be respected by the conservators?

If you notice a lack of compliance with public health measures, such as physical distancing, you can report the situation by contacting the police department in your area.

A worker can file a complaint or report a dangerous situation to CNESST, if necessary. This complaint will be processed to assess the risk of the situation and determine the need for corrective or control measures. You should call CNESST at 1-844-838-0808 (option 1).

13. What measures are being implemented to ensure the health and safety of employees in the catering sector?

A toolkit containing a specific health standards guide and a checklist have been prepared by CNESST for the restaurant sector to support the management of occupational health and safety in the environment.

The kit details the preventive measures to be implemented to reduce and control the risks associated with COVID-19, whether it involves staff contact with customers or between workers.

Here are some of the recommendations from the "Guide to Occupational Health Standards – COVID-19":

- Wearing a procedure mask and eye protection is required whenever the physical distance of two metres is not maintained. In addition, there should be limited exchange of objects with customers. For example, it is recommended that menus be displayed on slates or screens.
- The rule of physical distance requires limiting the number of clients, whether inside the establishment or outside on a terrace.
- The physical distance of two metres between staff members and clients should remain in effect, as well as for clients from each other.
- For restaurants offering buffet service, staff will be required to serve the customer according to the same guidelines.

For a complete set of recommendations and to download the CNESST toolkit for the catering sector: <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19/Pages/outils-restauration.aspx>.

14. What are the public protection measures?

The protection measures must be implemented to protect the health of the population when visiting food-service locations. They are available on the [Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux](#) website.

15. Given that outdoor consumption is favored, are there plans to allow people to obtain a terrace permit from the Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux (RACJ)?

The RACJ will adopt a streamlined process for licensees, whether to modify or expand a site or to obtain authorization to temporarily operate a liquor permit for a terrace in the context of COVID-19. Contractors will be able to run temporary terraces in order to provide customer service, in compliance with health standards established by the Public Health Branch and in accordance with their municipality's regulations.

To find out about the simplified terms and conditions for terrace permits: <https://www.racj.gouv.qc.ca/communications/communiqués-aux-titulaires/detail/covid-19-modalités-allégées-concernant-les-permis-de-terrasse.html>.

16. Do restaurants have to observe a ratio of customers to dining room capacity?

No, since measures will be implemented to ensure that physical distance between the interior and exterior of the restaurant is respected, thereby limiting the number of customers.

17. Is there any financial assistance available to help restaurant owners implement CNESST health standards?

There will be no specific program for restaurant owners, as there are [many programmes](#) already in place for both employers and employees.

18. Are more inspections planned regarding food safety?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that food is a likely source or route of transmission of COVID-19. There is no requirement for additional staff.

Efforts in food establishments to conduct food safety monitoring must continue.

Bio-food sector enterprises and workers

1. Is wearing a face covering required in farm stands?

You are required to wear a face covering inside fully-enclosed stands as well as in those that are partially enclosed and allow public access.

2. What to do if a food handler in a food establishment tests positive for COVID-19?

Read the [Guidance for Industry: What to do when someone tests positive for COVID-19 in a food establishment \(PDF 166 Kb\)](#) document.

Food establishments can comply with recommendations and adopt best practices to protect their staff and customers. To learn more, consult the [Recommendations for food establishment merchants \(PDF 104 Kb\)](#).

3. What are the preventive measures to take in my food business?

The Public health expertise and reference centre (INSPQ) has produced a series of documents outlining preventative measures to take against the spread of COVID-19 in [different work environments](#), including the following documents:

- [Interim recommendations for the food processing industry](#)
- [Interim recommendations for grocery stores and essential businesses](#)
- [Recommendations for agricultural labourers working in livestock and vegetable production](#)
- [Interim recommendations for the fishing industry](#)

- [Interim recommendations for home deliveries \(parcels and packages, restaurant delivery, groceries, etc.\)](#)
- [Interim Recommendations for Veterinary Care Workers](#)
- [Interim recommendations for the meat slaughter industry](#)
- [Interim Recommendations for the Marine Products Processing Industry](#)
- [Interim Recommendations for the Fishing Industry](#)

Some documents are also available in Spanish on the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) website: [Publicaciones](#)

You can also consult the [Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) page to learn more about how to protect staff and customers in a work environment.

