

# **COVID-19 Defra Update**

At this busy time, Government communications are increasing to ensure that stakeholders are aware of updated guidance. This is a summary of guidance to date, 21 April 2020.

If you have insights from a relevant sector send it to [agrifoodchainengagement@defra.gov.uk](mailto:agrifoodchainengagement@defra.gov.uk)

Latest guidance from Public Health England can be found [here](#).

## **Celebrating the food industry**

Defra has published a [Twitter Moment](#) and [Facebook Note](#) on how the food industry is changing the way it's working.

It has also published a [Twitter Moment](#) and [Facebook Note](#) on how the food industry is helping the vulnerable.

## **Guidance for consumers on food**

The Food Standards Agency has published [guidance](#) for consumers on coronavirus and food.

## **Guidance for food businesses on Coronavirus**

New guidance for food businesses [was published](#), on 25 March 2020.

## **'Stay at Home, Save Lives' campaign**

Assets for the 'Stay at Home, Save Lives' are [available to download online](#), including posters, digital screens, and social media resources.

We are encouraging all stakeholders use these assets and amplify the campaign as much as possible.

## **Updated guidance: Further businesses and premises to close**

The Government has updated its [guidance for businesses as part of further social distancing measures](#).

## **Guidance on producing hand sanitiser and gel for coronavirus**

HMRC has produced [updated guidance](#) to help businesses who produce – or would like to start producing – hand sanitiser and gel, including for licensed distillers and gin manufacturers.

A joint initiative between the government and Companies House will allow businesses to apply for a three-month extension for filing their accounts, allowing them to prioritise managing the impact of coronavirus.

As part of the agreed measures, while companies will still have to apply for the 3-month extension to be granted, those citing issues around COVID-19 will be automatically and immediately granted an extension. Applications can be made through a fast-tracked online system which will take just 15 minutes to complete.

Guidance on how to apply for an extension can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

## **Coronavirus: Latest retailer activity**

The British Retail Council (BRC) are providing a [daily update](#) on the actions taken by retailers to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic.

In their latest update they have covered: new and further measures by supermarkets to support social distancing, measures to implement social distancing between staff members in offices and staff rooms, changes to opening hours to support NHS and emergency staff, and bonuses for workers.

## **Number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and risk in the UK**

[Find out](#) the risk level in the UK, what to do if you have symptoms, and what the government is doing about the virus.

## **New Coronavirus Information Service on Whatsapp**

The government has [launched a Coronavirus Information Service](#), an automated 'chatbot' which will allow the public to get answers to the most common questions about coronavirus.

## **Gender pay gap**

The Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission have announced the suspension of the enforcement of the gender pay gap deadlines for this reporting year, meaning that there will be no expectation on employers to report their data.

## **Six-month MOT exemption**

The Department for Transport [has announced](#) that owners of cars, motorcycles, and vans which usually require an MOT test will be granted a six-month exemption from 30 March, enabling them to carry on with essential travel.

## **New requirements for travelling and moving goods to France**

The French Authorities have put a [new temporary requirement](#) in place for anyone travelling or moving goods to France.

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## Hallmarking arrangements during temporary closure of Assay Offices

The pandemic has caused many disruptions to business across the UK. The UK Assay Offices have of course been similarly affected and from the end of today all 4 offices will be closed for at least 3 weeks.

Any business that requires product hallmarking or needs advice should contact the Assay Office they usually use and guidance will be provided.

The British Hallmarking Council is maintaining an overview of the situation and further information will be issued when government restrictions are lifted.

Birmingham:

[customerservice@theassayoffice.co.uk](mailto:customerservice@theassayoffice.co.uk)

0121 236 6951

Edinburgh:

[enquiries@edinburghassayoffice.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@edinburghassayoffice.co.uk)

London:

[unhallmarked@assayofficelondon.co.uk](mailto:unhallmarked@assayofficelondon.co.uk)

Sheffield:

[info@assayoffice.co.uk](mailto:info@assayoffice.co.uk)

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## UK aid and Unilever to target a billion people in global handwashing campaign

The UK government is working with Unilever to fund a global programme to urgently tackle the spread of coronavirus.

The programme will reach up to a billion people worldwide, raising awareness and changing behaviour, to make sure people are washing their hands with soap regularly and disinfecting surfaces.

It is backed by funding of up to £50 million each from both the Department for International Development and Unilever. The programme will also provide over 20 million hygiene products in the developing world, including in areas where there is little or no sanitation.

Such support is vital to stop the spread of the disease in the developing world and will also limit its further potential spread in the UK. Tackling the disease in developing countries will also reduce its potential future impact on the global economy and travel.

Over half a billion pounds of aid from the UK government is already being used to help slow the spread of the virus in developing countries. This includes support for research into vaccines and tests, as well as humanitarian support for developing countries.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Health experts have said washing your hands regularly and staying away from other people are the most effective ways to stop this virus from spreading and to save lives.

