



ASTA Coronavirus Helpful Information & Resources

ASTA formed a coronavirus task force of our members to consolidate and share information about the Coronavirus, or COVID-19, including updates from government agencies, research, company statements, employee training resources, supply chain issues, etc. The situation continues to change rapidly and ASTA's Coronavirus task force will continue to discuss the situation and make any new information available to our members as it develops.

FAQs Regarding Coronavirus and Food

Q: How does COVID-19 spread?

The World Health Organization ([WHO](http://www.who.int)) has stated that COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

The [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov) states that it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), or through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Q: Can the coronavirus be transmitted via food or food packaging?

According to the [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov), the risk of spreading the virus from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures is low. Likewise, the [FDA](http://www.fda.gov) has stated that it is "not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging." The [Food Marketing Institute](http://www.foodmarketinginstitute.com) has additional information on the coronavirus, including information from the CDC that products and packages shipped to the U.S. from China pose a very low risk of spreading the virus. Coronavirus is most likely to be spread via respiratory droplets.

Q: Is the FDA currently conducting food safety inspections?

The FDA is not currently [conducting inspections](#) in China in response to the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisory to not travel to China due to COVID-19. While the FDA is not currently able to conduct inspections, the FDA stated that the lack of inspections is not hindering efforts to monitor food safety, as the agency is utilizing additional tools to monitor the safety of products from China. The FDA will continue to closely monitor the situation in China so that, when the travel advisory is changed, we will be prepared to resume routine inspections as soon as feasible.

Q: Are other non-governmental entities conducting food safety inspections?

Other non-governmental programs or auditors are also likely to be postponed. Each individual company and supplier should check with your suppliers to determine their policy regarding audits or expiring certifications. The [International Accreditation Forum](#) suggests that companies may introduce alternative arrangements to conduct assessments, including making arrangements to conduct assessments remotely or rescheduling activities if necessary.

Q: What can my business to do mitigate the impact of an outbreak?

The CDC has an active [resource guide](#) for businesses. The CDC stresses that employers must consider how to decrease the spread of any illness in order to lower the impact in their workplace in the event of an outbreak. Employers should consider how to:

- reduce transmission among staff;
- protect those at higher risk for adverse health complications;
- maintain business operations; and
- minimize adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.

The U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) provides a [fact sheet](#) for on information to protect workers during a pandemic.

Q: What about my company's state and local governments?

It is important that any business consult their [state and local](#) government agencies to find out if any additional guidance for their area has been issued or provided.

Q: Are there any travel restrictions for COVID-19 currently in place?

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued [instructions](#) for all flights from China and all passengers who have traveled to China in February 2020. For the latest in travel advisories, the [State Department](#) website provides the most updated travel advisories related to COVID-19 for each country that may be subject to a travel advisory. The CDC also provides a COVID-19 specific [travel advisory](#) update.

Q: Is there ongoing research about COVID-19?

The WHO is assessing ongoing research on the ways COVID-19 is spread and will continue to share updated findings. The U.S. Congress passed an \$8.3 billion emergency funding bill to help the states, cities and tribes with COVID-19 response. Congress has also ordered the Department of Health and Human Services to use \$3.1 billion of its quota on medical supplies, vaccine-making and ensuring U.S. health systems are up to the task of addressing COVID-19.

Supply Chain Impacts

At present time, the spice industry is not experiencing any broad supply chain challenges related to the coronavirus. However, each company's supply chains are unique, and companies must work individually with their suppliers to assess their particular situation. As this situation is rapidly developing, ongoing supply chain monitoring and contingency planning is recommended.

According to data by [Sea-Intelligence](#), a private subscription company that provides objective analysis within the container shipping industry, after an initial spike in cancelled sailings from Asia to North America or Europe due to the extended Chinese New Year holiday and COVID -19 outbreak, sailing levels are beginning to level out, back to pre-Chinese New Year levels. One exception are the ports in Zhejiang province, China. These ports are still experiencing some delays for shipments of live animals, live plants, food ingredients and packaged foods bound for Europe. There's no indication of when there will be some relief for these delays. As of Tuesday, March 3, 2020, data company [Cargometrics](#) has not seen any changes in shipping trends at Covid-19 hotspots such as Italy, Iraq, and South Korea.

Please contact [Jessica Skerritt](#) or (202) 331-2467 if you have additional questions.