

AGRILINKS



Keeping Essential Ag Businesses Open in the Age of COVID-19: Training Approaches from Afghanistan

Speakers:

Joseph Lessard, Director of the Office of Agriculture, USAID/Afghanistan

Abdul Nasir, Deputy Chief of Party, Regional Agricultural Development Program

Nasratullah Hashimi, Dairy Outlet Owner, RADP-E Business

Don Humpal, Senior Agriculturist and Senior Principal Global Development Specialist, DAI

Christina Aguila, Senior Analyst, DAI

Moderator:

Zachary Baquet, USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security

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Joseph Lessard, Director of the Office of Agriculture, USAID/Afghanistan



Joseph Lessard is a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). He has over 20 years of experience leading the design and implementation of the full range of economic growth, private sector development, and agricultural development programs, including 14 years of overseas experience in USAID Missions. He has extensive leadership, management, and supervisory experience with diverse teams of professional staff and technical experts. His technical specializations include small business/enterprise development; agriculture and rural development; food security and nutrition; supply/value chain development; access to finance; trade and investment promotion; policy and legal/regulatory reform; entrepreneurship; public-private partnerships; local economic development; and global climate change, with a particular emphasis on promoting renewable energy and other technologies to support adaptation to climate change.

Abdul Nasir, Deputy Chief of Party, USAID's Regional Agricultural Development Program –East



Abdul Nasir is an experienced development professional with experience in researching, designing, managing and monitoring various humanitarian and development initiatives. With over a decade of experience and knowledge of USAID and other donor funded program implementation in Afghanistan, Mr. Nasir is currently serving as Deputy Chief of Party of USAID's Regional Agricultural Development Program –East (RADP-East). Under RADP-East, Mr. Nasir works for the expansion of sustainable agriculture-led economic growth in Eastern Afghanistan by following a facilitative approach in partnership with anchor firms. Mr. Nasir has designed and managed various activities and programs to increase competitiveness and commercial viability of agricultural businesses in Afghanistan. The COVID-19 Adaptation Training and Rapid Response Grants were the initiatives implemented recently by Mr. Nasir and his team for mitigating health related risks and negative economic impacts of the Pandemic on agribusinesses and producers in Eastern Afghanistan.

Nasratullah Hashimi, Dairy Outlet Owner



Mr. Nasratullah Hashimi is a dairy processor having an outlet for selling various dairy products in Kabul, Afghanistan. Mr. Hashimi has basic education and is in the dairy business since 2017. Mr. Hashimi is one of the beneficiary who received COVID-19 mitigation training and equipment from RADP-East. As cost-share for the activity, Mr. Hashimi brought required changes in physical arrangement and operation of his dairy business. After the outbreak of the COVID-19, Mr. Hashimi was concerned regarding his operation and potential health risk of the contagious disease. After being selected and assisted under the mentioned activity by RADP-East, Mr. Hashimi has leaned about the mitigation practices and is regularly following it. As a result of the mitigation practices, Mr. Hashimi has observed an increase in sales and number of customers visiting his dairy outlet.

Don Humpal, Senior Agriculturalist/Senior Global Practice Specialist – Agriculture, Market Systems & Resilience, DAI



Don Humpal, Senior Agriculturist in DAI's Agriculture, Market Systems and Resilience Practice, has extensive experience developing and supporting DAI agribusiness and food security efforts with public and private sector clients in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Americas. He guides activities to transfer and adapt technology and skills in the production, postharvest handling and transport, input supply, processing, and marketing of crops and livestock. He has worked with broad sets of public and private sector clients for more than 30 years to address mandatory food safety regulations, adaptation to emerging disease threats, sanitary and phytosanitary issues and technical barriers to trade (SPS/TBT), and voluntary codes of good practice in the production and processing of crop and livestock products. Don worked with the RADP-E team to review processing and facilities issue, screen COVID-19 adaptation and mitigation approaches for adaptation to processor and retailer needs and, help develop industry-specific risk mitigation training materials.

