

## *Webinar summary report (draft)*

# COVID19 - What on-site measures can agricultural and forestry companies and sustainable landscapes operators take?

*On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, IDH and Mirova hosted this webinar on additional measures that agricultural/forestry companies and sustainable landscapes operators can take to halt the spread of COVID19, and support workers and neighboring communities.*

*Many agricultural and forestry companies and sustainable landscapes operators with operations in emerging economies or fragile contexts have received instructions from national governments on on-site measures to be taken to halt the spread of COVID19.*

*With a growing concern about the impact of the crisis on health, food security and livelihoods, land based operators in these contexts may benefit from exchanging on practical measures to take, in line with or where appropriate in addition to following the government regulations, to help halt the spread of COVID19, and support their workers and neighboring communities and local business partners.*

*This webinar brought together experts and practitioners, to share information and insights on this topic, and provide a space for Q&A. Over 750 people registered and 420 joined online.*

*Gautier Quéru, Director  
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## Agenda

1. World Health Organization (WHO) - Special Envoy **David Nabarro**, providing reflections on the role of land-based companies in combatting COVID19;
2. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) - **Maximo Torero Cullen** - Chief Economist, on the coronavirus, the food supply chain under strain, and 'what to do?';
3. **Matt Karinen**, **David Rothschild** and **Viganeswaran Ponnudurai**, on the realities of plantation management during a virus outbreak sharing experiences from Liberia during the Ebola crisis;
4. **Tatiana Pachon**, Chief Country Officer, Forest First Colombia
5. **Kate Mathias**, Compliance Director, Miro Forestry & Timber Products

## Session 1: World Health Organization (WHO) - Special Envoy David Nabarro, providing reflections on the role of land-based companies in combatting COVID19;

“This particular pandemic is quite a lot bigger than anything I have ever been involved in before.”

**Quick action is crucial:** The virus can double every 2.5 days without additional action. One thing that we have learnt: “When an outbreak starts, you have to move very quickly to contain it.” Contain transmission by isolating people who are infected. People are most infected at the beginning of the illness. This has been effective in Singapore, South Korea and China.

**If this fails, then isolation needs to be ensured:** Nearly 3 billion people are currently living under lockdown-like conditions. There are many consequences of lockdowns, particularly social and economic. Of course, the imposition of these early lockdowns in India, Chile, South Africa and Kenya, there are consequences related to insufficient dissemination of information on how to implement the lockdown. This can lead to societal unrest.

**Look after your workforce:** Companies should be focusing on their workforce right now. They will need food and support and should feel supported. We are seeing in poorer geographies that some people are suffering very severely.

**Look after your supply chains:** Ensure that your supply chains are robust. This situation may last for some time. Talk to your bankers and ensure that you have access to credit in order to be able to weather economic challenges.

**Work closely with your government:** Businesses play a role in making certain that their employees understand what is going on and why. There is a role for all businesses in making sure that their employees are informed and can comply with regulations that have been imposed. Businesses can also be part of checking for infection. This virus is not going away any time soon. A vaccine may take more than 18 months.

**Let's work together in solidarity:** This reminds us of the importance of basic public health services and the importance of communities being organized. In the coming months, we won't be able to do this work without working together.

**What about young people?** Young and old can get the disease but it seems that younger people are less affected. Young people can still carry the virus and give it to older people in their communities who are likely to die. Young people should be careful if they have symptoms not to come close to old people. They should also know who is where and do what they can to support older ones and make sure they have food and are not isolated. Let's think about physical distancing rather than social distancing, as we should protect vulnerable and old people from becoming isolated.

**How can big companies play a role, how about SMEs?** Businesses need to maintain customer loyalty, rely on markets continuing and have a lot of trust among customers and communities. Therefore, companies should constantly explain what's going on through regular briefings and through their marketing channels such as packaging and advertising. People should have the feeling that they are being looked after. Businesses are vital in maintaining continuity.

Many SMEs are in danger of bankruptcy. We need to enable them to thrive. Most importantly, we need to make sure that people on daily wages have enough money to eat and survive.

**What about masks?** In the midst of an intense outbreak, you must maintain physical distance. This is difficult in an industry where proximity is difficult to operate. It does appear that having a mask reduces the likelihood that if you're got the disease, you can transmit it to others.