4. Who should I contact to validate the prevention measures developed in a food processing or slaughter plant?

You can proactively validate the prevention measures as well as the response methods to act quickly if a positive case of COVID-19 is declared in an establishment.

Contact your local public occupational health network team. You can find the contact information under the “Régions” tab of [Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail \(RSPSAT\)](#) website.

5. What can food establishment operators do to minimize risks of contagion?

So far, we have no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food. It is therefore unlikely that such a transmission will take place. Adherence to good food hygiene and safety practices and safe cooking generally minimizes the risk of transmission of any foodborne contamination and illness.

Food establishment operators (restaurants, supermarkets, slaughterhouses, butchers, dairy plants, processing plants, etc.) play an important role in preventing foodborne illnesses. In the current context, they should follow public health recommendations and the following guidelines:

- Ensure that staff under their responsibility are aware of issues related to COVID19;

- Rest assured that the staff respect the rigorous sanitary guidelines recommended by the public health authorities;
- Ensure that food handlers are properly trained in food hygiene practices;
- Ensure effective supervision of food handlers to enhance hygiene practices in the establishment;
- Ensure that the appropriate facilities are available for hand washing;
- Ensure that food handlers are aware that they must report any symptoms of respiratory illness before or during work;
- Ensure that food handlers and other personnel are not ill;
- Ensure that staff with symptoms remain at home until medical advice is received;
- Enhance cleaning and sanitation procedures for items that are exposed to public handling (handles, crates, counters, menus, etc.). Special attention should be paid to fast food or self-service locations where utensils can be handled by several people;
- The use of self-service buffets where people have to wait in line, close to each other and close to food and utensils, is an increased risk and should be avoided;
- Provide for additional or alternative refrigerated or frozen storage capacities to meet the food demand, which is likely subject to change (decreased demand in the hotel, restaurant and institutional sectors, increased demand for food products at retail locations);
- Prepare an action plan in the event of a labour shortage. Do not neglect cleaning and sanitation activities and processing methods that require qualifications. If necessary, prioritize activities that ensure the best means of food availability and abandon other activities.

The Public health expertise and reference centre (INSPQ) has produced a series of documents outlining preventative measures to take against the spread of [COVID-19 in different work environments](#), with some of those pertaining to the food industry.

6. As a food handler, which precautions should I take?

If they believe that they have symptoms of a respiratory illness, it is important that food handlers inform their employer, avoid preparing food for others, and follow public health recommendations.

It is possible that food handlers who are infected may introduce the virus into the food they are in contact with through contaminated hands or by coughing or sneezing. However, this is unlikely to occur if people who come into contact with food in the food industry adhere to good personal hygiene practices that help reduce the risk of transmission of most foodborne illnesses. Such practices include:

- Frequent hand washing and good general hand hygiene;
- Compliance with the good food hygiene and safety practices (see the [Guide des bonnes pratiques d'hygiène et de salubrité alimentaires](#));
- Compliance with [respiratory etiquette](#);
- Avoid contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness, such as coughing and sneezing, to the extent possible;
- Food handlers should wash their hands frequently (even if they have no symptoms of illness). Hand washing is required:
 - before starting work,
 - before handling cooked or ready-to-eat foods,
 - after handling or preparing raw food,
 - after handling waste,
 - after performing cleaning and sanitizing tasks,
 - after going to the toilet,
 - after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose,
 - after eating, drinking or smoking,
 - after handling money.

Gloves are not required and wearing them provides a false sense of security.

7. What cleaning and sanitizing methods are effective against coronavirus in food establishments?

Common cleaning and sanitizing methods used in the food industry should be continued and their frequency of use should be increased where possible. Other pathogenic microorganisms, generally more resistant than coronavirus, should not be overlooked.

Currently, 70% alcohol and sodium hypochlorite are known to be particularly effective against coronavirus.

Confirm with your suppliers how effective their cleaning and sanitizing procedures and products are against coronavirus. In case of doubt, it is best to keep the procedures already in place and always ensure that they are correctly applied, in accordance with manufacturer instructions.

