

COVID-19; Guidance for companies inviting foreign berry pickers to Finland on safe entry, avoiding social contacts and health safety plan for berry pickers

1. ENTRY INTO FINLAND

- before entry:

- The company must inform the berry picker in advance that he/she may not travel to Finland from the country of origin if he/she has one or more of the following symptoms compatible with coronavirus infection before the start of the journey. (Source: THL/FIHW)

- fever
- cough
- sore throat or throat roughness
- runny nose or nasal congestion
- shortness of breath
- smell or taste disturbances
- headache
- muscle aches
- weakness or tiredness
- nausea or vomiting
- diarrhea

- if a berry picker develops any of the above symptoms, he or she should postpone the trip and seek a corona test in the country of origin. The trip can only take place after the end of the isolation period due to a possible coronavirus infection or after the berry picker has been asymptomatic for at least 2 days and at least 10 days have elapsed since the onset of symptoms.

- crossing from the border to the place of accommodation:

- if the berry picker enters Finland via the land border in a car, he must be instructed to take the most direct route to the accommodation, avoiding unnecessary diversions and stops en route

- if the company arranges transport from the border to the accommodation:

- public transport must not be used in this situation. The means of transport may be, for example, a car or minibus with no persons other than the driver and the berry pickers.
- berry pickers arriving at the same place of accommodation may be transported by the same means of transport
- if possible, the berry pickers are placed as far apart as possible in the vehicle
- clean face masks (disposable surgical nose and mouth masks are recommended) and hand disinfectant should be available on the vehicle. All occupants of the means of transport should wear a face mask. Hands must be disinfected before boarding the vehicle and face masks must not be unnecessarily removed from the face during the journey. If it is necessary to remove the mask (e.g. for drinking) during the journey, hands must always be disinfected before touching the mask, the used mask must be placed in a sealable rubbish bag and hands disinfected before applying a new mask to the face. (<https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektioaudit-ja-rokotukset/ajankohtaista/ajankohtaista-koronaviruksesta-covid-19/tarttuminen-ja-suojautuminen-koronavirus/suositus-kasvomaskien-kaytosta-kansalaisille>)

2. ENTRY TESTS

- According to the Communicable Diseases Act (1227/2016), if a traveller arriving in Finland does not have reliable proof of a complete vaccination series or of having contracted COVID-19 less than six months previously, he or she must apply for corona testing in Finland. The first test is carried out at the border immediately after arrival in Finland, the second test 72 to 120 hours after the first test. More detailed health security rules can be found in the Communicable Diseases Act or on the Finnish Institute for Health and welfare THL travel website (<https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektiotaudit-ja-rokotukset/ajankohtaista/ajankohtaista-koronaviruksesta-covid-19/matkustaminen-ja-koronaviruspandemia>). For entry rules, see the Border Guard website (<https://raja.fi/korona-info>). Tests for those arriving at borders and health centres are free of charge. Tests at private medical centres are subject to a fee.

- A government decree specifies the countries from which no tests are required on arrival. This definition will change and the list of countries must always be checked individually before entering Finland.

- In addition to the above, travellers entering Finland are advised to avoid social contact until the test results have been completed (and the results are negative). It is not recommended to start work before the test results are ready.

- Avoiding social contact means:

- avoiding contact with all other people at work, at home, at meals and during leisure activities
- if the person has arrived in Finland together with other persons in the same location, they may stay in common accommodation, forming a common group
- if new foreign workers subsequently arrive in the same accommodation, they form another group
- groups must not meet each other or other persons outside the group in accommodation, social premises, catering, etc. facilities
- the person must not go shopping or carry out any other business outside the accommodation, but the shopping must be done on his/her behalf and the goods delivered in a safe manner so that there is no contact with persons outside the volunteer group
- any necessary medical appointments etc. should be made as safely as possible, avoiding additional contacts and public transport. Persons should wear face masks in these situations.
- good hand and sputum hygiene must be observed at all times

3. TESTING BEFORE STARTING WORK

It is strongly recommended that all new employees are tested before starting work. Work can only start once a negative test result has been obtained. Testing is carried out at least 48 hours before the start of work. In this situation, the results of tests taken on entry may be used, if available. This recommendation also applies to workers who have received the full COVID-19 vaccination series. Testing is particularly important where workers are living in shared accommodation. This testing is not required by the Communicable Diseases Act, but it is done to prevent the spread of a communicable disease of public concern, so the recommendation is that municipalities should arrange and pay for the testing.