There is pressure on people to wear masks as part of the normal conduct of life. However, there is a danger that this results in a shortage of masks for medical professionals. In my case, I am just keeping 2m away from people and not wearing a mask. If you are sick, you should not be in contact with people but should be isolating yourself. If you cannot avoid having to be in contact with other people, it is worth thinking about wearing a mask.

**What about testing?** Testing will be important, and rapid tests for the virus are being developed, though it will be some months before they are available and there is sufficient quantity for testing to be available in all societies. That is why - for now - we have to focus on people isolating themselves when they have symptoms of respiratory disease.

**Will those in warmer climates be less affected by the virus?** We do not know how the virus will advance in warmer climates and/or in settings where people have been exposed to other diseases or been immunized with BCG. As with so many aspects of this virus and disease we are learning as we go, and we should anticipate that advice will be changed in the light of new information.

**Can people who have recovered from COVID19 get the disease again?** We do not know the extent and duration of immunity among people who have recovered from the disease. But it seems likely that those who have recovered will be seen to have an advantage because they are less susceptible to further infection. We need to be careful before we assume that this is true and to pay special attention to supporting those who are still susceptible.

**Do outdoor farm work environments pose less or more risks than a closed indoor work office?** We believe that transmission is less intense in well-ventilated areas. COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through the droplets that come out of our mouths when we cough or sneeze. There are some reports that in non-ventilated areas it may actually go into the air and be transmitted more than 2 meters. Our current thinking is airborne transmission is less important than droplet transmission.

**It's a challenge to implement physical distancing in ongoing operations in the agricultural industry, particularly in packing houses. How to strike a balance between supplying food to the population and protecting employees?** This is the challenge that has to be addressed by all governments everywhere: my sense is that the food sector has to be protected especially given the logistical challenges on the supply side and the difficulties faced by poor people whose income is reduced - it will be most unfortunate if they go hungry because of increased poverty and rising prices in local markets.

**More information from David Nabarro:**

→ Link to narratives written by David Nabarro on COVID19: <https://www.4sd.info/covid-19-narratives/>

→ Contact: [contact@4sd.info](mailto:contact@4sd.info)

## **Session 2: Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) - Maximo Torero Cullen - Chief Economist, on coronavirus and food supply chain under strain, 'what to do?';**

**Food supply chain:** The supply chain is a complex web of interactions and of actors: producers, inputs, transportation, processing plants, shipping, etc. There are many actors and many players. As the virus spreads and cases mount, and block downs increase there are seemingly countless ways the food system will be tested and strained in the coming weeks and months. Every sector is different within the food supply chain. Today, there is no supply shock in sense of availability but there is starting to be a supply shock in terms of logistics of movement of food. The upstream staple supply chain less vulnerable because is capital intensive than high value supply chain

**Staple supply chain:** In the staple world of grains and starches, the situation today is pretty good. We have enough supplies and sufficient stocks. The labor issue is not a problem: workers who have health issues or cannot move. Because most is managed by machines. The idea is to focus on logistics.

**High value world:** In the case of fresh fruit, veg, meat and fish, this is a different case. All the issues of labor matter. The labor supply is having an impact. Not only that: it is a sector where the logistical part is much

more sensitive because it is perishable. We need to put a huge logistical transformation in place in order to keep this supply chain going.

Main supply shocks:

- 1) Intermediate outputs like fertilizers are being affected
- 2) Labor intensity of production, which will affect the high value commodities
- 3) Macroeconomic issues: energy and exchange rate. Devaluation of exchange rates will create behaviors of exporting companies.
- 4) Trade policies: showing that the logistic part is being resolved
- 5) Demand is being affected by the economic effects and will continue to be affected in future as a recession is coming.

“We need to solve the logistic problems so that we can find solutions while implement the health measures... But the supply chain needs to be taken very carefully.”

We will see less production because of lack of labor. Some countries are destroying produce. Flowers do not have a market because they are transported by air. Fresh fruit is having problems. European countries are turning to local producers. We need to solve the logistical problems.

