

SPECIAL INFORMATION

1. What to do if a food handler tests positive for COVID-19?

Please read the **Guidance for Industry: What to do when someone tests positive for COVID-19 in a food establishment** 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**.

2. What can I do to be proactive in my bio-food business?

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

- the interim recommendations for the food processing industry
- the interim recommendations for grocery stores and essential businesses
- the recommendations for agricultural labourers working in livestock and vegetable production
- the interim recommendations for the fishing industry
- the interim recommendations for home deliveries (parcels and packages, restaurant delivery, groceries, etc.)
- the interim recommendations for veterinary care workers

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

Interregional travel

An FAQ pertaining to the closure of certain regions and territories can be found at the Québec.ca website, in the Answers to questions about Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Travel between regions section.

3. I am available to work in the bio-food sector, for example in an agricultural business or in food processing. How can I offer my services?

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.

Are you looking to sign up for temporary work? Visit the portal!

<https://atableemplois.ca/>

4. I have to close my bio-food company's doors. What should I do with my surplus food?

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

CONSUMERS

Food safety

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. However, 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.

Therefore, 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.

2. Could the government decide to close grocery stores?

MAPAQ would like to reiterate that grocery stores are considered an essential service and the government will not request that they be closed. In addition, the bio-food supply chain (for example, agricultural and food processing companies, slaughterhouses and vegetable farms) is also regarded as a key service. Also, MAPAQ remains active to ensure the safety and availability of food for consumers.

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

4. Can I continue to eat food from abroad?

Imported food does not carry a greater risk of transmission of the virus.

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

5. Should I wash all the packaged food items I buy at the grocery store?

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 between two hours up to nine days, depending on the type of surface and environmental conditions (temperature, humidity, etc.). However, it isn't necessary to wash all of your purchases. The key is to wash your hands often, especially when you return home and once you have put your groceries away. As always, you should also wash your hands before cooking and before eating.

In order to limit the contamination of surfaces, remember that a number of enhanced hygiene practices have been implemented by food establishment operators and that consumers should also be made aware of respiratory etiquette when in public places, including in grocery stores and supermarkets.

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 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 be made aware of complying with respiratory etiquette concerning unpackaged food such as fruits and vegetables.

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

Remember that, so far, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food. 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. Adherence to good food hygiene and safety practices and safe cooking generally minimizes the risk of transmission of any foodborne contamination or illness.

8. Homemade cleaning products can be made using bleach. What would you recommend on this topic?

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.

We believe that 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](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html)).

Please note that, in the current context and according to the available scientific data, the proportions usually recommended by MAPAQ (1:200) must be increased to 1:50 (equivalent to a 0.1% solution of sodium hypochlorite) as a precautionary measure. However, 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.

9. Can I bring my reusable bags?

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. However, 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.

10. Do washrooms in restaurants need to remain accessible to clients or not?

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 (see question 4. “What cleaning and sanitizing methods are effective against coronavirus in food establishments?”). It should however be noted that it is not recommended to make washrooms meant exclusively for staff available to the public.

ANIMAL OWNERS OR KEEPERS

1. Can my pet(s) get the coronavirus and transmit it to me?

All indications are that the virus is transmitted from person to person as a result of close contact, and there is no evidence that it circulates in the animal population. In fact, no case of transmission from a human (or other animal) to a domestic animal has been identified. In Québec, there is no evidence to suggest a risk of infection of humans by animals or animal products.

However, animals exposed to the virus can be similar to a contaminated surface that is difficult to disinfect and is generally mobile. The risks of contamination are limited by the following measures:

- Recommendations of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux:
[Quebec.ca/coronavirus](https://quebec.ca/coronavirus)
- Biosecurity measures:
www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/santeanimale/maladies/soussurveillance/Pages/Biosecuriteferme.aspx.
- Hygiene measures relating to contact with animals:
www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/zoonoses

Given the limited amount of scientific knowledge available, precautionary principles apply to those infected or suspected of being infected.

2. What must I do if I am infected by COVID-19 or think I am?

During the period of isolation prescribed by public health authorities:

- If possible, avoid contact with animals.
- If you have to take care of an animal nonetheless, comply with the hygiene measures recommended by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. This includes wearing a mask and paying special attention to hand washing before providing care. Comply with the usual hygiene measures for contact with animals.