4. DRAWING UP A HEALTH SAFETY PLAN

A company employing seasonal workers from abroad must draw up a health and safety plan which includes.

- the company inviting berry pickers to Finland must have a health contact person whom berry pickers can contact whenever they have questions or problems related to health safety (e.g. symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection)

- The health contact person shall:

- inform the infectious diseases doctor of the municipality where the enterprise is located of the arrival of foreign berry pickers in the municipality and discuss with him/her the measures to be taken in cases where the picker is suspected of being infected with coronavirus. At the same time, a list of the berry pickers (name, personal details and date of arrival) will be sent to the doctor responsible for communicable diseases and a second coronavirus test be arranged before they can start work. The contact details of the municipal infectious disease doctor should be obtained well in advance of the arrival of the berry pickers from the municipal health centre or from Töitä Suomesta Oy.
- ensure that the berry pickers have face masks and hand disinfectant (alcohol content at least 60%), that hand washing facilities are in good working order (cleanliness, soap, disposable hand towels, rubbish bins, preferably with lids) and that there are enough lidded bins for used disposable masks, which are emptied regularly.
- always be available to berry pickers so that they can be contacted if they have symptoms or questions about health issues. The name and telephone number of the health contact person should be included in the health and safety information given to the picker.
- place corona symptomatic berry pickers in separate accommodation with separate sanitary facilities and in their own room for meals away from others
- if necessary, schedule the symptomatic berry picker for a corona test and ensure that the symptomatic berry picker has safe and isolated access to the corona test
- monitor the condition of the symptomatic berry picker and, if necessary, refer him/her safely and under isolation to a health professional
- assist the municipal communicable disease unit in isolating any person found to be corona positive and in the identification, contact and implementation of the prescribed quarantine of those exposed
- ensure that the health information (e.g. coronavirus test results) of all berry pickers is kept confidential and available only for the purposes of assuring health security and safety. Health information must not be shared or disclosed to any third party.
- the berry picker is instructed on hand and cough hygiene and contact avoidance ("COVID-19; Guidelines for berry pickers")
- the berry picker is given instructions on what to do in case of symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection (see symptoms above):
 - staying at home or moving to their accommodation
 - avoiding contact
 - wearing a face mask if you cannot avoid contact with other people
 - contacting a health contact

- implementation and monitoring of social avoidance during the entry phase

- after the entry phase, ensure that good hand and cough hygiene and regional recommendations and restrictions are maintained in the workplace. The regional epidemic phase can be checked on the website <https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektiaudit-ja-rokotukset/ajankohtaista/ajankohtaista-koronaviruksesta-covid-19/tilannekatsaus-koronaviruksesta/koronaepidemia-alueiden-tilanne-suositukset-ja-rajoitukset>

- berry pickers should be housed in the smallest possible units, preferably in single rooms, throughout their period of work. This will help to prevent the emergence of large chains of infection in the event of subsequent coronavirus infections.

- Common areas should be cleaned regularly in accordance with the Occupational Health Institute's guidelines (<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/koronavirus/ohje-siivoukseen>). The same guideline also advises on the cleaning of the living quarters of a person infected with corona.

5. DAILY ALLOWANCE FOR COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

- Finnish Welfare Service Kela may pay a daily allowance for an infectious disease when a worker is ordered to be absent from work, in isolation (a person who has been diagnosed with an infectious disease) or in quarantine (a person who has been exposed to an infectious disease) in order to prevent the spread of an infectious disease.

- conditions for payment:

- the worker has been ordered by the municipal doctor responsible for communicable diseases to be absent from work, in isolation or in quarantine
- the worker is covered by health insurance in Finland or is a national of an EU or EEA country
- for more information on the daily allowance for communicable diseases: <https://www.kela.fi/tyonantajat-tartuntatautipavaraha>
- more information on isolation and voluntary quarantine: <https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektiaudit-ja-rokotukset/ajankohtaista/ajankohtaista-koronaviruksesta-covid-19/tarttuminen-ja-suojautuminen-koronavirus/karanteeni-eristys-ja-karanteenia-vastaavat-olosuhteet>