

**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP's) for Conduct, Hygiene
and other regulations for Packaging Facility workers.**

CPF/PAPF.

#1.2

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Overview

World agriculture in the twenty-first century is faced with three main challenges: 1) to improve food security, rural livelihoods and income; 2) to satisfy the increasing and diversified demands for safe food and other products; and, 3) to conserve and protect natural resources. These challenges have been articulated by the international community through the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the Millennium Development Goals with specific targets to be met by 2015.

These challenges can be tackled in part through a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) approach - a means to concretely contribute to environmental, economic and social sustainability of on-farm production resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products. A GAP approach can address the demand-side priorities of consumers and retailers, the supply-side priorities of producers and laborers, and those institutions and services that are bridging supply and demand. While a GAP approach may respond to the growing demands of increasingly globalized and integrated agricultural sectors, it can have important implications for local and national markets.

Food should be produced under conditions that minimize contamination, as food-borne illnesses can be fatal and repeated incidences are likely to negatively impact the local trade, tourism, production and access to regional and international market, resulting in damage to the agriculture sector, loss of income and employment. We all have a responsibility to ensure that food is safe for consumption and this can be achieved if Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) are employed throughout the entire production chain,

There are numerous routes for the transmission of disease. Sick or infected people can infect other persons directly through personal contact. They may also contaminate objects with their hands, such as a doorknob or money, which are then touched by others who become infected. When infected or ill persons touch food or food contact surfaces, the risk of causing illness in consumers is dramatically increased. Outbreak investigations have shown that just one identified infected person handling food has caused regional and multi-illnesses due to distribution and consumption of the contaminated product.

A first aid kit with supplies for treating injuries should be readily available at the work site. The kit should contain at a minimum, adhesive bandages for small injuries, other larger bandaging supplies, hydrogen peroxide and disposable gloves.

There are two specific considerations for personal hygiene that are of critical importance. First, the faecal-oral route of transmission of pathogens must be interrupted. Second, proper hand washing is essential in order to prevent the transfer of pathogens. All other components of GAP are important, but food industries cannot achieve the goal of food safety assurance if they fail to focus adequate attention on these two concerns. The health and hygiene of workers is critical for success.

Compliance Criteria -GlobalGAP

1. Hygiene instructions are visibly displayed: provided by way of clear signs (pictures) and/or in the predominant language(s) of the workforce.

At a minimum, the instructions must include:

- The need for hand cleaning;
- The covering of skin cuts;
- Limitation on smoking, eating and drinking to designated areas;
- Notification of any relevant infections or conditions, this includes sign of illness (e.g. vomiting; jaundice, diarrhea) whereby these workers shall be restricted from direct contact with the product and food-contact surfaces.

2. Documentation is available that demonstrates that a clearly identified, named member of management has the responsibility for ensuring compliance with and implementation of existing, current and relevant national and local regulations on workers health safety and welfare.

Hand washing and Personal Hygiene

The easiest and most effective food safety practice that every company can implement is hand washing. Hand washing is considered a basic procedure that children learn at an early age. However, each person has a different background and may either have a different concept of proper hand washing or fail to fully exercise that knowledge. Therefore, personnel should be well trained in proper hand washing technique no matter how simple or basic the procedure appears to be.

The proper technique involves wetting the hands with water, applying soap and vigorously scrubbing the whole surface of the hand, around and under the nails and between the fingers for at least 20 seconds. After these steps, the hands are thoroughly rinsed with clean water and dried with a disposable paper towel. To avoid re-contaminating clean hands, a paper towel should be used to turn off the water faucets and open exit doors. Paper towels should be disposed of in an appropriate garbage receptacle. Hand sanitizers may be applied after washing. A number of hand sanitizing products are available, but it is critical that managers emphasize that the use of sanitizers is not a substitute for washing, e.g. we cannot sanitize filth. Recent research has shown that some viruses are not inactivated by some sanitizers so the effectiveness of sanitizer use is questionable.

Hand washing should be practiced at the beginning of the work day and after breaks, going to the toilet, eating, drinking, smoking, sneezing, coughing, touching skin or wounds, touching floors, dirty surfaces or equipment, handling cleaning materials or handling agricultural chemicals. In general, any time a worker uses hands for something other than their assigned tasks, hand washing is required.