### Supply side:

- Less production likely, but not yet noticeable
- Lower freight rates, lower capacity use
- Food supply chains to be disrupted as of April/May
- Developing countries/Africa: reduction in labour force, affecting labour intensive forms of production (agriculture)
- No current noticeable impact on crop production; global cereal prospects for 2020 are overall favourable
- More perceptible impact on livestock sector; reports of reduced access to animal feed and diminished capacity of slaughterhouses (due to logistical constraints and labour shortages) in China
- Transport restrictions and quarantine measures likely to impede farmers’ access to input and output markets, curbing productive capacities and denying a point of sale for produce; potential to raise PHL
- Shortages of labour could disrupt production and processing of food, notably for labour-intensive crops
- Food supply chains disrupted; blockages to transport routes particularly obstructive for fresh food supply chains and may also result in increased levels of food loss and waste

### Demand side:

- At beginning of diffusion of disease significant increase in demand
- Food demand is generally inelastic and effect on overall consumption likely limited, although dietary patterns may alter
- Possible disproportionately larger decline in meat consumption (implication from its zoonotic origins) and other higher-valued products (likely to cause price slumps)
- Food demand in poorer countries more income elastic, and loss of income-earning opportunities could cause consumption to contract
- Aversion behaviour (fear of contagion) could exacerbate effect on food consumption, through reduced visits to food markets
- Expect shift in purchasing modalities: lower restaurant traffic, increased e-commerce deliveries (as evidenced in China), and rise in consumption at home
- Big problem for import dependent countries

## What to do?

**Africa:** We need to supply African countries with as much testing as possible.

**How to support:** Orientating ourselves around crop calendars and looking into changing harvest or planting times, so that this can happen before people go on lockdown, this may help. However, this cannot come at the cost of compromising health measures.

**Effects:** We are seeing changing eating patterns. There is also a risk of waste as a result of hoarding. Messages here are to stay calm and there is no need to panic buy.

**Devaluation:** Almost all commodities have devaluation. There should be a balance between retaining commodities for the domestic market and exports. The exchange rate is an issue we need to look at carefully as it is creating incentives to export.

**Food availability:** There is no crisis or problems in availability of staple foods. Prices of e.g. wheat are even going down. Soybeans are also going down. Rice is very sensitive and Vietnam's lockdown has affected this. We need to inform markets that there are sufficient stocks.

**School meal programs:** We need to find a solution to children who were dependent on school meal programs, who are not receiving these meals now. Solutions could be food banks and NGOs. This is also important for the farmers who supply the school meal programs.

**Small farmers:** We need to find ways to help farmers through safety nets. We can reduce the intensity of mobility by putting in place networks of collection centres. This infrastructure would be a good investment of aid money at the moment.

**How to ensure demand:** Where there is infrastructure, we can use e-commerce.

**Trade:** We cannot allow trade restrictions or export barriers, because this will artificially create a food crisis. There is a huge opportunity to empower interregional trade.

**Europe:** mobility could affect fresh fruit and vegetables in Europe. Governments need to ensure that key value chains keep moving, while the proper health measures are in place.

Meet immediate needs of vulnerable populations:

- Emergency Food Assistance, nutrition interventions and safety nets enhanced and made more accessible
- Urgent increases in food availability from smallholder farmer food production
- Management of macroeconomic implications

Reduce uncertainty on logistics.

## Session 3: Matt Karinen, David Rothschild and Viganeswaran Ponnudurai; Sharing experiences from Liberia during the Ebola crisis

The former team of the Sinoe and Grand Kru palm oil plantation company located in the south east of Liberia. At the time of Ebola, it had 16,500 hectares planted and 3,500 employees.

**Matti Karinen** is the former executive director and founder, and now works in investment and as a consultant in forestry and mineral resources.

**David Rothschild** is also a co-founder and former COO and now works in regenerative agriculture.

**Viganeswaran Ponnudurai** was senior vice-president for operations in Liberia, he is now head of plantations for Willmar International in Africa responsible for Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Uganda.

## Overview of the Ebola response - Matt Karinen

**Lessons from Ebola for Coronavirus:** our company dealt with Ebola in a remote and rural agricultural setting. There are differences between the diseases but we hope to share some experiences. We were responsible for 3,500-4,000 employees. It was very important for us to continue operations for these employees and for business viability. Ebola was a serious illness causing 50% mortality, 11,000 deaths in West Africa and 5,000 in Liberia.

**Successful efforts:** We had nearly 4,000 employees and 20-30,000 dependants. The outcomes were zero fatalities, no transmitted cases and no job losses. This was not achieved by medical treatment, there was not enough time for that, no cure. It was really achieved by the management, by the operations and by the people themselves, who took the right actions. It was not my success but a team of people including my co-director David Rothschild, our operations head Vigy Ponnudurai and other managers including Krish Nalaiah, and their teams.