Christina Aguila, Senior Analyst, Sustainable Business Group, DAI



Christina is a Senior Analyst at DAI's private sector practice, the Sustainable Business Group. With a diverse background in economic growth, she provides program design, advisory, research, and project management to international companies, trade associations and government clients making investments in their local industry and supplier base. Christina focuses on developing training products, facilitating business to business matchmaking missions and information exchanges for SMEs seeking to upgrade their operations. Among her experience she has worked in enterprise development for agribusiness, manufacturing, and energy sector suppliers, collaborating with teams of subject matter experts to harness industry knowledge and tailor learning objectives to diverse global contexts. Christina worked with the RADP-East team as a training and communications specialist to research and build out COVID-19 mitigation training materials.

Introduction



Joseph P. Lessard

Director, Office of Agriculture, USAID Afghanistan

- USAID Afghanistan Ag portfolio
- USAID pandemic response in Afghanistan
- Where RADP-E fits in response to COVID pandemic

Regional Agricultural Development Program – East (RADP- East)

Goal: Sustainable agriculture-led economic growth in Eastern Afghanistan

Value Chains and Target Area: Apricot, tomato, poultry, and dairy – 8 provinces

Strategy: Facilitative, market-driven value chain approach in partnership with private sector

Forms of Assistance



COVID-19 Mitigation Program



A seller working in a dairy shop serves customers in front of the display case and freezer that was awarded under a RADP-East grant, February 2020, Kabul.

Technical Assistance

Technologies, management practices, training, BDS, trade fairs, matchmaking, food safety, marketing, and A2F

Market Development Fund (Grants)

“Smart co-investment funding” for the development of commercial market systems – 96 grants, in total value of \$5.34 million with cost-share ~50%



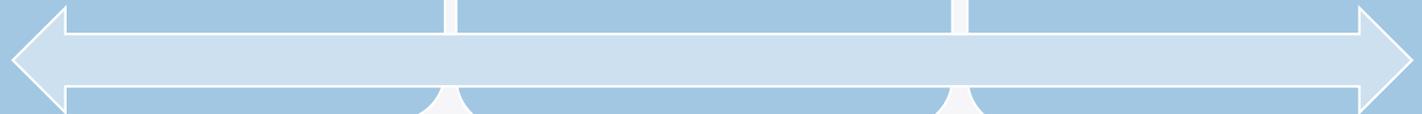
General COVID-19 Training – 294 Agribusinesses