These measures are found in the [Maladies animales transmissibles à l'humain](#) section.

- Avoid contact between your animal and other animals or with people.
- If someone else must take care of your animal, choose a household member if you can. Brief this person on the measures to apply, especially those concerning limited contact with the animal, hand washing before and after care is provided, and disinfecting the environment that must be shared with the animal, where applicable (e.g. for walks, etc.). Also remind the person about the hygiene measures to follow.
- Animal breeders already use good biosecurity and hygiene. They are urged to enhance it if needed.

3. My business is closed as my activities are considered to be non-priority. However, I am responsible for animals in the scope of my commercial activities. Do I need to ensure they are provided care, and if so, to what extent?

In compliance with the government order to close all non-essential businesses and services, in effect since March 25 at 12:01am, all non-essential businesses and services (e.g. puppy care and animal training courses), grooming services and other related activities (e.g. agility training) must close their doors until Monday, April 13. However, animals are sentient beings who have essential needs. Also, the animals' owner or caretaker must ensure their well-being and safety, by providing them with required care (e.g. food and shelter), despite the closure of their business. Furthermore, the hygiene measures recommended by the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ([Québec.ca/coronavirus](#)) must be implemented to ensure the safety of all parties concerned.

Useful links:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/essential-services-commercial-activities-covid19/#c48429>

https://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Productions/santeanimale/securitebea/Pages/Securite_bienetre.aspx

4. The animal boarding establishment keeping my animals (e.g. dog, cat, horse) has changed their terms of service since the order to close non-priority businesses and the release of recommendations issued by the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS). Is this normal given the current situation?

Yes Animal boarding establishments are not considered to be priority services. In accordance with the emergency measures introduced by the government of Québec, the owner of an animal currently lodged in an animal boarding establishment does not have

the authority to go to the establishment to see or retrieve their animal, so long as the emergency measures are in place.

Animals are sentient beings who have essential needs. The owner of the animal boarding establishment is responsible for providing their basic needs, such as food, shelter (e.g. ensuring cleanliness of the site and essential elements such as litter) and emergency medical care, all while respecting the hygiene measures recommended by the MSSS (e.g. social distancing). The owner of the animal boarding establishment must take the appropriate measures to ensure that staffing is sufficient to provide this care. The animals must also be able to exercise. However, given the situation of the pandemic, while daily exercise or yard time is recommended, this period must be evaluated and established relative to the particular needs of the animals being lodged and the resources available. The Ministère counts on the cooperation of citizens and businesses to ensure the well-being of the animals, all while prioritizing public health.

5. I own an animal boarding establishment. Can i take on new animals at this time?

No. Animal boarding establishments cannot take on any new animals before the end of the order decreed by the government of Québec.

6. I'm the owner of a business deemed non-priority (e.g. animal boarding establishment, a garden centre with animals, etc.) with animals currently on-site. What measures must I take to provide them with the necessary care, all while prioritizing public health?

For the security of staff and animals, the Ministère encourages affected companies to reevaluate their practices, notably taking into consideration the nature of the facilities they have, the species and numbers of animals being hosted, the minimum number of staff required to provide basic needs to these animals, and then to implement measures that prioritize public health. At minimum, the hygiene measures recommended by the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ([Québec.ca/coronavirus](https://quebec.ca/coronavirus)) must be adopted to ensure the health of all parties concerned, while respecting social distancing and avoiding gatherings.

7. I'm returning from travel and I wish to retrieve my animal which is currently lodged in an animal boarding facility. Is it possible to do so, given the mandatory closing of non-priority businesses?

No. No owner may retrieve their animal before the emergency measures decreed by the government of Québec have been lifted.

8. I'm the owner of a horse and I wish to change animal boarding establishments. Is it possible to retrieve my animal and to transport it to the new establishment?

No. Given the application of emergency measures, only cases deemed to be of extreme necessity are authorized for animal transportation. For example, transfer to a veterinary centre to receive care or to pick up an animal from a shelter when the owner or caretaker is no longer able to provide the animal with the necessary care. The person who is transporting the animal must have proof attesting to the necessity of the transfer, such as a document indicating that it is being brought to a specialized veterinary centre or that it is a transfer of care to or from an animal shelter.