In retrospect, the four key elements were:

1. Early recognition & plan
2. Communication
3. On the ground actions
4. Cooperation

**Early recognition and planning:** In our case, we were able to act very early, even before the government advice. In the case of the coronavirus, in a lot of countries, we are already past this stage by now. But what you can do now is look ahead, organise, think and act for the next stages of Covid. Look now beyond the next step, be thinking about the two next phases already. Do that.

**Crisis management team:** We had a crisis team talking daily: the two directors, two or three on-site leaders, and later we relaxed the frequency from daily when we saw that we knew what to do.

**Threat identification framework:** Also known as “alert levels”, we had green, yellow, orange and red alert levels, with some going even beyond. We thought this through up to the level of a catastrophe like a mass die-off in the countryside, which was a risk in the case of Ebola but did not happen thanks to everybody.

**Response plans:** You need to think very carefully about the next few layers to where you currently are. Those not currently in lockdown, you need to think about how you will operate under lockdown, or other changes that might be suddenly announced with only a few hours warning, e.g. an extension of lockdown beyond the original duration.

**Secured supply chain:** We stocked up on fuel, medicine and food to take care of operations and employees' wellbeing.

**'Listen to the field':** We were top down to a degree but it was very important for us to listen to operational teams.

**Weekly plan reassessment:** Be ready to change quickly.

## Communication, partners and operational actions - David Rothschild

**Communication, clear and repeated, by people whom the audience can trust:** We were working in a remote area and the community did not have access to internet or other information. There was distrust in the government.

**Visible crisis management:** We had to communicate, coach, educate our workers and reach out to communities very actively and frequently. We had to use materials such as posters, visits to check on people's status.

**Communicated targets, actions, and behaviours:** e.g. dealing with sanitation stations, giving feedback and ensuring that protocols are followed and matters are corrected. It takes a while to learn behaviours and these actions must be repeated. With Corona we are seeing how difficult it is to get used to the 2m distance.

**Communication via musters, daily:** Maintain communication and revise as you learn more

**Upfront clarity - situation will evolve**

**Changes explained**

**Actions on the ground for Ebola:** These are different in some cases to the measures needed for coronavirus to a certain extent as asymptomatic people can also transmit the coronavirus.

- **Cordon sanitaire:** Staff at the gate would check for fever and a checklist of symptoms and test all entrants with a thermometer. Staff who were manning these gates were all wearing personal protective clothing (PPE) and we had a number of these cordons throughout our various farms. Not only in the operations and offices but also in the housing where the employees were living, also in local villages and on the roads
- **Handwashing:** This is extremely important also for coronavirus. We provided disinfectant water buckets, water treatment materials etc and coaching on how to do hand-washing to the employees, to the communities and repeated the message many times.
- **Protecting the clinics and medical staff:** Particularly relevant to any remote site that has logistics challenges and clinic services, it's very important to figure out where the isolation zone is going to be if cases arise. How to protect the clinics, how to protect the doctors and nurses in the clinics with proper PPE, and very importantly repeatedly practice proper SOP, such as putting on the PPE, for taking off or for disposing the PPE. This is very very important.

**Engagement with the communities:** We also carried out these activities in the community, for example on handwashing and quarantine. We helped the community develop understanding and a sense of urgency.

**Effectiveness of quarantine:** Unfortunately, two people did come in from the outside who were infected, and they were not able to be saved due to medical limitations. But they also did not infect anybody else due to the measures that the community put in place. They died because there was no care available from a large hospital.

**Cooperation:** We belonged to the Ebola private sector mobilization group (EPSMG) started by Allan Knight of ArcelorMittal who's a big operator in the country. Included were the mining companies in the region. We were not the only agricultural company and there were other multinationals. This allowed us to provide a coordinated response and to support the local governments and ensured a single leveraged voice to major players like the World Bank, Medecins Sans Frontieres, the UN, CDC, and lobbying to governments like the US. This started long before ebola was considered a major crisis by some.

**Information sharing:** We shared materials and best practices with the other companies – very useful.

**Logistical support:** This coordinated effort was needed to provide e.g. transport, accommodation and food to the Red Cross, Medecins Sans Frontieres and so on. We also provided this support to government and provincial doctors - weekly coordination with them.

**Outreach:** Community authorities and committees engagement – weekly outreach to help them convince communities of the importance of sanitation measures. It also gave us information of infections.

**NGO's professional help for employees' and communities' wellbeing:** two-way support – information and expertise on medical questions that they could provide and we were able to provide logistical and practical support.