Industry Specific Adaptation Training – 119 Agribusinesses

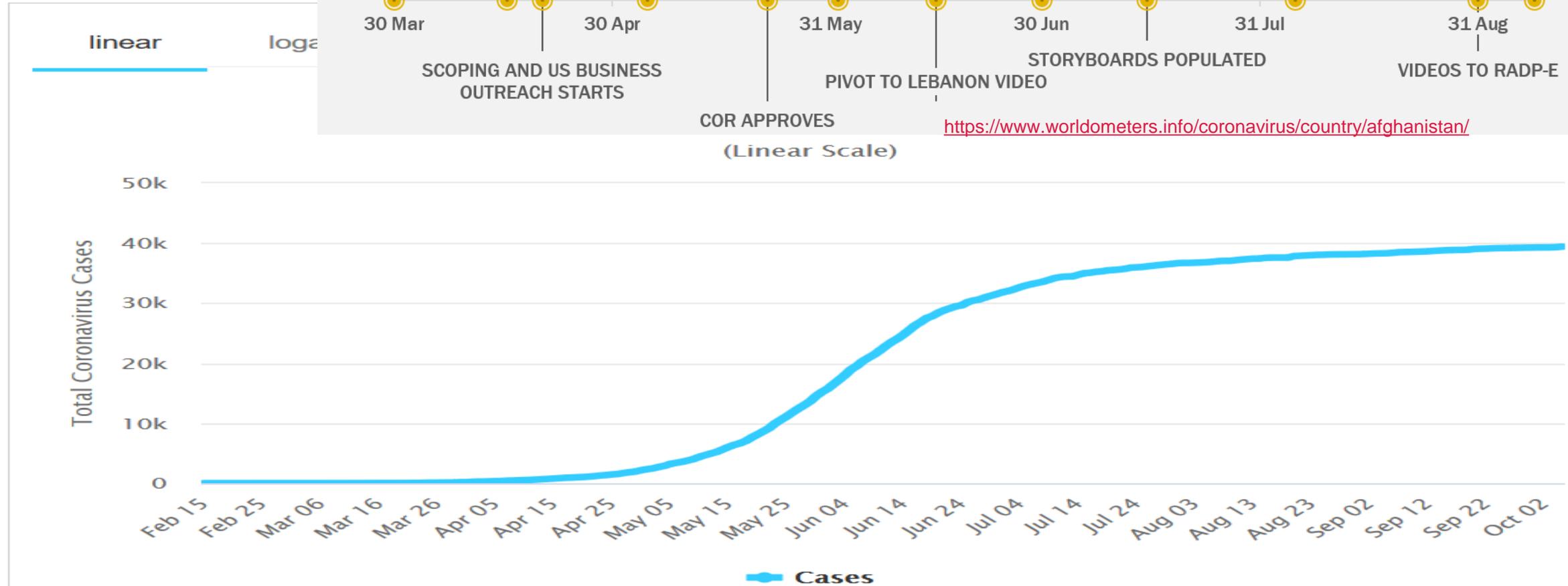


Rapid Response Grants (10 RRGs ~\$225K)



Timelines

Total Corona



Steps

- Scoping (Dairy, Dried Fruit, Fresh F&V, Tomato Processing, Poultry Processing, Butcher Shops, Markets)
- Develop questionnaire to interview firms for crowd sourcing
- COVID-19 Input Source Identification
 - US Community Agriculture Sites
 - Associations for Specialty Foods (smaller scale operations)
 - Organic Operators and their associations
 - Cooperative Extension Services
 - Small-Scale Turn-Key Equipment Suppliers
 - Individuals (current and past DAI projects)
 - Crowd-Sourcing footage
- Story Boarding: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
- Training Module Development
- Video and Voice Adds
- Editing/Revision
- Delivery of Training Modules in English for dubbing by RADP E



Existing source materials

- High volume of information from government agencies, universities and associations
- Continuous update in knowledge requiring adjustments
- Basics from public health officials need to be translated into practical actions
- Materials need to be adapted to specific country, worker, and value chain contexts



The Packer



Links to Industry Associations with regularly updated coronavirus advice



<https://www.thepoultrysite.com/>

American Association
of Meat Processors



<https://www.aamp.com/coronavirusupdates/>

Community Involved
In Sustaining Agriculture



<https://www.buylocalfood.org/poultry-processing/>

Almost all Industry Associations include technical, regulatory, market, business, and financial mitigation and adaptation advice

Produce Marketing Association

<https://www.pma.com/>



Specialty Food Association

<https://www.specialtyfood.com/>



Farmers' Market Alliance(s)

<https://farmersmarketalliance.org>



Dried Fruit: Storyboard from US Company Interview

Tomorrow

- How we will handle re-opening, if any significant change
- Longer-run preparedness?
- Shift to more automation and digital?

Today (Risk ID and Mitigation)

- Truck driver backs to loading dock and stays in truck after unlocking gate before arrival, mask and glove, bill of lading delivered electronically
- Workers unload, gloved, masked.
- +/- Box decontamination
- Workers arrive, daily worker health self-declaration, voluntary temp check?
- Manager/sales staff – bigger social distancing from work spaces
- Video conference visits
- Training protocol for temporary workers
- Workers distance during donning, gloving masking +/- shields
- Increased distance between work tables, plastic barriers, or increase shifts to reduce worker density
- Worker hand washing and glove
- Surface cleaning and sanitation between shifts
- Breaks and lunches separately
- Packaged product boxed for orders or palletized for storage on-sit/off-site
- No driver contact with loaders