For non-food surfaces that are particularly exposed to the public (handles, crates, counters, etc.), more frequent cleaning using a disinfection method known to be effective against coronavirus is recommended. Health Canada has published a list of disinfectant products that can be used to inactivate SARS-CoV-2 on hard surfaces.

8. What is recommended for washing items made of fabric (hand towels, table napkins, work jackets, etc.)?

In the food sector, items in fabric can be washed following manufacturer instructions. If possible, use hot water and dry the items thoroughly.

If at all possible, clean and sanitize items made of fabric more frequently, as is the case for any other surface.

For more information on this subject, consult the [COVID-19 : Nettoyage de surfaces](#) document from Public health expertise and reference centre (INSPQ).

9. Should I take any precautions with regards to preparing take-out orders and deliveries?

Aside from using enhanced good hygiene practices when preparing food, additional precautions may be taken to limit the contamination of surfaces and contact with clients:

- protect packaging (tins, bottles, containers, etc.) or distance packaging from handlers or clients;
- encourage transactions by telephone or Internet and avoid the use of cash;
- delivery people should signal their arrival, then leave packages on doorsteps.

Clients should handle the packages, then wash their hands before eating.

Masks and gloves are not necessary measures to ensure the protection of delivery people, food handlers or clients. They are for patients who have symptoms or who are thought to be infected, and for the healthcare professionals.

On this subject, consult the [COVID-19 : Mesures pour les livreurs à domicile \(colis, livraison de restaurant, épicerie, etc.\)](#) from the Institut National de la Santé Publique du Québec (INSPQ).

10. If a customer coughs and has symptoms, should I tell them to leave the grocery store?

It is the responsibility of the owner of the establishment to take such measures as he/she deems necessary to ensure public health in his/her restaurant or grocery store.

However, coughing does not mean that he/she is infected with the virus. We are relying on the civic-mindedness and honesty of citizens to respect public health instructions in case of doubt or contamination.

11. Do grocery stores have to clean the grocery carts?

Retailers are strongly encouraged to pay even greater attention to the application of best practices for cleaning and sanitizing food and non-food contact surfaces.

Documentation on these practices can be found on the [Nettoyage et assainissement](#) page.

Consumers must rely on basic personal hygiene practices for their safety, which include thoroughly washing hands and used utensils before cooking and eating, thoroughly washing food before eating, as well as coughing or sneezing into their elbow. Therefore, there is no need for any denunciations.

12. Can retailers (e.g. grocery stores or fishmongers) pre-pack live lobster to minimize contact with customers?

Lobsters are not a species covered by the Animal Welfare and Safety Act (RLRQ, chapter B-3.1). Furthermore, the Regulation respecting food does not specify how lobsters must be kept alive before being delivered to the consumer, but the operator must make sure the packaging or container used is adequate to keep the lobsters alive until delivered to the consumer. It is recommended that the methods for keeping the lobsters be monitored and adjusted if adverse effects on the animals are noticed.

13. How can the Government of Québec help me improve my company's human resources management practices or training for my employees?

The [Continued Employment](#) (PACME) program is offered to all companies and includes subsidies to cover the costs of training activities within a company, as well as the costs of human resources management practices. To be eligible, a company must have experienced a loss of business due to the effects of Covid-19.

Among the activities covered by the PACME, all types of training for employees (computer skills, learning French, etc.) or which aim to improve human resources management (e.g. setting up a remote working system) are activities for which direct assistance may represent up to 100% of eligible expenses.

14. What process should foreign workers and their employers follow?

At all times, [Public Health Recommendations](#) must be strictly followed when receiving temporary foreign workers in order to support Québec's agri-food activities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Refer to the [Protocol for the arrival of temporary foreign workers to Québec from the bio-food industry \(PDF 251 Kb\)](#) document which was produced in collaboration with several Quebec and Canadian departments and agencies. This is a checklist for employers which groups together the federal government's guidelines, applicable labour standards and the Public Health Recommendations.

See also the [Frequent Asked Questions](#) page on the same subject.

15. I am available to work in an agricultural business or in food processing. How can I offer my services?

As far as agricultural businesses are concerned, consult the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) website dedicated to employment in this sector: [Centres d'emploi agricole](#).

