



Instructions

29.7.2021

VN/8723/2020
VN/8723/2020-MMM-9

COVID-19: Instructions for employers on seasonal primary production workers' safe entry into Finland, ways to avoid close contacts and drawing up a health security plan

1. Entry into Finland

- before entry:
 - the employer should inform workers in advance that they must not travel to Finland from the country of origin if they develop one or more of the following symptoms indicative of COVID-19 infection before they start their trip (Source: Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare)
 - fever
 - cough
 - sore throat or hoarse throat
 - running or congested nose
 - shortness of breath
 - disturbances of the sense of smell or taste
 - headache
 - muscle pain
 - weakness or fatigue
 - nausea or vomiting
 - diarrhoea
 - if a worker develops the above symptoms, the worker must postpone their trip and seek a COVID-19 test in the country of origin. The trip can take place only when the prescribed isolation due to possible COVID-19 infection has ended, or the worker has been asymptomatic for at least 2 days and at least 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms.
- transit from the border to the place of accommodation:
 - if the worker comes to Finland via the land border in their own car, they should be instructed to drive to the farm and accommodation via the most direct route, avoiding unnecessary deviations and stops along the way
 - if the employer arranges transport from the border to the farm:
 - public transport may not be used in this situation. The means of transport can be, for example, a car or minibus with no one in the vehicle aside from the driver and the worker or workers.

- workers coming to the same accommodation can be transported by the same means of transport
- where possible, passengers should be placed in the vehicle as far apart as possible
- clean face masks (disposable surgical mouth and nose coverings are recommended) and hand disinfectant should be provided. All occupants of the means of transport must wear a face mask. Passengers' hands must be disinfected before entering the vehicle, and face masks must not be unnecessarily removed during the journey. If it is necessary for a passenger to remove their mask (e.g. while drinking) during the journey, they must always disinfect their hands before touching the mask, the used mask must be placed in a sealable trash bag, and the passenger must disinfect their hands again before putting on a new mask (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: recommendation on the use of face masks)

2. Testing upon entry into the country

- Under the Communicable Diseases Act (1227/2016), if a traveller arriving in Finland does not have a reliable certificate of a full vaccination course or proof of recovery from COVID-19 within the past six months, that person must undergo two COVID-19 tests in Finland. The first test is taken at the border immediately after arrival in Finland, and the second test 72–120 hours after the first test. More information on health security rules is provided in the Communicable Diseases Act and on the travel website of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. The rules on entry into Finland are available on the Border Guard website. Tests for people entering the country taken at the borders and at public health centres are free of charge. Testing at private medical centres is chargeable.
- The countries for which tests are not required upon entry are defined in a Government decree. The list of countries changes depending on the epidemiological situation, so it is always important to check before entering the country. An up-to-date list of these low-risk countries is available on the travel website of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.
- **In addition to the above, it is recommended that seasonal workers arriving in Finland avoid close contacts with others until they have received the results of their tests (and they are negative). Starting work before receiving the results is not recommended.**
- Avoiding close contacts with others means:
 - workers should avoid contact with all other people at their accommodation, while eating and during their free time
 - if a worker has arrived in Finland and is going to the same workplace together with other people, the employer can instruct them to stay in the same accommodation. If this is the case, if necessary the workers can also be close to each other while eating.

- a worker must not go shopping or run other errands outside the accommodation and the workplace; shopping should be done on the worker's behalf and the goods should be delivered to them securely so that there is no contact with outside persons
- essential visits to a doctor, etc. are conducted as safely as possible, avoiding additional contacts and public transport. In these situations, it is recommended to wear a mask.
- good hand and coughing hygiene must always be observed

3. Testing before the start of work

It is strongly recommended that all new employees be tested before starting work. It is not possible to start working until a negative test result has been received. The test should be carried out no earlier than 48 hours before the start of the work. In this situation, the results of the tests taken upon arrival in Finland, if available, can be used. This recommendation also applies to employees who have received a full COVID-19 vaccination course. Testing is particularly important for employees living in shared accommodation. This testing is not required under the Communicable Diseases Act, but it is carried out to prevent the spread of a generally hazardous communicable disease, so it is recommended that municipalities take care of the arrangements and costs.

