

**April 20, 2020**

## **COVID-19 Food Safety Advice Published by WHO and EU Commission**

Two global organizations have published separate guidances addressing coronavirus and food safety.

The World Health Organization has issued an interim guidance for food businesses that concludes it is “highly unlikely” that humans can contract COVID-19 directly from food or food packaging. That fact notwithstanding, the interim guidance references laboratory research that reports the virus can remain viable for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, up to four hours on copper, and up to 24 hours on cardboard. Because this research was under controlled laboratory conditions and not in a real-life environment, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Still, the guidance says it is “imperative” that the food industry use robust hygiene practices to protect workers and the public. This includes personal protective equipment, physical distancing and sanitation measures such as handwashing at every stage of food processing, manufacturing, and marketing.

The European Commission has also published a question and answer document on COVID-19 and food safety that broadly addresses issues in food production, food in shops, and food at home. Like the WHO guidance document, it underscores the fact that there is currently no evidence that food poses a COVID-19 risk to public health. But it too discusses the necessity of good hygiene practices at all stages of food production, and the need for good hygiene during food preparation and consumption.

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