9. Are animal shelters currently open?

Animal shelters, as well as pounds, animal services, rescues and locations managed by people or organizations dedicated to the protection of animals are all considered to be essential services. However, in the interest of public safety over the short and long term, these locations can limit or modify their services offered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministère underlines the importance of limiting animal abandonment, when citizens are able to provide basic care to their animals, until the lift of the emergency measures. Transporting animals to a shelter is authorized, as that consists of an essential service.

Caring for animals

Currently, abandoning or euthanizing animals is not justified or supported by any scientific evidence. MAPAQ relies on businesses and partners with animals under their responsibility to ensure the continuity of essential services for the welfare of animals. Pet owners and animal caretakers are also encouraged to have an emergency plan in place to ensure that their animals receive the necessary care in the event that they are unable to care for them. They must also provide the necessary equipment for the health of the animals (e.g. the equivalent of at least two weeks of food and medication, if necessary).

AGRI-BUSINESSES AND AGRI-FOOD WORKERS

1. Information for businesses about essential services and priority activities

Your company's activity is not listed, but you think it is a priority. You can check the essential company designation on the [Quebec.ca](https://www.quebec.ca) website.

If you have any questions, you will need to fill out an online form. An information officer from the Government of Québec will then contact you shortly.

2. Is there a website for recruiting by agri-food businesses?

Yes. The [À table! Emplois](#) website came online on March 26. This Québec-based portal is free and pertains to jobs specialized in the bio-food sector. It will remain open throughout the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic. It serves to connect employers looking for temporary staff with workers who want to work in this key sector, ensuring a continued supply of products in grocery stores and on tables in Québec homes.

3. What can food establishment operators (restaurants, supermarkets, slaughterhouses, butchers, dairy plants, processing plants, etc.) do to minimize risks?

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 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 COVID-19;
- 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 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. Visit the <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/covid-19/sante-au-travail> website.

4. 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.

5. Should I ask food handlers to wear gloves?

No, gloves are not required and provide a false sense of security. Frequent hand washing is more appropriate.

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.

7. Are there special precautions surrounding the preparation of take-out food or food for delivery?

Aside from using the enhanced good hygiene practices when preparing food (link to the question 3 *What can food establishment operators do?*), 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 phone and internet transactions and avoid using 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 who treat them.

Remember that, so far, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food. 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. Adherence to good food hygiene and safety practices and safe cooking generally minimizes the risk of transmission of any foodborne contamination or illness.

For more information on this subject, you can consult the following for more information: [“COVID-19: Measures for home delivery \(packages and parcels, restaurant delivery, groceries, etc.\)”](#).

8. 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.

9. 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, stay at home until their symptoms subside and follow the public health guidelines available on the [Québec.ca](#) website and on the [“Self-care Guide”](#). In addition, food businesses are encouraged to work on their service continuity plan.

10. I own a supermarket or grocery store that can accommodate more than 250 people per day. What should I do?

The 250-person limit does not apply to your establishment. So you have the option to take steps to apply this limit.

The government of Québec is asking restaurant and café owners to close all their dining rooms.

Take-out orders, deliveries and drive-in services remain permitted.

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 MAPAQ website. However, 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.

For consultation: [Cleaning and sanitizing](#).

12. I only offer bulk food. Should I close?

No. However, you should enhance good hygiene practices:

Add additional protections (containers, sneeze guards, nearby hand-washing stations, service by an employee);

Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing in high traffic areas or on exposed surfaces.

13. I own a sugar shack. Do I have to close my establishment completely?

The current prohibition applies to providing food service or accepting visitors at your establishment. Maple syrup production and maple product manufacturing can therefore continue. We invite you to avoid activities associated with pouring maple syrup on snow.

14. I have to close the doors of my establishment. What should I do with my surplus food?

We encourage you to donate any remaining food to food banks or other food aid organizations.

15. 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, please visit the <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/covid-19/nettoyage-surfaces> website.

ECONOMIC ISSUES FOR BUSINESSES

1. I can no longer pay my employees because of the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. layoffs, contracting the virus, etc.). Which programs can I refer them to?