Yesterday

- Truck delivers dried fruit in bulk, driver unloads with my workers, bill of lading paper exchange,
- Workers arrive, donning work clothes, gloves
- Unit operations tables with grouped workers
- Hand filling bagging machine
- Hand sealing
- Manager/sales staff plus customer visits to workspace
- Breaks and lunch together
- Worker hand washing for bathroom breaks, lunch breaks
- Facility cleaning and sanitation as per SOP schedule
- Packaged product boxed for orders or palletized for storage on-site/off-site

Training modules

COVID-19 General Awareness Training



General Hazard Reduction, PPE, and Worker Precautions



COVID-19 Mitigation for Ag Value Chains

Poultry Retailers

Poultry Processors

Tomato Processors

Dairy Retailers

Dairy Processors

Jam producers

~10-15min each

~15min each

Produce Packers/Exporters

Dried Fruit Producers

~15min each

Training Videos + Storyboards

Facilitation decks and handout slides

Audience Considerations

Mixed experiences of trainees:

- Mechanized operations
- Sourcing models
- Labor intensity
- Capital investment and costs to make distancing modifications
 - Farm worker transportation/ housing
 - Mechanized processes
- Testing may not be readily available or at high costs

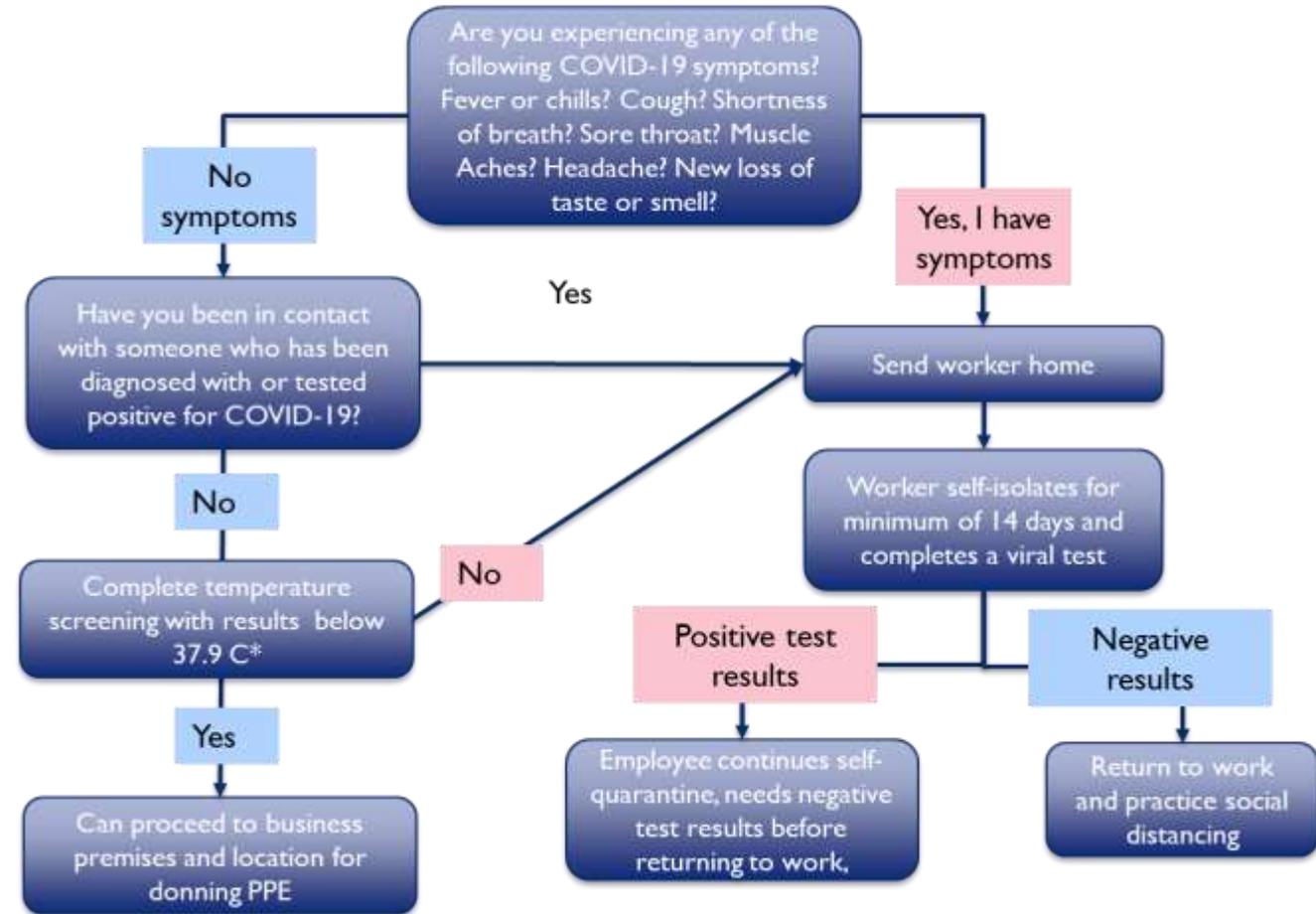


Audience Considerations

Actionable recommendations and tools:

- Decision trees
- Signage
- Checklists
- Key messages for worker safety
- Identify high touch surfaces
- Identify high risk transmission points along the supply chain and in facility

Decision Tree for Daily Screening Questionnaire



Sample outline for value chain training module

Processors

1. Overview of industry impacts throughout the X value chain
2. Explain key factors of transmission risk
3. Identify risk points in various supplier-producer models
