

# **Food safety and the COVID -19 pandemic: lessons learnt**

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**AUDA-NEPAD Guidelines for harmonizing Food Safety  
Standards and Legislations: Technical Review Webinar**



**World Health  
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# Outline of the presentation

- Introduction: Potential transmission of COVID-19 via food
- Key lessons learnt
  - ✓ Application of a “One Health Approach”
  - ✓ Invest in building of safe food markets
  - ✓ New challenges to food safety authorities arising from COVID-19 Pandemic : reorient national food control systems
  - ✓ Strengthen existing Food Safety Management Systems in the food industry + additional measures



# Potential transmission of COVID-19 via food

Highly unlikely that people can catch COVID-19 from food or food packaging :

## How to grocery shop safely?

- When grocery shopping, keep at least 1-metre distance from others and avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose. If possible, sanitize the handles of shopping trolleys or baskets before shopping. Once home, wash your hands thoroughly and also after handling and storing your purchased products.
- There is currently no confirmed case of COVID-19 transmitted through food or food packaging.



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# Potential transmission of COVID-19 via food

Potential survival of SARS-CoV-2 in food environment :

## How to wash fruits and vegetables?

- Fruits and vegetables are important components of a healthy diet. Wash them the same way you should do under any circumstance: before handling them, wash your hands with soap and water. Then, wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly with clean water, especially if you eat them raw.



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# Application of a “One Health Approach”

## Food safety and COVID-19 – A One Health Issue: Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals for food in traditional food markets

Interim guidance

XX May 2020



### [Executive Summary](#)

Traditional food markets, rather than supermarkets, are the norm in many parts of the world. Such markets form part of the social fabric of communities and are a main source of affordable fresh foods for many low-income groups and an important source of livelihoods for millions of urban and rural dwellers from Asia to Africa, Europe and the Americas.

But significant problems arise when these markets allow the sale and slaughter of live animals in areas open to the public, especially wild animals. When wild animals are held in cages and slaughtered and dressed in open market areas that become contaminated with body fluids, faeces, and other waste, a risk arises for transmission of the pathogens they carry to workers and customers alike, and can also result in a spill over to other animals in the market. Experience shows that these environments provide a location for animal viruses, including coronaviruses, to amplify and transmit to new hosts, including humans.

The majority of [recently-emerging](#) infectious diseases have wildlife origins, among them Lassa, Marburg, [Nipah](#) and other viral diseases. Within the coronavirus family, zoonotic viruses have been linked to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003 and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) first detected in 2012. The COVID-19 pandemic stemmed from introduction of a novel coronavirus (“SARS-CoV-2”) into human populations. While the specific mechanism of SARS-CoV-2 emergence has not been definitively identified, at some point or over time interactions occurred that allowed for cross- and perhaps multiple- species pathogen transmission. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) recognizes the repeated emergence of zoonotic diseases and the linkages of some of these along the value chain of the wildlife trade.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that zoonotic disease risks vary amongst different animal species (e.g. terrestrial vs aquatic animal species), different farming and marketing systems, thus risk assessment is required to determine appropriate risk management strategies.

Well-managed traditional food markets that separate areas for selling and slaughtering live animals from access to the general public, which operate under veterinary supervision with good hygiene and sanitation standards for workers and the animals, and that have adequate waste management systems in place, are safe environments for public shopping.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is working closely with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and other international agencies to ensure that the global food system is safe and secure, and that technical support is available for the strengthening national food safety control systems. In some parts of the world, there are traditional food markets where live animals are sold in designated areas as well as markets dedicated to selling live wild animals. WHO and OIE are committed to assisting governments to strengthen food safety regulations to prohibit the marketing and sale of captured live wild animals as food and to control the safety of all animals and animal products intended for human [consumption](#).

In order to reduce the public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals for food in traditional food markets, WHO and OIE are recommending a number of urgent actions that national governments should consider adopting.

## Upcoming - recommendation from WHO and OIE:

**WHO and OIE are committed to assisting governments to strengthen food safety regulations to prohibit the marketing and sale of captured live wild animals as food and to control the safety of all animals and animal products intended for human consumption.**



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# Invest in building safe food markets

**Food markets** (traditional food markets, informal markets, farmers markets, street-food markets):

- are an **important source of affordable** fresh food for billions of people all over the world
- have a **critical social function** and are a great attraction for tourists



But....