**Private Sector coordination - accelerate responses and learning**



EPSMG – Ebola Private Sector Mobilisation Group (2014 Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone crisis)

- Initiated by Arcelor Mittal's Alan Knight. Included most regional mining companies, ourselves, other MNCs, London secretariat
- **Key benefits:** cooperation and coordination, lobbying and single-voice interface, info/idea sharing, logistics support
  - Fast moving, proactive, coordinated approach pre-empted many govt and international decisions and actions
  - Multi-signatory lobbying to international bodies (UN, WHO) and governments (US, UK...)
  - Single-voice coordination and assistance to local governments, who were overwhelmed, and implementers (eg British RC)
  - Internal sharing of ideas, communication materials, best practice prevention and intervention protocols, access to medical facilities
  - Logistics support: Vehicles, accommodation, other support offered to Red Cross, local medical teams etc
- Most companies did local outreach and provided support to local communities and governments
- Most companies continued to operate at some level - maintaining employment levels was a key request of governments

#### Minimum recommended operational actions

- **Educate and support communities and workers**
  - Coach workers and communities; supply messages/posters, cleaning stations (Don't reinvent the wheel: Use best practice materials, eg WHO, CDC, Int'l SOS etc - posters, protocols, SOPs)
  - Keep a constant ear to the ground for news of any cases – insist on strict quarantine for such cases; offer medicines
- **Check, check, check 100% of people entering the site**
  - Check all workers for symptoms – at a minimum, daily, at all gates: checklist of questions, explain why (safety of self and others), hand cleaning station, PPE, thermometer, logbook
  - Send home if symptoms (malaria symptoms present the same, send home); quarantine; follow up at home cases via community
- **Prepare for cases "inside the fence"**
  - Prepare isolation unit and isolation zone, plus SOPs to handle patients if cases emerge (onsite and getting safely to hospitals)
  - Order PPE and medicines, sanitising equipment
  - Train users on safe use and disposal of PPE, patient-interaction protocols, use checklists
  - Educate management based on these best practice,
- **Clarify repatriation approach for domestic and foreign expats**
  - Decide on best time to repatriate non-essential expats (domestic & foreign) - medevac can become a real challenge as systems get overwhelmed
  - Incentivise core management team
  - Reassure families with direct communication

**Thoughts – important in covid specifically:** *It is extremely important to verify the health of people coming into a site if they're coming from the outside and to maintain constant checks for people that are on the inside.*

**Physical distance:** Ebola transmission was slower than Covid. I would suggest that in the Covid case, if you are keeping operations going, have people maintain physical distance within the **communities** right now and within your on-site facilities right now.

**Early warning system:** Malaria symptoms in the first days could be similar to Covid. Get an early warning system in place in case somebody comes back with symptoms. Take it seriously, put people into isolation or into quarantine. Hopefully it's just malaria and they can be treated with malaria medicine.

**PPE:** very important to stock up.



**Specific risk groups need protection:** maybe additional distancing is needed for them. Education is also important.

- Elderly (60, 65+)
- Background illnesses: diabetes, HIV, TB, heart

**Detection and prevention problems:** If the infection gets 'inside the fence' you need to have a very clear plan in place as to if or how you can continue operations at all. Can you isolate one area, replace it with a SWAT team? You may need to slow things down.

**Planning for economic impact:** we found the escalation matrix very useful because every level was elaborated with a set of actions that were well communicated throughout the management team.

- Industry, nation-wide, global wide
- Lockdowns – can you get permission to operate, and how you do it if it happens?
- How to get back into operation when restrictions are lifted

