

## North Macedonia

### ***Impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the EFFAT Sectors and measures taken to deal with the consequences of the pandemic***

*EFFAT affiliates: Agro-Sindikar, SUTKOZ*

#### Governmental measures

A national emergency was declared on 18 March 2020 for a period of 30 days.

The Government follows the WHO recommendations and translates them into a set of measures to protect the health of citizens and workers.

In addition to the set of government measures and the declaration of a national emergency, the following are specific recommendations for companies, especially for those with production facilities:

1. In plants where the manufacturing process is directly carried out, there shall be a limited number of employees to respect the distance of 1.5 to 2 metres.
2. It is obligatory to provide disinfectant for hands and the work surfaces in the plant.
3. During the working hours, employees should comply with the general recommended measures for a higher level of personal and general hygiene (frequent hand washing, disinfection with alcohol-based disinfectants).
4. To ventilate the workplaces more frequently (through natural and artificial ventilation).
5. To disinfect all work premises once a week, especially in plants, by an authorized service.
6. In the event of direct contact with a positive confirmed case of COVID-19 (with or without symptoms), the person shall be immediately isolated and reported to the competent Public Health Centre.
7. To avoid contact among employees during the work process, mostly among the administrative staff.
8. In case of need for administrative work, exclusively a certain person wearing personal protective equipment should carry out the signing of paper documents (protective mask and gloves).
9. Persons responsible for securing the facility shall also wear personal protective equipment.
10. Drivers who distribute finished products, raw materials, paper documents should also wear personal protective equipment.
11. Special forms of displacement licenses have been introduced for shift workers so they will not be penalized when the movement ban begins.
12. Not to hold physical meetings; better conduct them by phone or email.

Agro-Sindikar has asked trade union representatives to report in case of disrespect of the government or company measures.

The set of main economic measures for the business support are not yet brought by the Government as there are different points of view between the Government, some political parties and Trade Unions.

The Government also made several tax-provisional suspensions during the National Emergency:

- the amount of interest charged on the amount of less or more tax paid for each day of delay (from current 0,3% to 0,015%).
- exemption from payment of the amount of the advance payment for personal income tax for self-employed taxpayers for the months of March, April and May 2020, for catering business, tourism, tour operators, transport, if the taxpayer-employer fulfil some criteria.
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There are still no economic measures brought forward by the Government, Agro-Sindikata as a part of SSM, via SSM requires the Government adopting measures that are necessary to bring about the existence of every worker, citizen and firms in the economy:

- Moratorium on all cancellations of employment contracts for economic, organizational, technological, structural or similar reasons by the employer (business reasons) for a period of 60 days (a measure taken by Italy to protect workers and prevent abuses by the employer, negligent employers who are using this difficult time for self-interest)
- Paying salaries without reducing them by delaying payment of compulsory social security contributions, by having them paid into the appropriate funds within 6 months of overcoming the hardship or emergency.
- Postponement of instalment payments for loans and reprogramming for 6 months for all private sector workers, citizens and companies.
- For the public sector any measure to be taken is in accordance with the Labor Law, the Collective Agreement on Public Sector which offers solutions to such situations.
- Branch unions affiliated with the Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia refuse to adopt any set of measures outside the framework of the Labor Law and Collective Agreements of the public and private sectors that will reduce the wages of workers in the State.

More information on the governmental measures can be found on the ETUC webpage [here](#).

### Impacts in the EFFAT sectors and specific measures adopted to deal with them

#### **Agriculture sector:**

Agricultural workers, especially those working in open fields, continued to work in accordance with the government's recommendations and measures.

The biggest problem is the sale of lambs, and the Ministry of Agriculture is working hard to find a solution. Exports to Italy are currently slowing down due to transport problems. The Ministry is in constant communication with buyers and, in addition to traditional markets such as Italy, Croatia and Greece, other alternative markets for lamb exports are being sought.

The transport of goods is not prohibited and is carried out under special security protocols. The Macedonian Foreign Ministry is currently working with the foreign ministries of other countries on a joint transport protocol that will allow for a smooth flow of goods. With the introduction of a common protocol, the transport will run smoothly.

The government has imposed an export ban on wheat and flour in order not to disrupt the country's market situation and to provide sufficient quantities of flour in the country in view of the growing market demand for these products triggered by the pandemic.

Spring sowing of maize and sunflowers is underway and should continue uninterrupted by planting and sowing the fields. The government's recommendations in this state of emergency must also be followed in this area. Agricultural pharmacies will not be closed. The procurement of animal feed by regulating transport protocols will proceed smoothly. The same applies to the supply of raw materials.

For security reasons, the cattle markets are currently closed. Consignments of animals may only be moved if the animals are properly identified and accompanied by a valid animal health certificate.

Agricultural products can be sold on green markets, but it is of course important to comply with government recommendations regarding hygiene, adherence to the one-meter distance and reasonable prices.

As far as seasonal workers are concerned, most of the foreign seasonal workers in Macedonia come from Albania, mainly in the south-western part of the country, the region of Ohrid, Struga and Prespa. With the closure of the state borders of Macedonia and Albania, these seasonal workers have returned to their home country. We have no data on the number of these seasonal workers as they are undeclared workers mostly.

#### **Food, Drink and Tobacco sector:**

The whole food industry is maximally mobilised; all focus is put on how to continue with the production. Although there is enough stock, food industry is acting cautiously, seeking modalities to ensure the flow of all raw materials, so that the moment of shortage does not come. They are closely working with the authorities and the common focus is on ensuring the unimpeded import of raw materials necessary in the production process. They are working on interstate driver protocols, in-country transport protocols and product deliveries, protecting the workers, shift work, homework.

Currently there are no reported closures of the companies, decrease in employment or redundancies due to COVID-19 pandemic and Agro-Sindikata is following very closely the developments.

#### **HRCT sector:**

#### [Measures adopted in specific companies](#)

For more information on the measures adopted in transnational companies please check the main page