

# TEA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF SRI LANKA

Issued In: May 2020

Guideline No: 02/2020

## GUIDELINES ON PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN TEA PLANTATIONS

Entire world has been affected by the pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus, commonly known as COVID-19. Sri Lanka is also currently experiencing COVID-19 threat. Globally, COVID-19 pandemic will create significant impacts on economies and Sri Lanka is not exempted being an upper middle-income country. This will certainly create adverse outcomes in the health, social and economic settings in short, medium and longer terms.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease and the transmission takes place via following 3 routes:

1. Droplets - The virus can be transmitted by breathing infected droplets. Droplets can be produced during coughing or sneezing or even by exhales from infected persons. These droplets travel up to a distance of 1m.
2. Direct - Person to person transmission by direct contact with an infected person (Eg. Hugging, Shaking hands). The virus enters the body through nose, mouth or eyes.
3. Indirect – When an infected person coughs, sneezes or exhales, droplets of infected fluid may release and contaminate nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables, telephones, computers etc. An uninfected person may come in contact the virus by touching these surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Therefore, individual workplaces should adopt best practices to avoid such transmissions through the routes described herein. Individual behavior is also important in arresting transmission of this virus.

Two simple measures adopted in public namely wearing face masks and not touching the face could protect any individual from infecting with this virus.

In the present context, workplaces need to modify the practices and their working environments to prevent any possible transmission of COVID-19 infection. Therefore, stakeholders in the tea plantations are hereby advised to adopt the following guidelines at their workplaces viz. tea field, factory and office, while complying with the Government directives and Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services guidelines issued time to time.

The staff and workers of following categories should not report for work;

1. Those having fever, with or without acute onset respiratory symptoms such as cough, runny nose, sore throat and/or shortness of breath.
2. Those who have had contact with suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 for the last 14 days
3. Those who are quarantined for COVID-19.

4. Those who are occupying premises and/or housing schemes declared as self- quarantine areas for suspected cases of COVID-19.

A large number of people are frequently gathered at the workplaces, it is a collective responsibility of persons to keep workplaces safe and healthy. The lead responsibility for the implementation of this guideline lies with the management of each organization.

All staff and workers need to adhere to the recommendations append below in order to avoid possible transmission of COVID-19 infection.

### **General**

1. Identifying a suitable focal point (a responsible officer) to coordinate, monitor and control activities implemented against COVID-19 infection and provides necessary guidance.
2. Formulating a task force in each estate representing the management, field, factory, medical and welfare staff, and safety officer/s and community members as deemed necessary.
3. Formulating vigilance committee within the plantation community to ensure proper coordination, feedback flow of information and decision taking etc. by the individual estate.
4. Continue awareness on COVID-19 spread and encourage stay at home and line room.
5. Maintaining records and census of all resident individuals, visitors, influx personnel from other regions and countries, workers with reduced immunity and suffering from diabetes, heart, kidney, liver, asthma and lung diseases, age over 40 years.
6. Advise staff to minimize direct verbal communication between co-workers and use alternative methods (Public address system, intercom etc.) to provide instructions to workers and staff members.
7. Discourage workers from the use of other workers' baskets, sacks, knives, mobile phones, pens and common telephones, desks and equipment etc. If any object has been shared, it must be cleaned with soap and water or with minimum 70% v/v alcohol-based sanitizer.
8. Conduct review meetings periodically to monitor, obtain feedback and improve systems.
9. In the event of detecting a suspected case at workplace, seek assistance from hotline 1390 and follow the instructions given or alternatively transfer the worker to the nearest government hospital, by ambulance. Suwasariya ambulance service can be contacted by dialing 1990.
10. Deploy workers with less risk: persons with reduced immunity and suffering from diabetes, heart, kidney, liver, asthma and lung diseases, and age over 40 years are vulnerable.

## **At Field**

1. Limit agricultural practices to essential operations such as plucking, weeding, fertilizing, pruning and nursery upkeep. Additionally, shade lopping and blister blight control in plantations receiving monsoon rain.
2. Avoid gatherings at musters, weighing sheds, tea break, transport etc. and always maintain one meter minimum distance between workers while working and moving.
3. Allocate tea rows in such a way to ensure always minimum of one-meter distance.
4. Deploy workers on alternate basis to maintain social distance and avoid continuous exposure.
5. Ensure proper use of suitable masks by all staff and workers and gloves only on occasions, if necessary.
6. Promote good hand hygiene among workers at all critical points by providing appropriate Alcohol-based hand sanitizing mixtures/soap and washing areas.
7. Discourage sharing of farm implements at work and sharing food, tea, beetle leaf and smoking and other items viz. masks, bags, level sticks etc.
8. Offer tea breaks batch wise in a manner to gather at few locations than one location.
9. Encourage TRI shear, harvesting and pruning machines to minimize worker involvement.
10. Disinfect all, field equipment, machinery, uniforms, vehicles and other personal objects.

## **At Factory**

1. Deploy workers on rotation basis to minimize personal contacts.
2. Maintain social distancing at least with a 1 meter at all times.
3. Practice hand hygiene at critical points by providing washing facilities with sanitizers, cough etiquette and wearing masks.
4. Avoid gatherings at unloading and weighing points, and tea break etc.
5. Ensure sufficient ventilation in the processing areas.
6. Restrict worker movements from one area to another as far as possible.
7. Discourage sharing of food, beetle and common utensils.
8. Encourage measures to minimize worker involvement.
9. Encourage completing work at one stretch.
10. Provide tea breaks batch wise or section by section.
11. Disinfect all equipment, machinery, uniforms and vehicles.
12. Clean/disinfect door handles, railings and toilets regularly.
13. Ensure persons involved in transportation bought leaf, refuse tea and firewood etc. practice hand hygiene, cough etiquette and wearing masks, and limit number of external vehicles.
14. Dispatch teas to Colombo with extreme care, and provide lorry driver and helper with personal hygiene guidance, sanitizers and masks for disinfecting and regular use in transportation.

15. Comply with food hygiene standards by implementing stringent measures during transportation, handling, auctions, sampling for tests, processing, packaging and warehousing for shipping with traceability records.

#### **At the Estate office premise**

1. Ensure practice of hand hygiene at the entry to office by providing washing facilities with sanitizers, cough etiquette and wearing masks, and promote regular hand washings.
2. Rearrange office to ensure social distancing at work and avoid direct contacts within and outsiders, and may establish a barrier/shield for cashier counter.
3. Establish alternate days and/or extra shifts reducing total number of employees in the work place and personal contacts.
4. Avoid unnecessary gatherings and meetings with both internal and external persons. Arrange tea and lunch breaks batch-wise to prevent crowding the meal room.
5. Maintain routine cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, office equipment, door handles and toilets etc.
6. Adopt waste management and garbage disposal, cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
7. Discourage staff use others desks/work stations, common telephones, fax machines, pens, calculators, and also sharing food, tea, chewing beetle leaf etc.
8. Keep doors and windows open in order to improve ventilation and avoid regular handling.
9. Advise staff to minimize verbal and written communication among co-workers and promote use of alternative methods (public address system, intercom etc.) for internal communication.
10. Minimize cash handling and formalize the distribution of food materials, etc. and introduce alternate means to avoid personal contacts.

#### **Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka Talawakelle**

##### **COPYRIGHT**

*All rights reserved. No parts of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or information storage and retrieval, without permission in writing from the Director, Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka.*