



Statement on CoVid-19 for Asia-Pacific Seed Industry

March 18, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Recently, the coronavirus disease 2019 (CoVid-19) has been declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global pandemic. This declaration has prompted many countries, territories, states and cities to impose emergency containment measures to stop or limit the spread of the underlying virus (SARS-Cov-2). These include quarantines as well as restrictions on travel.

While such measures may be necessary at this time, hindering or delaying the movement of vital necessities would have major implications for domestic, regional and global food and nutritional security. Thus, it is important that delivery and distribution networks for vital food and agricultural commodities and inputs continue to remain open.

Seed is a fundamental link in the food supply chain and the season and cycles for sowing, harvesting and production should not be delayed as it would gravely impact the livelihoods of millions of farmers, and thus our food security. Therefore, it is very important to get full support from concerned government agencies (e.g. the department and ministry of agriculture, farmers and/or rural affairs, as well as those concerned with commerce and international trade regulations) to ensure that all relative services such as laboratory testing and phytosanitary certification and clearance, continue to operate at full capacity.

Public-private cooperation is absolutely vital in ensuring that the international movement of seeds as well as other agriculture inputs is not affected, nor subjected to unnecessary roadblocks.

At the height of the CoVid-19 outbreak in China, the central and local governments issued a policy to ensure the stable supply of food products and agricultural production materials. The government also released a stimulus package to effectively support the stability of production and supply of agricultural products.

APSA has recently confirmed with the Department of Agriculture in Thailand that all imported seed trade services will continue to be offered as usual, and that shipments of all agriculture inputs, including seed, will not be affected. Likewise, we have also been reassured by the Philippine Seed Industry Association that there are no anticipated impacts for seed movement ([see this reference](#) for more info)

APSA would like to take this opportunity to urge the seed sector to read and follow WHO advice, and hereby provide some references and guidelines to help your company and customers to ensure optimal food safety with regards to daily seed production and operations, as follows:



1. There is no evidence to date that coronaviruses can be transmitted through food and seeds. Cooked food is recommended as the virus can be killed by heat treatment of at least 30 minutes at 60 Celsius degrees ([reference here](#))
2. According to [WHO](#), and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), coronaviruses have poor survivability on surfaces, and all confirmed transmissions to date have been human-to-human. Furthermore, there is no evidence that packages of imported goods are a source of transmission, and it is highly improbable that coronaviruses can survive international transport. This is especially true for shipments of seed handled by leading international seed companies that already employ strict sanitary, phytosanitary and hygienic handling protocol in accordance with international standards.
3. Nonetheless, APSA urges all those working in the field, or in operations to follow World Health Organization [standard recommendations](#), specifically those covering:
 - proper hand hygiene
 - cough/cold hygiene practices
 - Use of appropriate PPE (mask and hand sanitizer)
 - safe food practices
 - avoiding close contact, when possible, with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing

As business owners and/or managers, please ensure that the sufficient facilities and amenities are provided onsite (hand washing sanitizers, PPE) and ensure that your staff are trained appropriately according to recommended hygienic practices. Please continue to keep monitoring your staff, ensuring they are fit to work and do not have any symptoms of the virus.

In case you have received any news from your country in regards to the impact on seed movement due to the virus, please do not hesitate to get back to me directly via email (may@apsaseed.org). We hope all of you stay safe and healthy.

Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kanokwan Chodchoey'.

Kanokwan Chodchoey, Ph.D

APSA Executive Director

Asia and Pacific Seed Alliance