A Québec-based portal named "[À table! Emplois](#)" was created to facilitate recruitment for food processing companies. This portal is free and serves to connect employers looking for temporary staff with those looking for work during the COVID-19 pandemic. This recruitment effort serves to ensure a continued supply of products in grocery stores and on tables in Québec homes.

You can create an account on this portal to fill temporary jobs.

The Incentive Program to Retain Essential Workers (IPREW) was implemented by the Government of Québec and can improve the federal government's Emergency Wage Subsidy. Eligible workers will be able to apply for this assistance online and will receive an additional amount for each recognized week of work. This program provides higher compensation than that offered by the CERB.

Furthermore, [a bonus of 100 dollars](#) will be offered by Québec government to seasonal agricultural workers who are paid minimum wage for at least 25 hours of work per week.

Adjusting my company's activities

16. Where can I find information on producing and selling plants?

Many companies may resume their sales activities, including garden centres.

Regarding public health, horticultural producers are encouraged to follow the directives of the National Public Health Institute of Québec (INSPQ - Institut national de santé publique du Québec): [COVID-19:Measures for Agricultural Labourers Working in Livestock and Vegetable Production](#). Other guidelines concerning on-site sales are being prepared.

Ornamental horticulture includes ornamental horticultural production not necessarily intended for human consumption: ornamental greenhouse growing (greenhouse plants), nurseries, sod, Christmas trees, etc.

17. My establishment has surplus food, what can I do?

We encourage you to donate any remaining food to food banks or other food aid organizations to help support Québec families in need.

Companies who make donations can take advantage of a [tax credit for charitable donations](#).

The Food Banks of Québec network has implemented the [Food Exchange](#), which is an electronic platform that connects product suppliers with community programs associated with the preparation or distribution of food.

18. Should an establishment be closed after a certain number or percentage of employees develop symptoms?

Food handlers who are sick or showing symptoms of respiratory illness (fever and cough) must inform their employer. They should stay at home until their

symptoms subside and follow the public health guidelines available on the [Self-care Guide](#).

Food businesses are encouraged to work on their service continuity plan.

19. Is it possible for my business to continue its direct consumer sales activities (farmer's market, farm stand and shop, delivery point)?

Agricultural producers and food processors may continue their direct sales activities to consumers through the following:

- In a permanent or seasonal farmer's market stall;
- In a shop or stand located on or outside production sites, including self-service stands;
- At a delivery point for the delivery of a basket or an order.

They must, however, ensure compliance with hygiene and public health measures and instructions. Farmer's markets, whether indoors or outdoors, can also continue to operate and must follow the same guidelines.

Guides are available to support businesses and farmer's markets that carry out direct-to-consumer sales activities. These guides propose ways of implementing directives that are adapted to business reality. Consult the [Guides to Implementing Recommended Preventative Measures](#) page.

Selling non-food products in farmers' markets is also permitted throughout Québec.

20. My business offers on-farm U-pick services. Can I offer this service to my customers?

Agricultural businesses may now offer u-pick activities. They must, however, ensure compliance with hygiene and public health measures and instructions.

A [Guide to the implementation of recommended preventive measures \(COVID-19\)](#) was published to assist businesses offering u-pick activities. It suggests ways of implementing government directives that are adapted to their situation.

Commercial fishing and aquaculture

21. Are there programs available to support a business in the fishing and aquaculture industry?

Especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, government programs exist to support businesses and workers in the commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry. For information, refer to the following files:

- [Government support programs for fishing companies \(PDF 205 Kb\)](#);
- [Government support programs for fish and seafood farmers \(PDF 205 Kb\)](#);
- [Government support programs for fish and seafood processing plants \(PDF 199 Kb\)](#);
- [Government support programs for fisher helpers, plant workers and aquaculture workers \(PDF 165 Kb\)](#).

22. What measures must a business in the fishing and aquaculture industry apply to ensure the safety of its employees?

The Public health expertise and reference centre (INSPQ) indicates preventative measures to take against the spread of COVID-19:

Consult the [Interim recommendations for the fishing industry](#) and the [Interim recommendations for the food processing industry](#) documents.