- [The federal government's main Employment Insurance program](#) provides two kinds of benefits: regular and sickness.
- The federal government's **Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)** combines the Emergency Care Benefit and Emergency Support Benefit. Regular employees, contract workers and self-employed workers who have lost their income are eligible for taxable financial assistance of \$2,000 a month for a maximum of four months. Program details will be posted online shortly.

2. If my employees do not qualify for Employment Insurance, what else can I do for them?

On March 16, the provincial government announced the [Temporary Aid for Workers Program](#), designed to meet the needs of workers who, because they are in isolation to counter the propagation of the COVID-19 virus, cannot earn all of their work income and are not eligible for another financial assistance program.

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

- 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 Protec-pêche program](#) is a measure that enables fishing enterprises to pay the interest on their loans and to be granted a moratorium on repayment of capital on maritime loans, up to a certain maximum. It also provides for payment of marine insurance premiums.
- La Financière agricole du Québec (FADQ) is already offering a six-month moratorium on its loan repayments. For more information, please read the following press release: "[La Financière agricole du Québec implements new measures to help agricultural producers](#)".
- With respect to its program requirements, the FADQ is adapting to the current situation in different sectors. Regarding the specific situation of producers, they are being treated on a case-by-case basis by the service centres. Depending on their liquidity requirements, companies can communicate with their service centre

for help, to come to an arrangement, and to implement a solution adapted to their situation. For example, financing could be provided to replenish working capital.

- For producers insured by the FADQ programs, maintaining activities will allow them to proceed to regular final ASRA (Farm Income Stabilization Insurance) payout for the livestock sector and to the second advance for grain and canola.
- Furthermore, AgrilInvest and Agri-Québec program accounts allow participating producers to benefit from short-term liquidity with no withdrawal condition. The AgriStability program provides the possibility of provisional payment, allowing producers in difficulty to obtain part of the year's calculated payment in advance.
- The government has announced the [Concerted temporary action program for businesses \(PACTE\)](#) and a three-month moratorium on loans contracted through the Fonds locaux d'investissements. PACTE can help businesses with supply problems (raw material or goods and services) or those for which the delivery of product (goods and services) or merchandise is impossible or significantly reduced. A minimum of \$50,000 is granted as either a loan guarantee or a loan.
 - [News release: COVID-19 – Economic measures – A proactive government helping Québec business](#)
 - [PACTE Q&A](#)
- The Government of Canada has increased the lending capacity of **Farm Credit Canada (FCC)** by more than \$5 billion for producers' and food processors' liquidity needs. Contact it for further information: <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/fr.html>.
- [Federal COVID-19 programs for businesses](#)

4. I need to repay my Advance Payment Program (APP) advance before April 30th. Is it possible to delay this payment? (Updated March 29th)

The federal government is offering a six-month delay for repaying the loan. Moreover, you may apply for an exemption of the interest on an additional \$100,000 for 2020-2021 provided that your total APP advances do not exceed the \$1 million ceiling.

5. During this period, will the MAPAQ continue issuing approved financial assistance?

- The Ministère will maintain its essential services, including issuance of financial assistance to businesses.

MAPAQ ACTIVITIES

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

If you wish to apply for a food permit, please visit the [Permits 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. However, no negative consequences will be attributed to clients of the Ministère.

Please note that due to these exceptional circumstances, the phone service for permits is currently unavailable. The Ministère is working to get this fixed as soon as possible.

2. Will inspection activities be affected?

Despite the current crisis (COVID-19), the Ministère's 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.

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

3. 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, you are invited to contact [the regional branch of the MAPAQ](#) to let us know.

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

As an employer, MAPAQ must take all measures necessary to protect the health and ensure the security and physical safety of workers, as outlined in Article 51 of the Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety (AOHS).

Thus, 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, MAPAQ requires that its 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.

Useful links

1. For psychological support for farmers, visit [Ressources d'aide psychologique pour les agriculteurs](#).
2. Latest information from the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) for consumers on food and animal health and with regard to COVID-19:

<https://inspection.gc.ca/covid-19/questions-and-answers/eng/1584648921808/1584648922156>

3. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - Information for industry – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada: <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-information-for-industry/?id=1584732749543>

The MAPAQ is closely monitoring the evolution of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We will update this Q&A section daily as needed. We will also inform you of any changes that could impact food availability and safety and animal health and welfare.