Managers in particular should follow all practices to set an appropriate example for the workers. Signs describing appropriate hand washing procedures, using clear graphic icons to accommodate language or literacy issues, should be placed in strategic locations such as near toilets or at the entrance to a restricted work area as a reminder to everyone.

Compliance Criteria - GlobalGAP

Wash stations shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition to allow workers to clean and disinfect their hands. Personnel shall wash their hands or make use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer prior to start of work; after each visit to a toilet; after using a handkerchief/tissue; after handling contaminated material; after smoking, eating or drinking; after breaks; and prior to returning to work; and at any other time when their hands may have become a source of contamination.

The number of toilets must be adequate for the number of workers in the field. Generally the rule is that there must be at least one toilet for each 20 workers of the same sex. If male and female workers are present in the same work area toilets should be designated by gender.

Toilets should be cleaned regularly and workers should be supplied with toilet paper by personnel*. Workers should be trained to deposit used paper inside the toilet and not on the floor where it might be inadvertently transferred into the field. Records of cleaning and replenishment of toilet supplies must be kept. Workers are more likely to use a facility that has been serviced than one that is dirty.

Most audit guidelines stipulate that the presence of toilet paper or human faeces in or around a production field results in an automatic failure of the audit. Inspectors from regulatory agencies also view this as a serious violation of GAP. Managers must inspect fields and the perimeter for signs of non-compliance with these rules. Evidence of non-compliance should be cause for an immediate training session for the workers. Appropriate signage instructing workers on proper sanitation in the Facility should be placed in strategic locations to remind personnel of these important practices.

*The personnel referred to here, in our case would be the exporters, since the workers are not employed by GMC.

Standard Operating Procedure

For Packaging Facility Workers.

- You are required to present to the supervising officer or manager of the packaging facilities: A valid Police clearance and a valid Food Handlers Certificate. Without these documents you will not be able to enter the facility.
- A clean coat must be worn at all times during processing of produce, Since worker hygiene plays an important role in preventing contamination from all the major hazards, you are required to wash your coat after each shipment, failure to do comply with this simple task, would deny entry to that worker.
- You are required to make full use of the washroom facilities, for all body washing needs, and toilet uses, no washing of body parts must be done in the sinks provided in the packing house for the processing of produce. If the worker fails to comply, relevant action would be taken against that worker or the Exporter responsible for that worker.
- Eating, Drinking, Smoking, Sleeping, and the use of indecent language will not be permitted in the packaging facility, in each Facility an area is allocated for eating and drinking, no other area in the packing house will this be permitted.
- Conflicts and physical altercations between workers must be resolved outside of the packing house; such indiscipline will lead to the parties involved in the confrontation, been banned from the packaging facility.
- Appropriate footwear must be worn at all times during processing, slippers and sandals will not be allowed. eg. clean footwear that has the entire feet enclosed.
- You are required to wash your hands following the easy steps shown in the various diagrams: upon entering the packaging facility and begin your daily work, after using the toilet facility, after eating, and before leaving the facility, all of these measures are to prevent the contamination of the produce for which you will be in direct contact with during your work.
- Persons visiting you, at the facility will have needed to wait outside of the building and you will reach them there, they will not be allowed entry into the Packaging Facility.
- The electrical outlets provided in the facility are not to be used for your personal needs, eg. Cell phone charging or any other use. They are in place to provide the services of the packaging facility.
- No sitting or playing will be allowed with any of the facilities equipment, they are in place for processing purposes, the restroom area will be dedicated to sitting and eating
- Upon entering the facility, you are required to notify the supervising officer and sign the workers time book.
- Theft of any level, from fellow workers or exporters, will result in you been banned from the packaging facilities.
- Once your work with the exporter is completed you are required to organize your work area and leave the premises.

For Worker

I hereby understand and will follow all the S.O.P's of been a worker of this facility, also I understand that failure on my part to follow these procedures will cause the administration of the facility to take action against me.

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Date:.....

For Exporter

I hereby understand the S.O.P's for my worker.

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Date:.....

References

- *Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. FDA October 1998*
- *Good Agricultural Practices Manual for Agricultural Operations. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ontario*
- *Training manual in good Agricultural practices, Fruit and Vegetables sub sector. Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana School of Agriculture and IICA, 2011.*