Many people in the poorest countries lack access to basic handwashing products, such as soap, or are not aware of the urgent need to change their behaviour. The UK Government's partnership with Unilever, will make a real difference, helping to protect both developing countries and the UK from further infections.

The mass awareness campaign will run across TV, radio and print, social and digital media to help change people's behaviour in countries across Africa and Asia, like Kenya, Ghana and Bangladesh. Messages will be tailored to communities in these countries to ensure they are effective.

The initiative will be led by Unilever's hygiene brands Domestos bleach and Lifebuoy soap, which have been driving large scale hygiene behaviour change programmes for decades.

The announcement builds on a series of actions announced by Unilever in recent days to tackle the coronavirus outbreak globally. The company employs over 6,000 people in the UK.

Unilever CEO, Alan Jope, said:

Lifebuoy and Domestos have a proven track record of running hygiene awareness and education programmes successfully, and we hope that the work we will be able to drive jointly with UK aid will help save lives that could otherwise be impacted by coronavirus.

As the world's biggest soap company, we have a responsibility to help make soap and hygiene products more readily available, and to use our expertise to teach people to wash their hands effectively, whichever brand they choose to use.

The initiative will support British and international NGOs and other partners to run programmes to tackle the spread of coronavirus, through increasing access to hygiene products; a mass public awareness campaign on the importance of handwashing; and a hygiene behaviour change programme. It will also harness the expertise of leading academics, including from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine to analyse and ensure the programme is targeted where it has the biggest impact.

DFID and Unilever will work closely with partners to curb the spread of coronavirus in vulnerable countries with poor health systems, saving lives in the process.

Unilever's broad range of hygiene brands in the UK and in low and middle-income countries, means it is well positioned to support the UK government to step up its response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Lifebuoy's handwashing programmes have already reached over 450 million people over the last 10 years, tackling diseases like rotavirus and typhoid which spread easily through people's hands.

Domestos programmes have previously helped 28 million people over the last eight years get improved access to toilets across schools and communities ensuring facilities are maintained clean and safe for longer.

The partnership announced today plans to harness the expertise of leading academics, including from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

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## **G20 Leaders' Summit – statement on COVID-19: 26 March 2020**

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic is a powerful reminder of our interconnectedness and vulnerabilities. The virus respects no borders. Combatting this pandemic calls for a transparent, robust, coordinated, large-scale and science-based global response in the spirit of solidarity. We are strongly committed to presenting a united front against this common threat.

We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and the suffering faced by people around the world. Tackling the pandemic and its intertwined health, social and economic impacts is our absolute priority. We express our gratitude and support to all frontline health workers as we continue to fight the pandemic.

The G20 is committed to do whatever it takes to overcome the pandemic, along with the World Health Organization (WHO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank Group (WBG), United Nations (UN), and other international organizations, working within their existing mandates. We are determined to

spare no effort, both individually and collectively, to:

- Protect lives.
- Safeguard people's jobs and incomes.
- Restore confidence, preserve financial stability, revive growth and recover stronger.
- Minimize disruptions to trade and global supply chains.
- Provide help to all countries in need of assistance.
- Coordinate on public health and financial measures.
- Fighting the Pandemic

We commit to take all necessary health measures and seek to ensure adequate financing to contain the pandemic and protect people, especially the most vulnerable. We will share timely and transparent information; exchange epidemiological and clinical data; share materials necessary for research and development; and strengthen health systems globally, including through supporting the full implementation of the WHO International Health Regulations (IHR 2005). We will expand manufacturing capacity to meet the increasing needs for medical supplies and ensure these are made widely available, at an affordable price, on an equitable basis, where they are most needed and as quickly as possible. We stress the importance of responsible communication to the public during this global health crisis. We task our Health Ministers to meet as needed to share national best practices and develop a set of G20 urgent actions on jointly combatting the pandemic by their ministerial meeting in April.

We fully support and commit to further strengthen the WHO's mandate in coordinating the international fight against the pandemic, including the protection of front-line health workers, delivery of medical supplies, especially diagnostic tools, treatments, medicines, and vaccines. We acknowledge the necessity of urgent short-term actions to step up the global efforts to fight the COVID-19 crisis. We will quickly work together and with stakeholders to close the financing gap in the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. We further commit to provide immediate resources to the WHO's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, on a voluntary basis. We call upon all countries, international organizations, the private sector, philanthropies, and individuals to contribute to these efforts.

To safeguard the future, we commit to strengthen national, regional, and global capacities to respond to potential infectious disease outbreaks by substantially increasing our epidemic preparedness spending. This will enhance the protection of everyone, especially vulnerable groups that are disproportionately affected by infectious diseases. We further commit to work together to increase research and development funding for vaccines and medicines, leverage digital technologies, and strengthen scientific international cooperation. We will bolster our coordination, including with the private sector, towards rapid development, manufacturing and distribution of diagnostics, antiviral medicines, and vaccines, adhering to the objectives of efficacy, safety, equity, accessibility, and affordability.