- Little consideration given to food safety and environmental health when building markets
- Lack of **basic infrastructure** (no running water, polluted water used, poor waste management, inadequate zoning)
- Live animals and raw food of animal origin **not separated** from ready-to-eat food
- Lack of awareness of basic safe food handling behaviours



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# New challenges for food safety authorities: reorient national food control systems

## COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for competent authorities responsible for national food safety control systems

Interim guidance  
22 April 2020



### Background

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presents an exceptional and unprecedented challenge for competent authorities\* with responsibilities for national food safety control systems\* to continue conducting routine functions and activities in accordance with national regulations and international recommendations. In many countries, competent authority staff are largely working from home, teleworking being the normal practice, and all face-to-face meetings cancelled or rescheduled as teleconferences. It is challenging to maintain, without interruption, routine activities such as the inspection of food business operations, certifying exports, control of imported foods, monitoring and surveillance of the safety of the food supply chain, sampling and analysis of food, managing food incidents, providing advice on food safety and food regulations for the food industry, and communicating on food safety issues with the public.

To preserve the integrity of the national food safety control system and to support international trade and the food supply chain, each competent authority will need to prioritize

The challenges facing national competent authorities arise from:

- implementing contingency plans;

COVID-19 et sécurité sanitaire des aliments : orientations pour les autorités compétentes responsables des systèmes nationaux de contrôle de la sécurité sanitaire des aliments

Orientations provisoires  
22 avril 2020



COVID-19 e inocuidad de los alimentos: orientaciones provisionales para las autoridades competentes responsables de los sistemas nacionales de control de la inocuidad de los

Orientaciones provisionales  
22 de abril de 2020

ur la sécurité sanitaire des aliments, onales, certaines autorités compétentes vilégier certaines activités, par exemple prises du secteur alimentaire à haut on des exportations, le contrôle des tion des incidents alimentaires ou es concernant les denrées alimentaires. entes doivent absolument continuer à de la pandémie de COVID-19 et à

كوفيد-19 وسلامة الأغذية: إرشادات للسلطات المختصة المسؤولة عن النظم الوطنية لمراقبة سلامة الأغذية

إرشادات مبدئية  
22 نيسان / أبريل 2020



COVID-19

руководство для компетентных органов, ответственных за работу национальных систем контроля безопасности пищевых продуктов

COVID-19 e segurança dos alimentos: Orientações para as autoridades competentes responsáveis pelos sistemas de controlo da segurança dos alimentos

Orientações provisórias  
22 de Abril de 2020



## WHO and FAO guidance to food safety authorities :

- New challenges for Food Safety Authorities: Teleworking, Protection of inspectors and premises, prioritization of inspections
- Working as usual not an option - need to identify and prioritize critical areas of work
- Reduced capacity as laboratories relocated to clinical work
- Risk to the integrity of the food supply chain from food fraud
- Communication with stakeholders

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/covid-19-and-food-safety-guidance-for-competent-authorities-responsible-for-national-food-safety-control-systems>



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# Strengthen existing Food Safety Management systems + additional hygiene measures

## COVID-19 et sécurité sanitaire des aliments : orientations pour les entreprises du secteur alimentaire

Orientations provisoires  
7 avril 2020

### Contexte

Avec la pandémie de COVID-19 causée par le virus CoV-2, le monde est aujourd'hui confronté à une menace sans précédent. De nombreux pays à travers le monde ont suivi le conseil de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé (OMS) de mettre en place des mesures de distanciation physique, l'un des moyens de réduire la transmission physique. L'application de ces mesures a entraîné la fermeture d'un grand nombre d'entreprises, d'établissements d'enseignement, et des restrictions des voyages et les rassemblements. Pour assurer la continuité des discussions et les réunions en télétravail et les discussions et les réunions en présentiel, il est désormais possible de travailler à distance. Cependant, eux, n'ont pas la possibilité de travailler à domicile et doivent continuer cette pandémie de travail habituel. Pour traverser cette pandémie, il est indispensable de préserver la santé et la sécurité des personnes qui travaillent dans la production alimentaire et les chaînes d'approvisionnement en denrées. Les produits doivent être distribués le long de la chaîne et toutes les parties prenantes doivent continuer à travailler de manière essentielle. C'est une nécessité aussi

## COVID-19 and food safety: guidance for food businesses

Interim guidance  
7 April 2020



### Background

The world is facing an unprecedented threat from the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (referred to as the COVID-19 virus). 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. The application of these measures has resulted in the closure of many businesses, schools, and institutes of education, and restrictions on travel and social gatherings. For some people, working from home, teleworking, and on-line or internet discussions and meetings are now normal practices. Food industry personnel, however, do not have the opportunity to work from home and are required to continue to work in their usual workplaces.