 - i.e. Where there are risks in coming into contact with multiple suppliers? Sourcing from multiple dispersed dairy farms vs. an integrated farm and creamery business have different risks.
4. Identify risk points in facility operations
5. Introduce a case example from Lebanon, where available and zoom in to high-risk points and examples
6. Worker precautions taken and PPE

Weave in example cases from producers in Lebanon, + industry and public health source material.



Takeaways: actionable considerations for workforce and organization of facility, PPE recommendations, ability to identify high risk points in worker and supplier interactions.

1

Review key factors to transmission risk

Re-emphasize points from awareness training



Identifying potential COVID-19 transmission points

Here are the main factors to consider when identifying transmission risks in your business.



Person to person transmission between employees and suppliers

Where are there transmission risks due to contact between different groups?
Where are these risks between worker and supplier interactions?



Worker density

How many workers needed for each operation?



Duration of contact

How much time is needed for operations that require in-person contact?



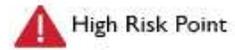
Enclosed space vs. open areas

Which operations must occur in a closed space with limited ability to distance from others?

Identify risk points in various supplier-producer models

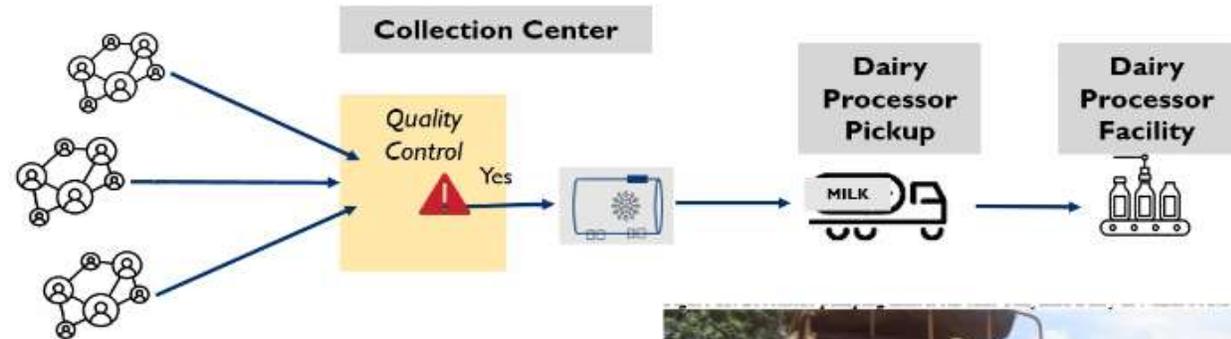
Dairy Example

Groups of dispersed small dairy farmers



High risk point at collection center where different dairy farms can come into contact

- Small Dairy Farms**
- Family-operated
 - 5-10 dairy animals



Transferring milk from an aggregator to a bulk tank

3

Zoom into high risk points, provide examples

Dairy Example

In this part of the training onward you would see various materials from the cases mixed with example material from industry and public health sources.



