

## MPI answers key COVID-19 questions for fresh fruit and vegetable industry

MPI answers Horticulture New Zealand's questions below.

### Clarification about the 2m social distancing rule

**Q)** It is impractical for some grower operations to continue using the 2m rule. It would mean either halving production by taking staff off the packing lines (for crops already in the ground) and it would be impossible for new crops to be planted using machinery required (transplanters) that do not enable people to be 2m apart. Is PPE able to be used in lieu of the exact 2m spacing, especially in outdoor conditions where there's fresh air? For packhouse environments, are other conditions able to be applied for closer spacing i.e. 1.5m and PPE with no contact between staff and full wipe downs between staff areas and shifts?

*MPI's response:*

Each essential horticultural business that cannot practicably meet social distancing requirements (or has more than five people present on any site) must register with MPI and provide extra information about how it will manage COVID-19 risk. [A form to register is on the MPI website](#) and **must be emailed to MPI by 5pm on Friday 27 March**. The business should continue operating in the meantime with the best health precautions possible.

### Access to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

**Q)** Will the horticulture and other primary industry sectors be prioritised access to PPE?

*MPI's response:*

No. The priority for PPE access is the health sector and first responders.

### Growers and workers over 70

**Q)** Can growers over 70 years of age still work on their orchards/farms? Can individuals over 70 years of age who perform essential services in the horticulture industry continue working?

*MPI's response:*

Yes, but they are strongly advised not to.

### **Independent fresh fruit and vegetable shops**

**Q)** Can individual fresh fruit and vegetable shops remain open? Some of these are operated by growers on site.

*MPI's response:*

No. All such shops must close.

### **Documentation for movement to/from workplaces**

**Q)** Will people need some sort of documentation for movement to/from their places of work? If so, what will they need?

*MPI's response:*

No. If essential workers are questioned by police/military/civil defence about their movements, they should be prepared to explain their work situation.