Financial assistance

23. Which measures are available for my business to cope with the financial difficulties it faces?

If you are a company or a stakeholder in the bio-food sector and you are faced with specific issues jeopardizing your activities, you are invited to contact the [regional branch](#) of the ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation.

The following measures are available:

- Lending banks are available to study your file and find a customized solution for your situation. It is important that you contact them before you reach a critical tipping point.

- The Financière agricole du Québec (FADQ) is offering new solutions in connection with its financing and insurance products. For more information, visit the “[News room](#)” section of the FADQ website, and feel free to contact the service centre in your area.
- The Government of Québec announced the creation of the [Concerted Temporary Action Program for Businesses](#) (PACTE) and a moratorium on loans taken out through local investment funds. The PACTE can help businesses experiencing difficulties with the supply of raw materials or products (goods or services) and who are facing an inability or a substantial reduction in their ability to deliver products (goods or services) or merchandise. The financial assistance, for a minimum amount of \$50,000, is provided in the form of a loan guarantee, but may also take the form of a loan.
- The Government of Québec announced the introduction of the [Emergency Assistance Program for Small and Medium-Sized Businesses](#), which aims to support eligible companies experiencing financial difficulty for a limited period. The assistance granted will take the form of a loan or guarantee of up to \$50,000 and will serve to mitigate the same cash flow problems as the PACTE (Concerted Temporary Action Program for Businesses). Loan applications must be sent to regional county municipalities (MRC).
- The Government of Canada has set up the [Canada Emergency Business Account](#) intended to help eligible businesses that paid out wages in 2019. Financial institutions have been mandated by the federal government to offer a loan of up to \$40,000, including an interest-free period.
- The Government of Canada has increased the lending capacity of [Farm Credit Canada](#) (FCC) by more than \$5 billion to support the cash flow needs of farmers and food processors. Contact this organization for more information.
- The Government of Canada is offering SMEs, through the [Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Loan and Guarantee Program](#) and the [BDC's Co-Lending Program](#), the possibility of maintaining a sufficient volume of liquid assets. These programs are being managed by Export Development Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada, respectively. In addition, these two organizations have relaxed the conditions for offering their financial services following the increase in the business credit program.
- [Revenu Québec](#) and the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) are also offering various deferrals with regard to the dates for tax returns, tax instalment payments, GST-QST returns and on balances of income taxes payable.
- Regarding medium and large businesses, the [CDPQ \(Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec\)](#) is offering financing of more than \$5 million to companies that were profitable before the crisis and which have good future business prospects, to help them overcome the crisis.

24. I can no longer pay my employees because of the COVID-19 crisis. Which programs can I refer them to?

The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy is supporting companies that, in order to pay their employees, are experiencing losses of more than 30% of their revenues. It can be used for a period of three months as from March 15, 2020 and will be equal to 75% of the wages paid.

This wage subsidy is intended to prevent further job losses and also to encourage employers to rehire workers who were laid off as a result of Covid-19. If the business is ineligible for this program, it can apply for the [Temporary Wage Subsidy for Employers](#), which reduces the burden of payroll deductions.

As for the Incentive Program to Retain Essential Workers (IPREW), it is offered by the Government of Québec and enhances the Emergency Wage Subsidy. Eligible workers will be able to apply for this assistance online and will receive an additional amount for each recognized week of work. This program provides higher compensation than that offered by the CERB.

The [Work-Sharing Program](#) was also extended to help companies retain employees over a longer period.

The [Canada Emergency Response Benefit \(CERB\)](#) is a combination of the Emergency Care Benefit and the Emergency Support Benefit. Employees, contract workers and self-employed workers who involuntarily lost their jobs are eligible for financial assistance. This benefit cannot be combined with either the Temporary Wage Subsidy or the IPREW.

The federal government's [EI benefits](#) program could offer your employees regular or sickness benefits, depending on their eligibility and the terms of their layoff.

25. I need to repay my Advance Payment Program (APP) advance before April 30th. Is it possible to delay this payment?

The federal government is offering additional time to repay the loan. Furthermore, you can apply for interest relief on an additional instalment of the loan for the 2020-2021 year.