- Video clips from company examples demonstrate that others are taking measures to mitigate transmission risk
- Show simple, actionable steps that trainees can take

3

Identify high touch points and risk areas in retail shops

Retail Example

Which part of my retail operations pose a high risk?

- High touch areas, high traffic areas
- Locations where handwashing stations are not readily available
- Areas that require prolonged person to person contact in a close space



3

Identify risk points in facility operations

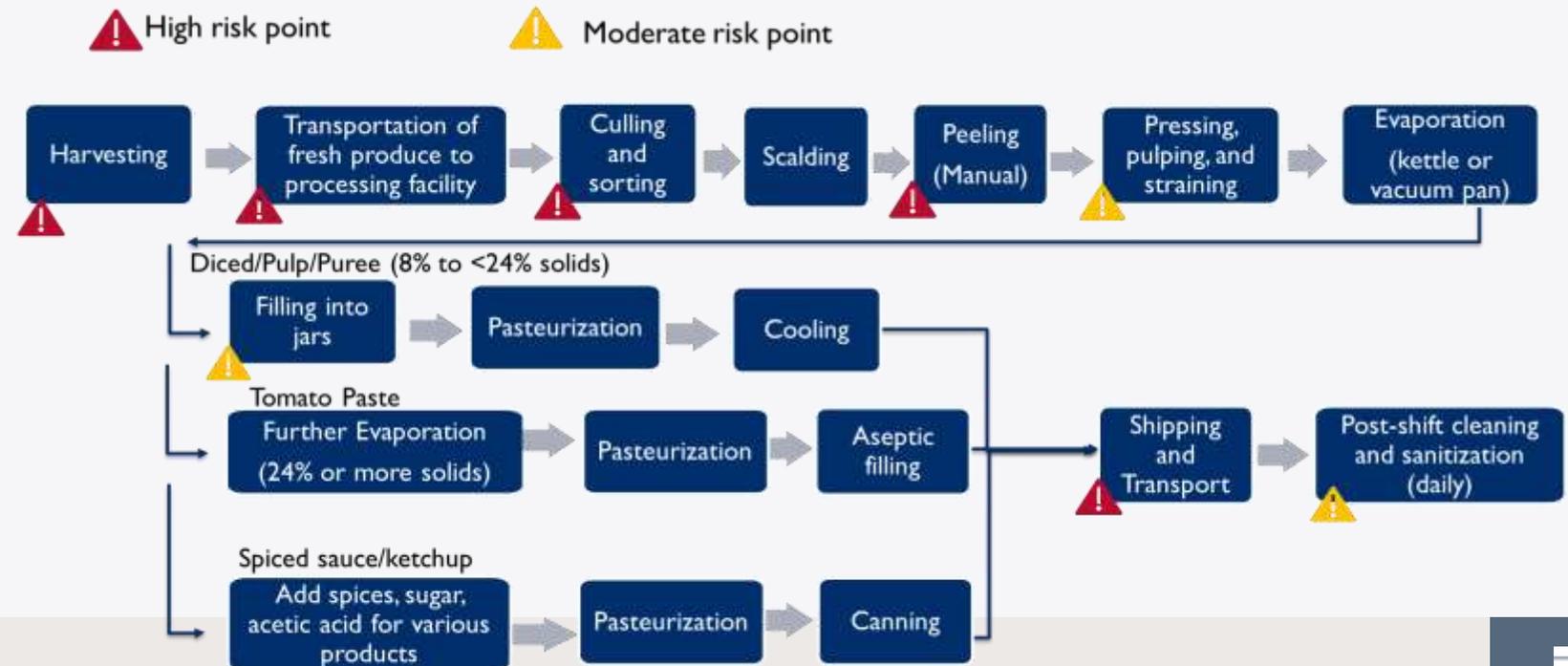
Tomato Processor Example

Transmission risk in Tomato Processing Operations

Identifying Risks

Which part of my facility, process, or personnel face risks?