The purpose of these guidelines is to highlight these additional measures so that the integrity of the food chain is maintained, and that adequate and safe food supplies are available for consumers.

### Potential transmission of COVID-19 via food

It is highly unlikely that people can contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging. COVID-19 is a respiratory illness and the primary transmission route is through person-to-person contact and through direct contact with respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

There is no evidence to date of viruses that cause respiratory illnesses being transmitted via food or food packaging. "Coronaviruses cannot multiply in food; they need an animal or human host to multiply.

The most recent advice from the WHO<sup>3</sup> is that current evidence indicates that COVID-19 virus is transmitted during close contact through respiratory droplets (formed on coughing or sneezing) and by fomites.<sup>4,10</sup> The virus can spread directly from person-to-person when a COVID-19 infected person coughs or sneezes, producing droplets that reach the nose, mouth, or eyes of another person. Alternatively, as the respiratory droplets are too heavy to be airborne, they land on objects and surfaces surrounding the infected person. It is possible that someone may become infected by touching a

## WHO and FAO guidance to food businesses :

- How to protect food workers
- How to shop safely
- Safety in retail sector

## مرض كوفيد-19 وسلامة الأغذية: إرشادات لقطاعات الأعمال في مجال الأغذية



### إرشادات مبدئية

## COVID-19 e inocuidad de los alimentos: orientaciones para las empresas alimentarias

Orientaciones provisionales  
7 de abril de 2020



### Antecedentes

La pandemia de COVID-19 causada por el virus SARS-CoV-2 ha puesto al mundo frente a una amenaza sin precedentes. Muchos países están siguiendo el consejo de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) de aplicar medidas de distanciamiento físico como una de las formas de reducir la transmisión de esta enfermedad. Como consecuencia de ello, se han cerrado muchas empresas, escuelas e instituciones educativas, y se han restringido viajes y reuniones. Para algunas personas, el teletrabajo y las conversaciones y reuniones en línea se han convertido en parte de la vida cotidiana. Sin embargo, el personal de las empresas alimentarias no puede trabajar desde su domicilio y se les pide que sigan desplazándose a sus lugares habituales de trabajo.

evalúe si las medidas adicionales que se puedan adoptar ponen en riesgo la inocuidad de los alimentos. Esta persona debe estar en contacto con los organismos de reglamentación pertinentes y seguir sus recomendaciones. Las empresas alimentarias deben aplicar urgentemente las medidas necesarias para impedir que los trabajadores del sector contraigan la COVID-19, evitar la exposición y la transmisión del virus causante y reforzar las prácticas de higiene y saneamiento de los alimentos.

La finalidad de las presentes orientaciones es explicar las medidas adicionales que se pueden adoptar para preservar la integridad de la cadena alimentaria y garantizar el acceso de los consumidores a alimentos que satisfagan sus necesidades, sin poner en riesgo su salud.

## COVID-19 и безопасность пищевых продуктов:

## для предприятий пищевой промышленности



этой угрозы пандемии и SARS-CoV-2. Многие страны следуют совету Всемирной организации здравоохранения (ВОЗ) по применению физических мер по предотвращению передачи вируса. В результате многие предприятия, школы и учреждения образования закрыты, поездки и собрания ограничены. Для некоторых людей удаленная работа и онлайн-обсуждения и встречи становятся нормой. Однако работники пищевой промышленности не имеют возможности работать из дома и должны продолжать работать в своих обычных местах.

этих групп должны принимать участие во всех обсуждениях, чтобы гарантировать, что новые меры будут рассмотрены с учетом безопасности пищевых продуктов. Если на предприятии нет группы в области ФССМ и/или HACCP, необходимо назначить одного человека, ответственного за рассмотрение вопроса о том, могут ли в результате дополнительных мер возникнуть риски для безопасности пищевых продуктов. Это назначенное лицо должно обратиться в Управление по контролю качества пищевых продуктов для получения

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/covid-19-and-food-safety-guidance-for-food-businesses>



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Thank you



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