We ask the WHO, in cooperation with relevant organizations, to assess gaps in

pandemic preparedness and report to a joint meeting of Finance and Health Ministers in the coming months, with a view to establish a global initiative on pandemic preparedness and response. This initiative will capitalize on existing programs to align priorities in global preparedness and act as a universal, efficient, sustained funding and coordination platform to accelerate the development and delivery of vaccines, diagnostics and treatments.

## **Safeguarding the Global Economy**

We commit to do whatever it takes and to use all available policy tools to minimize the economic and social damage from the pandemic, restore global growth, maintain market stability, and strengthen resilience.

We are currently undertaking immediate and vigorous measures to support our economies; protect workers, businesses—especially micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises—and the sectors most affected; and shield the vulnerable through adequate social protection. We are injecting over \$5 trillion into the global economy, as part of targeted fiscal policy, economic measures, and guarantee schemes to counteract the social, economic and financial impacts of the pandemic.

We will continue to conduct bold and large-scale fiscal support. Collective G20 action will amplify its impact, ensure coherence, and harness synergies. The magnitude and scope of this response will get the global economy back on its feet and set a strong basis for the protection of jobs and the recovery of growth. We ask our Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to coordinate on a regular basis to develop a G20 action plan in response to COVID-19 and work closely with international organizations to swiftly deliver the appropriate international financial assistance.

We support the extraordinary measures taken by central banks consistent with their mandates. Central banks have acted to support the flow of credit to households and businesses, promote financial stability, and enhance liquidity in global markets. We welcome the extension of swap lines that our central banks have undertaken. We also support regulatory and supervisory measures taken to ensure that the financial system continues to support the economy and welcome the Financial Stability Board's (FSB) announced coordination of such measures.

We also welcome the steps taken by the IMF and the WBG to support countries in need using all instruments to the fullest extent as part of a coordinated global response and ask them to regularly update the G20 on the impacts of the pandemic, their response, and policy recommendations. We will continue to address risks of debt vulnerabilities in low-income countries due to the pandemic. We also ask the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to monitor the pandemic's impact on employment.

## **Addressing International Trade Disruptions**

Consistent with the needs of our citizens, we will work to ensure the flow of vital medical supplies, critical agricultural products, and other goods and services across borders, and work to resolve disruptions to the global supply chains, to support the health and well-being of all people.

We commit to continue working together to facilitate international trade and coordinate responses in ways that avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. Emergency measures aimed at protecting health will be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary. We task our Trade Ministers to assess the impact of the pandemic on trade.

We reiterate our goal to realize a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep our markets open.

## **Enhancing Global Cooperation**

We will work swiftly and decisively with the front-line international organizations, notably the WHO, IMF, WBG, and multilateral and regional development banks to deploy a robust, coherent, coordinated, and rapid financial package and to address any gaps in their toolkit. We stand ready to strengthen the global financial safety nets. We call upon all these organizations to further step up coordination of their actions, including with the private sector, to support emerging and developing countries facing the health, economic, and social shocks of COVID-19.

We are gravely concerned with the serious risks posed to all countries, particularly developing and least developed countries, and notably in Africa and small island states, where health systems and economies may be less able to cope with the challenge, as well as the particular risk faced by refugees and displaced persons. We consider that consolidating Africa's health defence is a key for the resilience of global health. We will strengthen capacity building and technical assistance, especially to at-risk communities. We stand ready to mobilize development and humanitarian financing.

We task our top relevant officials to coordinate closely in support of the global efforts to counter the pandemic's impacts, including through proportionate border management measures in accordance with national regulations and to provide assistance where necessary to repatriate citizens. We value the efforts to safeguard our people's health through the postponement of major public events, in particular the decision by the International Olympic Committee to reschedule the Olympic Games to a date no later than summer 2021. We commend Japan's determination to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 in their complete form as a symbol of human resilience.

We stand ready to react promptly and take any further action that may be required. We express our readiness to convene again as the situation requires. Global action, solidarity and international cooperation are more

than ever necessary to address this pandemic. We are confident that, working closely together, we will overcome this. We will protect human life, restore global economic stability, and lay out solid foundations for strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth.

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## **Message from Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents**

These are difficult times for everyone, including those in the railway industry. Although RAIB offices have effectively closed, our teams continue to work from home and, when essential, on railway premises. All our usual investigative functions are continuing; deployments to site when necessary, evidence gathering, analysis and testing, report production, consultation and publication. The railway industry should continue to notify RAIB of accidents and incidents in accordance with the Railways (Accident Investigation and Reporting) Regulations 2005, by the normal means, and we will respond to this information as usual. However, in accordance with Government guidance, we will seek to minimise contact between our staff and others. As such, site activity will be limited to that which is absolutely necessary for investigations to continue and we will conduct more interviews and consultation meetings by phone or other remote means. If you have any questions please contact us via [enquiries@raib.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@raib.gov.uk).

I wish you well in these extraordinary circumstances.

Simon French