- Areas that require prolonged person to person contact in a close space
- Processes where distancing is not possible
- Locations where handwashing stations are not readily available
- High touch areas, high traffic areas



COVID-19 Mitigation

Company Example: Produce packing and export company

Lebanon-based trading company engaged in production and marketing fresh produce

- Main products are exported to the UAE
- Up to 30 employees varying on the line of production.
- Founded in 1965



Donning PPE before entering packing area.

Throughout the section that takes a closer look at operations, look at worker and shift management, as well as line modifications, for example during packing.



Unit Processing Operations in Poultry Plants: Packing and Inspection Lines

4

Zoom into high-risk points

Poultry Example

In this part of the training onward we would introduce materials from the Lebanon company cases mixed with example material from industry and public health sources.



Example video source: Maryland PBS Farm and Harvest Series

Yesterday

Free movement of staff and management in processing, inspection and packing areas was not an issue

Today

Increased distance between unit operation with floor marking or barriers

Temporary closures and reduced staff pose bottlenecks to usual processing.

Handwashing stations and hand sanitizers easily accessible

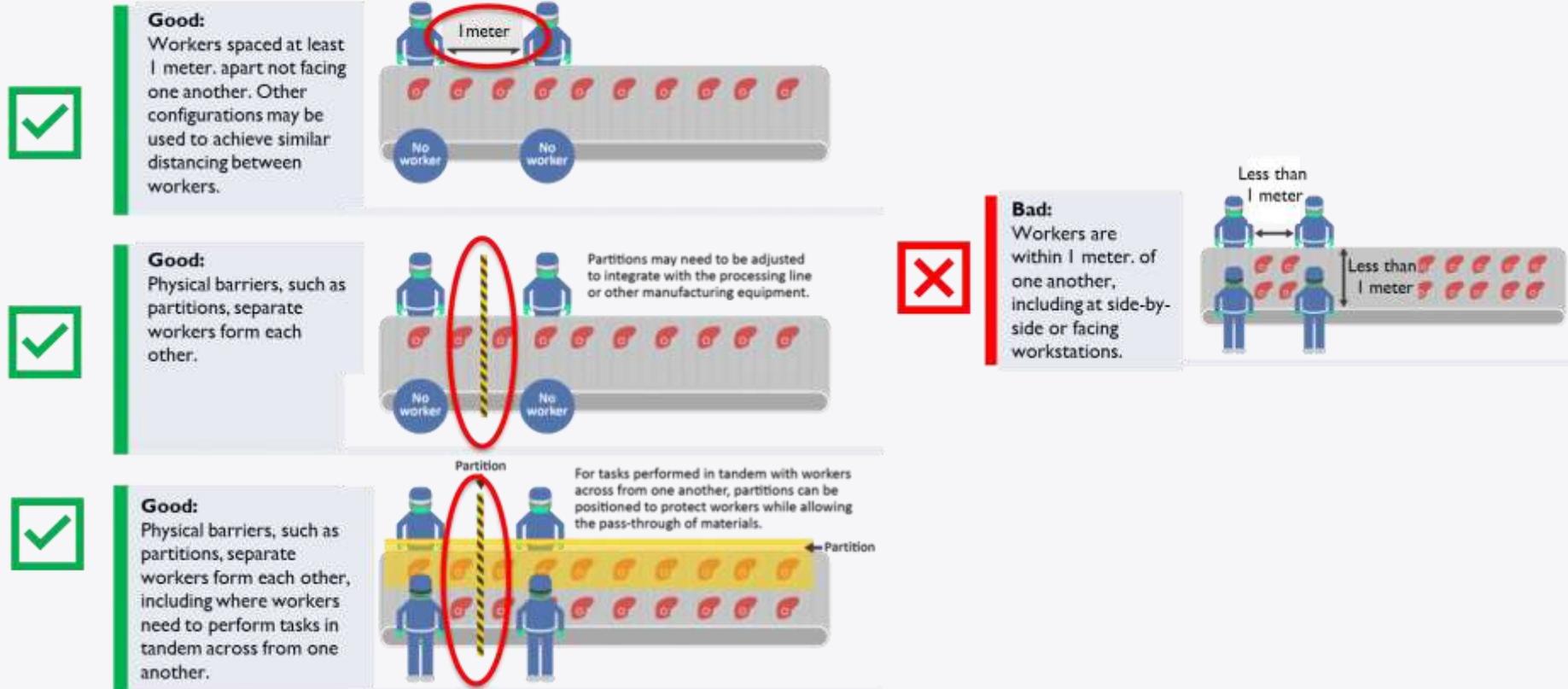
Modifications and hazards in high-risk points