4. Activities after the start of work

- in all activities, it is important to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- if you have symptoms, do not go to work; please stay in your accommodation and contact your employer
- due to the COVID-19 epidemic, there are varying recommendations in place in different parts of Finland, for example concerning the number of people allowed to meet at the same time
- there is a recommendation in place throughout Finland to wear a face mask in situations where close contact with other people cannot be avoided

5. Drawing up a health security plan

A company employing foreign seasonal workers must draw up a health security plan that includes the following.

- the workplace must have a health contact person appointed by the employer, who the workers can contact whenever they have questions or problems related to health security (for example, symptoms associated with a coronavirus infection);
- the health contact person must:
 - inform the municipal doctor responsible for infectious diseases at the workplace of the arrival of seasonal workers from abroad, and go through

the measures with the doctor in cases where a worker is suspected of having a coronavirus infection. At the same time, they can agree on COVID-19 testing for workers if necessary. It is a good idea to find out the contact information of the doctor responsible for infectious diseases in good time before seasonal workers arrive. This information can be obtained from the local municipality health centre or from Töitä Suomesta Oy.

- ensure that the workers have access to face masks and hand sanitiser (alcohol content at least 70 %), that hand washing facilities are in working order (cleanliness, soap, disposable hand towels, rubbish bins preferably with lids), and that there are enough rubbish bins with lids to be used for disposable face masks. These bins are then emptied regularly
- be available to workers at all times so that the health contact person can be contacted if workers develop any symptoms or have questions regarding health issues. The name and telephone number of the health contact person must be entered in the health security instructions given to workers.
- place a symptomatic worker into accommodation separate from others so that they have separate sanitary facilities and eat in their own room apart from others
- if necessary, set aside time for a symptomatic worker to give a coronavirus test sample and ensure that the symptomatic worker can get to the coronavirus test securely and following isolation
- monitor the condition of the symptomatic worker and, if necessary, refer them for assessment to a healthcare professional securely and following isolation
- assist the municipal infectious disease unit in carrying out the isolation of a worker who may be positive for the coronavirus and in identifying, reaching out to and implementing the prescribed quarantine;
- ensure that the health records of all workers (for example, the results of coronavirus tests) are kept available only to individuals who have access to them in order to ensure health security. Workers' health data must not be shared or passed on to any outsiders.
- workers are given the instructions on hand hygiene and coughing hygiene, and on the avoidance of contact (see Health security instructions for seasonal workers in primary production)
- workers are given instructions in the event of symptoms fitting coronavirus infection (see above):
 - staying in or going to the place of accommodation
 - avoiding contact
 - wearing a face mask if contact with other people cannot be avoided
 - contacting the health contact person
- avoiding close contacts until two COVID-19 tests have come back negative (implementation and monitoring of implementation)
- even after entry, it is important to ensure that good hand and coughing hygiene and regional recommendations and restrictions are observed at the workplace.

Check the phase of the COVID-19 epidemic in the area on the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare website. Links to local recommendations and restrictions for each region are shown on the same page.

- it is good for seasonal workers to be accommodated throughout their work period in the smallest possible units, preferably in single rooms. In this way, even in the event of possible subsequent coronavirus infections, the emergence of large chains of infection can be prevented and the viability of the farm can be secured as well as possible.
- shared facilities must be cleaned regularly in accordance with the instructions issued by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The same guidelines also provide instructions for cleaning the common areas in use by a person with a COVID-19 infection.

6. Infectious disease allowance

- More information on infectious disease allowance is available on the Kela website: Sickness allowance on account of an infectious disease.
- More information on voluntary avoidance of contacts, isolation and quarantine is available on the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare website: Quarantine and isolation.