



IUF : UNITING FOOD, FARM & HOTEL WORKERS WORLDWIDE

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# IUF SAFE RETURN TO WORK DURING COVID-19 DEMANDS : CATERING



## INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, catering workers are essential workers cooking, preparing and serving food to those maintaining essential services.

Other catering workers, servicing sport, entertainment, convention centers and non-essential business may have been furloughed or laid off and are now returning to work.

Catering workers are routinely paid low wages and are drawn from the population of migrants, women, youth and ethnic minorities. This makes them vulnerable and it requires extra measures from governments and employers to protect and support catering workers during the pandemic and beyond.

This document provides a set of trade union demands for safety and support now and to move to a post pandemic world where catering workers can access their rights, work with dignity and be respected.

Employers should work with unions, clients, and governments to protect employment, income and social benefits during the pandemic and beyond.

## SAFETY AT WORK

All workplaces need a plan on how to deal with COVID-19. These plans must be negotiated between the management and the union and include risk assessments of each job classification as well as task specific hazard control measures.

- Facilities should appoint a COVID-19 Response Facilitator responsible for all compliance.
- Each facility should maintain detailed records of all actions taken in response to possible instances of COVID-19.
- A person with detailed knowledge of facility protocols should be designated on each shift.
- Employees should be informed of the person's identity and how to contact them.

## SAFETY AT WORK

- 1.** Unions, employers and clients should work together to ensure uniform safety protocols that apply to all workers in a facility.
- 2.** Workers should be able to work at least 2 meters (6.5 feet) apart from each other throughout their working day. This is possible through modification to work organization, work scheduling and rest breaks to limit the number of staff in a food preparation area at the same time. There may need to be changes to the design of the work stations such as the installation of Perspex, Plexiglas or similar material to shield workers from potentially infecting each other and food service customers. Reconfiguring worktables, equipment and machinery in kitchens and dining tables and seats in customer areas are essential to maintain physical distancing at work.
- 3.** All workers must be provided with the most protective PPE, suitable for both women and men, to protect them from a COVID-19 infection. PPE enhances but does not substitute for appropriate spacing between workers. Job risk assessments are essential for identifying task related COVID-19 hazards and implementing task specific hazard control measures including providing PPE. PPE training must be provided including proper donning, doffing and disposal and the equipment must be worn properly. Masks must be replaced after a single use. In addition, surgical masks must be replaced when becoming wet, soiled or torn. The following PPE should be provided: surgical masks, disposable gloves, goggles/face shields, disposable gowns and/or aprons, hair caps, shoe covers and biohazard disposal bags.
- 4.** Additional PPE may be necessary for cleaning staff to ensure safe usage of all chemicals and equipment. Cleaners must have ample time to complete their tasks fully and safely.
- 5.** When catering workers are in a healthcare setting, it is essential that all workers in the facility are prioritized to receive the most protective PPE to protect them from infection, such as N95 respirator masks.
- 6.** Protocols should be translated into all languages spoken in the workplace and should be posted in prominent and accessible locations.
- 7.** Notices to promote the use of masks, hand hygiene and physical distancing are to be posted in visible locations throughout the facility for employees and customers.
- 8.** Soap and water for frequent handwashing for all workers must be provided. Where frequent handwashing is not feasible (at least every 30 minutes), alcohol based hand sanitizer must be available, e.g. for cashiers and other workers with direct customer contact.
- 9.** Workers should be trained in respiratory hygiene practices and to recognize COVID-19 symptoms.
- 10.** There must be regular, thorough frequent cleaning and disinfection of the workplace, including restrooms and lunch rooms. All shared surfaces (e.g. equipment, utensils, workbenches, dining tables, door handles, handrails, and keyboards) should be cleaned at least hourly. Clean visible dirty surfaces before disinfecting.
- 11.** Unions should negotiate strong policies to uphold equality and to demonstrate zero tolerance for discrimination against any worker because of illness, quarantine requirements, or the duty to care for other family members or any other legitimate reason for absence from the workplace.
- 12.** The workplace must be free from retaliation against any worker who refuses to undertake work that the worker believes poses a risk to themselves or others or for reporting work conditions that they believe may be unsafe.
- 13.** Arrangements for safe travel to and from the workplace to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 should be negotiated. If shuttle buses are used they must be thoroughly cleaned after each trip and physical distancing must be maintained among passengers and between passengers and driver. If an employee becomes ill at work, arrange for safe travel home so the employee does not expose others.