Poultry Example

In this part of the training onward you would see various materials from the Lebanon company cases mixed with example material from industry and public health sources.

Unit Processing Operations in Poultry Plants: How to arrange packing and inspection Lines

If feasible integrate social distancing and barriers:

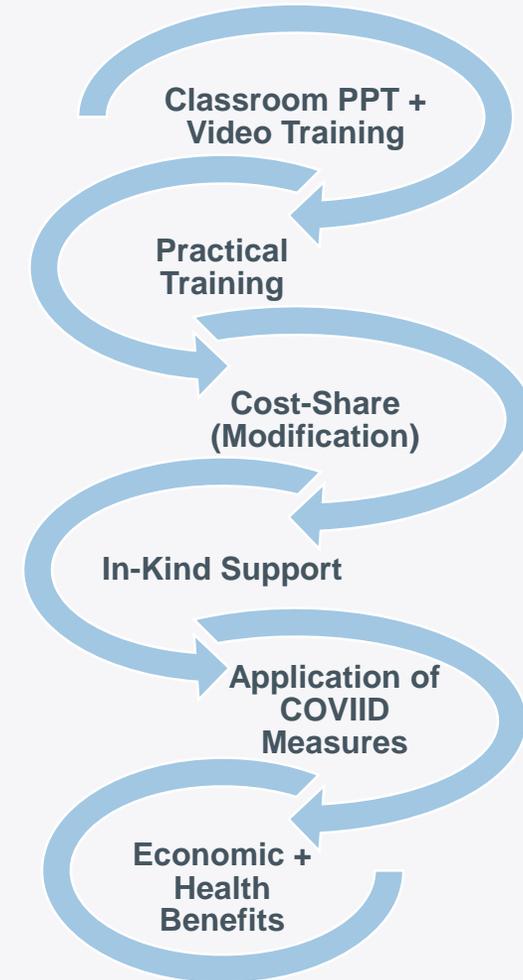


Business Feedback

Food Company Uptake:

- More than 119 Afghan food businesses have been able to easily identify high-risk points in their operations and put in place necessary risk control measures to minimize workers' and clients' exposure to COVID-19, thereby keeping businesses open.
- Feedback suggests that firms needed to **see both a safety and a business reason** to adopt changes in their operations. Staying open is a good business reason but being perceived as concerned for clients' health and actively implementing mitigation measures is a competitive advantage.
- The COVID-19 mitigation measures implemented by these firms are accruing positive returns to businesses
 - Dairy retail shop observed a 63 percent increase in sales, compared to four months ago.

Overview of Training Implementation



Business Feedback

Nasratullah Hashimi

Dairy Outlet Owner

“I learned about the mitigation practices of COVID-19 for dairy shops. I was not aware of these practices before. I learned about shop arrangement, practices for producing and selling quality products, personal sanitation and protection practices. As result, I brought positive changes and modified my outlet. I am strictly following all measures of COVID-19. This has increased my sales and number of customers visiting my shop” *Dairy Shop Owner, Nasrtaullah Hashimi*



Key Takeaways

- Localize solutions and assess their applicability along the way.
- Partner-led co-creation process to ensure that proposed solutions meet the reality.
- Need for agility and to continually pivot strategy in the context of novel virus and institutions struggling to adapt guidance and action to new information daily





Thank You!
Questions?