26. During this period, will the government continue issuing approved financial assistance?

Financial assistance to businesses, granted under the programs administered by the ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, is maintained as are essential services.

Permits and inspections

27. How should I proceed to apply for a new food permit or renew my current permit?

If you wish to apply for a food permit, please visit the [Permis](#) section to view the documentation and download the permit application form.

You must complete the form and mail it to the address indicated on the form. It must include the required documents, if applicable, as well as the payment (opening fee and cost of the permit).

Due to the ongoing epidemiological crisis (COVID-19), additional processing times for applications and permit renewals are expected.

We would like to remind you that submitting an application is not sufficient to start an operation. You must receive a permit before taking any action.

[Renew a current food permit](#) : Send your completed and signed renewal form along with the required payment.

Given the current situation, additional processing times are expected. In cases where a previously issued permit is not renewed within the recommended time due to extended processing times; this means you can continue to carry out the activities authorized by that permit, under the same conditions.

28. Will inspection activities be affected?

Despite the current crisis (COVID-19), inspectors are continuing to support operators to ensure food safety and animal health and welfare. They are also informing operators of the public health measures to be taken with regards to COVID-19 when preparing and processing food.

Some services may be affected, such as the issuing of permits. Under these circumstances, no negative consequences will be attributed to clients in this respect.

29. What protection measures will be put in place for inspectors and veterinarians who must make on-site visits?

All measures necessary to protect the health and ensure the security and physical safety of workers are taken, as outlined in Article 51 of the Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety (AOHS).

Only inspections deemed to be priority or critical will be carried out in person. For other situations, telephone interventions are preferred.

When an inspection must be carried out on-site, employees take all measures necessary to protect themselves as well as to protect the clients with which they are entering into contact. To do this:

- Isolation for a 14-day period is obligatory for all inspectors who return from abroad or who present clinical signs of fever or cough;
- Standard biosecurity directives are maintained to limit the spread of all pathogens. A clean lab coat must be worn during each inspection. Handwashing is mandatory both upon arrival and before leaving the inspection site;
- Staff must keep a distance of two metres between themselves and others. All unnecessary contact between individuals is to be avoided;
- It is no longer required to have the inspection report signed by the operator. The inspector must instead indicate "submitted to Mr. or Mrs. the..." and set down the report at a reasonable distance from the operator;
- Before entering the operation site, the inspector must ask whether anyone present or on-site is showing any symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, respiratory difficulties), has tested positive for COVID-19 or has travelled abroad in the past 14 days. If the answer is yes to any of these questions, the inspector must not enter the site and then evaluate alternative options with their manager. It is to be noted that in the absence of symptoms amongst the occupants, social distancing measures must be respected, and the inspector must avoid all unnecessary contact with the animals or the environment;
- Specific measures are planned for continuous inspections in slaughterhouses.

MAPAQ activities

Has the MAPAQ implemented special measures to support the industry or to meet companies' needs?

The Ministère's essential services remain available (e.g. inspections, registrations and permits, financial support, laboratory analyses). Furthermore, MAPAQ is evaluating the situation's impact on companies in the sector with the aim of implementing support measures, if required, in addition to other government interventions. If you are a company or a stakeholder in the bio-food sector and you are faced with specific issues jeopardizing your activities, please contact the regional branch of the MAPAQ to let us know.

What methods is the government exploring to guarantee food availability for residents of Québec?

The MAPAQ is still active and pursuing its mission to ensure food availability, promote a quality food supply and support the growth of Québec's bio-food sector.

Useful links

For psychological support for farmers, visit [Ressources d'aide psychologique pour les agriculteurs](#).

[COVID-19:Santé au travail – Institut national de santé publique du Québec](#)

[Latest information from the CFIA \(Canadian Food Inspection Agency\) for consumers about food safety and animal health, with regard to COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) - Information for the agriculture and agri-food industry](#)

[COVID-19 and Animals - Frequently Asked Questions for Veterinarians - Canadian Veterinary Medical Association](#)

MAPAQ is closely monitoring the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We will update this Q&A as needed. We will also keep you informed of any changes that may have an impact on food availability, food safety and animal health and welfare.