## **Field level Operational Questions - Viganeswaran Ponnudurai**

### **How did you manage day to day quality of check stations and clinic preparedness?**

1. First, we had an experienced senior nurse, as well as 5 trained nurses working. They were assisted by our chief security and his 15 men at the gate. Everyone had to be ready at the main entrance at 05:45 AM. All other entrances to the facility were cut off, allowing only one direct entrance to the facility.
2. We had 800 hundred workers coming in daily that we checked before entering our facility at 06:00 AM.
3. At the entrance gate, all workers had to come down from the bus and walk into the 8 lanes that were marked in advance.
4. We had a tank prepared with 4,000 litres of water and cleaning chemicals already mixed in. The tank had 10 taps, allowing multiple workers to wash their hand at the same time.
5. After this, a temperature check was done for each worker, and anyone showing high temperatures were advised to remain in a waiting area. From there they were transported to our clinic where further investigation was undertaken.
6. The visiting medical doctors arrived at 08:00 AM to check and verify whether patients were required to be taken to the quarantine hospital for blood testing to check presence of Ebola.
7. We conducted daily checks to ensure crucial items were available in sufficient quantity and ready for use (e.g. all PPE, disinfectants, Dettol, face masks).
8. Recently absent workers (e.g. from the previous day or days) were asked to wait at the designated waiting area. These workers were checked by the senior nurse for any symptoms and whether they were fit to go to work. If deemed not risk free by the senior nurse, then they were sent to the government hospital for further checks. If required, they were asked to remain in the quarantine isolation area as required by the health department.

### **How did you educate employees and communities?**

1. Managers, field Supervisors, and work gang leaders were trained first on this infectious disease.
2. Training was conducted by our senior nurse, as well as our Environment Health and Safety staff. The medical in-house doctor also spent an hour providing information at the end of each session. The entire session took about three hours.
3. Community leaders, Paramount Chiefs and Clan Chiefs were invited for a meeting and discussion on how we want to tackle the Ebola outbreak. Once agreed upon, these influential leaders would go back to their communities and inform those working for us, as well as any dependents, on how to seek medical assistance from us. The entire community was dependent on our company for medical, midwifery and vaccination for their infants and children.
4. Informing and training the communities, was one of the toughest jobs to do as most of them are illiterate and did not at that time believe the disease even existed.

### What were the biggest difficulties / challenges during this time?

1. Workers refuse to follow guidelines given or come to work late on purpose to avoid all these procedures.
2. Most of the community members did not believe the disease was real and/or were not willing isolate themselves when told to.
3. Expectant mothers did not isolate themselves and we worried they would come into contact with those infected with the disease. Making it very difficult and causing newborn to also be infected.
4. Most community members believe more in traditional African medicine than Western medication. They would still come to pick up the medicines, but many did not take them on time or purposely kept them aside.
5. We then moved to actually administer the medication by our nurses which is time consuming and our nurses are stretched.
6. Food was difficult to come by daily as the community cannot do farming due to restricted movements. We needed to supply.
7. Suspected community members who were isolated ran away from the quarantine zones to go back to their communities. When the health vehicles subsequently searched for them in the villages, some would run away to their farm huts and hide.
8. Funerals: deceased must be buried immediately, and body bags cannot be opened. But this goes against the local tradition and the Chiefs did not agree to this rule. So, serious patients kept spreading the disease even after they died.
9. Government hospitals lack medicines and due to restricted movement, supplies ran out quickly. Even fuel to run the generators for power and water supply was scarce. So, we helped out by transporting medicines and donating diesel for the hospital and isolation centres. This allowed the operation theatre to continue with the other emergencies and for planned surgeries to continue.

### How should employee transport be organized?

1. Need to make more bus runs, so that in the buses people can sit separated.

#### More information:

Following the presentation, additional questions were submitted per chat function. These were responded to in writing by the speakers, and are annexed to these notes.

If any participants or entities wish to obtain more comprehensive or bespoke advice or suggestions, the speakers welcome participants to contact either of them on:

David Rothschild: [dsrothschild@gmail.com](mailto:dsrothschild@gmail.com)

Matt Karinen: [ma.karinen@karinen.net](mailto:ma.karinen@karinen.net)

## Session 4: Business operators on the ground share their COVID19 measures

### First Speaker: Tatiana Pachon: Chief Country Officer, Forest First Colombia

*Forest First is a large sustainable forestry company founded in 2010.*

**Status of COVID-19:** Nearly 1000 cases in Colombia and national lockdown since 25<sup>th</sup> March.

**Containment strategy:** We operate in a very remote location in the eastern plains of Colombia close to the Venezuelan border. The border is an infection spread risk. Before the national lockdown we already limited our operations to avoid contamination in our operations but also in the local communities. The remote location brings up infrastructure-related challenges.

**Limiting rotation:** People who were out on rotations in other parts of the country were asked not to return. We had to redesign our operations so that they could do other activities and not have contact with people in our plantations.

**Redistributing work:** Management had to rethink how to give legitimate work for those asked not to return.

**Communication:** A lot of pressure has been put on our communication, literally bandwidth so that people can be in touch.

