



TO: All Trees for the Future Field Staff and Field Partners

FROM: Trees for the Future Executive Director, John Leary

RE: COVID-19 Action

STATUS: Urgent

Your health, and the health of Trees farmers is of the utmost importance. Some countries have established a rule preventing gatherings of 5 people and others 50. **We have decided to go with the more strict guidelines, for all countries, so that we can stay ahead of the spread, and so that all staff will be well prepared in the event that restrictions increase.** By following these guidelines you will protect yourself, your family and the farmers you work with, and help to shorten the time in which this pandemic affects everyone. Please stress the seriousness of COVID-19, countries that have not taken proper measures are now seeing large outbreaks (including the United States).

The following adaptations will need to be implemented immediately (please read thoroughly and carefully):

1. All staff should wash their hands regularly, including before and after visits to farmer homes or fields, and in the office. Handwashing facilities with soap are available at each office and work site.
2. If feeling sick with a fever, cough and/or shortness of breath, all staff should notify their supervisor, do not meet with anyone, and stop work immediately until they can obtain a test and recover.
3. For staff working in the office, all staff should be given the option to work from home with a portable wifi device charged with data credit. If the office is the only place they can work, staff should be separated by a distance of 4 meters (or be in opposite rooms) and wipe down all hard surfaces (including door knobs, light switches, desks, etc.) with disinfectant wipes or soap and water several times a day.
4. Technicians should no longer shake hands, hug, or share food and drink with farmers and their families. While this may go against acceptable cultural norms, you can explain that it is to preserve the health of the people you are working with, and you can share that as an organization we care about everyone's health and well being. Also, smiles and friendly words go a long way. Some people have no symptoms but can still transmit the virus so avoiding contact is the best protection.

5. When working with other staff or farmers in small groups, all should keep the recommended distance of 6 feet (2 meters) between each person.
6. There is currently NO vaccine and NO medication that can prevent or cure COVID-19, a lot of misinformation has been spread about this. Please do not try to take a recommended medication for this virus as it can cause other illnesses.

Farmer Registrations, Surveys, and Trainings: Technicians who are scheduled to do farmer registrations, surveys or group trainings in the next few months should use these guidelines limiting all contact to conversation at a distance of 6 meters and all group trainings to 5 people for less:

1. When registering farmers and/or asking questions to complete the registration and survey data, technicians should keep a safe distance of 6 feet (2 meters).
2. When training on each module, Technicians will train lead farmers from each group, with no more than 4 leader farmers being trained at one time. Technicians will keep a safe distance of 6 feet (2 meters) between participants during the trainings.
3. In training the farmer leaders, technicians ensure the lead farmer understands the concepts and techniques in the lesson and is also well equipped to deliver that content to the farmers in their group. Technicians will state the seriousness of the virus and inform lead farmers that they can only meet with 4 or less farmers in their group at one time to deliver this training information. Technicians will remind Lead Farmers to keep a safe distance of 6 feet (2 meters) between participants during the trainings.
4. Lead Farmers go back to their group and train individuals in groups of 4 or less. Thus for a farmer group of 25, they will need to have 6 separate meetings. Technicians will attend and observe the first 2 to 3 meetings ensuring that the lead farmer is adequately teaching the concept. The technicians should advise but let the lead farmer do the teaching.
5. Technicians will then follow up 1-on-1 with farmers in their fields to make sure that they are implementing things correctly and answering any questions they may have. Remembering to keep a safe distance of 6 feet (2 meters) during the visits.
6. TREES staff will be making short in-country videos in local language to describe specific processes as reminders: (seed preparation, soil preparation, nursery care, etc.). These videos will be sent to Lead Farmers to use as references during training. The protocol for developing in-country videos can be found [here](#).
7. No Refreshments (food and drink) should be served at trainings during this time.

Advancing Communications:

The key to making this new strategy work will be excellent communication with staff and Lead Farmers. Each country will make it a top priority to create several groups on WhatsApp. For the project groups with lead farmers use WhatsApp (if Lead Farmers have smartphones) and text messages (if Lead Farmers have regular cell phones). These groups are recommendations only. Each country can adapt the system to work for their field offices.

This will help us segment communications and get mass communications quickly to different teams as necessary. Information is key to safety right now. All official health communication about COVID-19 should only be relayed by the Country Director to ensure information is correct and uniform.

We caution that all these groups are meant to share official information, coordinate between staff and farmers, and check on each other's health and safety to ensure everyone in the program feels supported and calm. These communication groups should never be used to share 'home remedies for a cure', rumors, or unofficial news updates that provide 'misinformation' and create panic and fear'.

- **Head Office Group:**
Country Director, Liaison, Accountants, Bookkeepers, M&E officer, Partner Coordinator, Training coordinator, Driver, Seed Bank Coordinator (any other staff working in Head Office)
- **Lead Supervisors Group:**
Country Director, Regional Program Coordinator, Technician Supervisors
- **Technicians Group:**
Regional Program Coordinators, Technician Supervisors, All technicians from the country
- **Regional Groups:**
All staff in each Region
- **1 Group for Each Project:**
Lead technicians, assistant technicians, lead farmers from that project
Each Technician should make sure that all the Lead Farmers are on What's App. If the Lead Farmer is not on WhatsApp we must have them download WhatsApp and get on it. If the lead farmer does not have a smart phone, we will create text message groups

Staff Trainings

If there are any informal staff trainings planned during this period, they should also maintain the 5 person rule, and be conducted in two parts or more if they were intended for a larger group. All unnecessary trainings should be postponed. If you have questions about what is essential please contact the Program Director, Brandy via email, brandy@trees.org.

About Training of Trainer (TOT) Trainings

Country programs had planned multiple TOTs for partners in the next few months. We will postpone these trainings until further notice. Please notify those who have already signed up to attend scheduled trainings of this adjustment We will be communicating the same information to those who request information about trainings via email. For training new partners we will do 1 on 1 trainings and follow the protocol above.

In case of quarantine...

If the country government or local jurisdictions impose a quarantine, requiring families and individuals to shelter in place, all Trees staff will do so and cease direct in-person work with farmers and will contact farmers via phone calls, text messages and WhatsApp to inform them of this change. Although planting trees and working with farmers to improve their lives is of great importance, the primary concern is always the health and welfare of farmers and our staff.

Timing

This will be set in place immediately, and lifted at a further point when the risk to transmission has lowered. We are not sure when this will be, so staff should make plans to operate under this protocol for at least 2-3 months, meaning looking ahead to modules and trainings for that time period and making necessary arrangements.

Partners

This protocol should be sent to all partners and partners should be encouraged to follow it for their health and safety and for that of the community.