## INCOME AND FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTIONS

- 1.** Governments should recognize the employment risks and the potential extreme economic hardship facing workers. Governments should collaborate with unions and employers to introduce employment and income support measures to mitigate these risks and provide social benefits including access to health care.
- 2.** Wages and social benefits should be maintained during any period of furlough. This includes health and pension benefits. It may be necessary for governments to subsidize wages for a period of time.
- 3.** Child care allowances should be provided to ensure workers required to work through the pandemic can have access to adequate child care facilities.
- 4.** Employers should employ directly rather than through agencies, temporary workers required to cover for sick workers and/or increased demand. A direct employment relationship increases conformance with these standards and facilitates contact tracing. Temporary workers must be appropriately trained including specific training in relation to COVID-19 measures and be provided with the most protective PPE.
- 5.** As work resumes across different sectors of the economy, unions, contractors and host employers should negotiate alternatives to temporary work and other forms of precarious employment.
- 6.** Governments should legislate to strengthen employment security by outlawing zero hours contracts, dependent contracting and other forms of insecure work.
- 7.** Workers who are at increased risk of becoming critically ill with COVID-19 should be placed on leave if they cannot be completely physically isolated. The negotiation of paid leave for these workers is a necessity.
- 8.** Permanent and non-permanent workers must be treated equally with respect to income support. All workers should be able to pay for their basic necessities such as food, housing, healthcare and childcare.
- 9.** Because the maintenance of food supply is an obligation of governments, governments must work with trade unions and employers to ensure that the catering sector can operate without putting the health and safety of its workers at risk.
- 10.** Governments should work with employers, unions and food producers to strengthen the integrity and reliability of the food supply chain. The pandemic must hasten work towards reconstructing the food system to respect union rights, lift wages and incomes, and to produce more climate friendly food.



## Dealing with sickness

Preventing sickness in the workplace includes having trained personnel perform non-intrusive thermal screening on customers and employees upon entry into the facility. Individuals with a temperature exceeding 38°C should not be admitted to the facility. Everyone who has coronavirus symptoms should be able to be tested and to stay away from work until testing negative. Testing and contact tracing should be negotiated as part of workplace protocols. Although testing helps prevent the spread of the disease it does not guarantee workplace safety. Where there is community transmission the best approach is for everyone to consider themselves potentially infectious.

Employers should inform employees and their union, who have had close contact with individuals who have tested positive for, or are suspected to have COVID-19 that such contact has occurred and should conduct appropriate contact tracing. Employees who have had close contact with an infected employee should be asked to stay at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case and monitor their symptoms.

All rooms used by persons under quarantine or isolation orders, or otherwise exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 during the preceding 7 days should be cleaned and disinfected by a specially trained group of employees. Plumbing and HVAC systems should be inspected by appropriately qualified maintenance personnel to ensure their healthy operation.

## WINNING A SAFER AND MORE SECURE WORKPLACE WHERE RIGHTS ARE ENHANCED AND PROTECTED.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted another equally dangerous pandemic of low pay, insecure work and the absence of rights and adequate social protections.

Affiliates of the IUF unite in our demands for a post pandemic world and are determined to fight workplace by workplace and country by country to win:

1. Access to core labour standards including the right to join a union, to organize and to enter into collective bargaining to agree on a living wage.
2. Direct permanent employment with regular hours and social protections. If the business loses a contract, there must be the right to transfer to the new employer with identical or improved terms and conditions of employment.
3. Protection from discrimination of any kind and protection from harassment of any kind including sexual harassment.
4. Gender, ethnic/racial and LGBTI equality as a guiding principle of all workplaces.
5. A healthy and safe work environment where workers can elect representatives to improve and monitor health and safety in the workplace.
6. A workplace free from retaliation for refusing work that an employee believes poses a risk to themselves or others or for reporting work conditions that they believe may be unsafe.
7. Universal access to affordable health care.
8. Paid sick leave for all workers.
9. Paid parental leave.
10. Financial security in retirement.
11. Hours of work and scheduling which takes into account family requirements and sufficient leisure time.



## Dealing with **sickness** cont.

Sick leave, including during periods of quarantine, must be paid to protect the individual worker, other workers and customers.

People should not go to work if they feel unwell. This is more important in a pandemic than during normal conditions. Working when unwell threatens the lives of others. Even if the sickness is not COVID-19, spreading illness at this time weakens others' immune systems and places extra pressure on health services.

Workers who are over 60 years of age or who have underlying health conditions such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes or respiratory illness, or who have lowered immunity, are most at risk of becoming critically ill or dying from contracting COVID-19. If these workers cannot be completely physically isolated, they should be placed on paid leave.

Governments should implement COVID-19 surveillance strategies that include case investigation and contact tracing. Governments must track the number of cases and locations to swiftly implement contact tracing and limit the spread of workplace and community outbreaks; provide access to testing and healthcare treatment and to ensure quarantine takes place.

These activities shall be carried out in cooperation with employers, with the affected workers and their representatives in the workplace and follow the technical and ethical guidelines of the ILO including keeping personal data confidential at all times.

The coronavirus is a workplace hazard and COVID-19 is an occupational disease. Governments should perform subsequent inspections of worksites with COVID-19 cases to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Inspections must be performed by government agencies as mandated for public health and/or occupational safety and health and by employers as part of hazard control efforts in conjunction with union health and safety representatives.