**Cut down numbers of staff per shift:** We identified a minimum number of staff that can be working so we reduced the number of people working. E.g. in the nursery, an average 25 people were coming in and out daily. This has been restricted to the minimum number necessary.

**Redesigned accommodation camps:** Those people selected would remain in the camp and the others remain outside.

**Controls:** We are checking daily temperatures, provided staff with kits of masks, hand gloves and sanitizer.

**Handwashing:** We have operational procedures so that regular hand washing is monitored.

**Restricted movement:** Camp staff still move between the camp and the plantations but without moving into any other locations where there could contaminate

**Logistics:** The remote location is a real challenge.

**Communication:** Critical because people are not well informed about what is happening nationally. We have to communicate regularly to control panic: with management and staff but also regular meetings every three days between operations people and community leaders.

**Incentives:** A mixture of financial incentives and potential leave that could be taken at a later stage has been offered so that people who have not been able to take leave due to the rotation decisions can compensate that time.

What we've learned:

- **anticipate** what your operational procedures can be
- **keep a flexible mindset** because this is an ongoing change - new things are happening daily
- **communication:** providing practical information on what to do
- **regular meetings** with our management team and team leaders
- **keeping in touch** with what's going on in the field and taking feedback into decisions
- **cooperation:** we are working with the rest of the agricultural sector and the local government to make sure measures are mutually supportive and do not counteract each other

## **Second speaker 2: Kate Mathias: Compliance Director, Miro Forestry & Timber Products**

*Miro Forestry is a sustainable forestry operator active in Ghana and Sierra Leone*

**Government guidance:** Followed changes introduced by the government. Those countries closed flights early on so expats were offered to go home and work remotely or stay.

**Awareness-raising:** by social teams and nurses in communities with the help of other companies. Developed posters and leaflets for noticeboards and transportation to raise awareness.

**Leveraging platforms:** Our social communications team has regular radio slots in Sierra Leone, so we have used these to share practical information on COVID-19

**Partial closures of operations:** As the situation in Ghana is moving rapidly operations may need to be partly closed or suspended.

**Prevention:** Soap and chlorinated water is provided, and every person must wash hands before boarding any transportation.

**Reducing transportation load:** One empty seat always between workers. Reduction of movement of communities between areas. Communities are working as close as possible to their homes. Vehicles are washed between journeys. This impacts efficiency.

**Travel ban:** on non-essential travel outside of the operational areas and reduced meetings of communities

**Remote working:** those staff who can work remotely are doing so

**Published information:** produced a public document for our workers and for the communities around details what happens now when we start to suspend or close operations and impacts on salaries and leave.

**Leave:** For industry activities where distancing is not possible, they have to be suspended. Staff who are particularly anxious can choose not to come to work.

**Protection of older and vulnerable workers:** These groups have been advised not to come to work

**Priority:** the health and safety of the workers and the communities is priority over the trade

## 5. Closing and Follow up

Participants shared feedback on the session, and suggestions for areas of support of the likes of Mirova and IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative. For additional ideas, feedback or suggestions, kindly contact Thomas Duurland ([duurland@idhtrade.org](mailto:duurland@idhtrade.org)).

*IDH and Mirova warmly thank the speakers for dedicating their time to joining us and helping agricultural and forestry companies and other sustainable landscape operators prepare for Corona. Their willingness to share information, concrete experiences and measures currently being taken is highly appreciated.*

*We also thank our partners and stakeholders for their participation, and hope that these insights will benefit them and their workers and neighboring communities in the times to come.*

*Gautier Queru*

*Nienke Stam*



**IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative** - IDH is an international organization that convenes, finances and manages large programs to accelerate transitions toward sustainability together with multinational and smaller companies, governments and civil society. IDH operates globally in different industry sectors and promotes sustainable agriculture and forestry through its Landscapes program, based on production, protection, restoration and inclusion. The Landscape Finance team is dedicated to mobilizing investments and learning around such innovative business models, and manages Technical Assistance facilities for Investment Funds that promote inclusive and sustainable land use, including the LDN Fund managed by Mirova.

**About Mirova** - Mirova is an investment manager dedicated to sustainable investment. Through a conviction-driven investment approach, Mirova's goal is to combine value creation over the long term with sustainable development. Mirova's talents have been pioneers in many areas of sustainable finance. Their ambition is to keep innovating to propose the most impactful solutions to their clients.

COVID19 - What on-site measures can agricultural and forestry companies take?

Webinar summary notes: 2 April 2020

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