

# How to adapt to a rapidly changing work environment under COVID-19

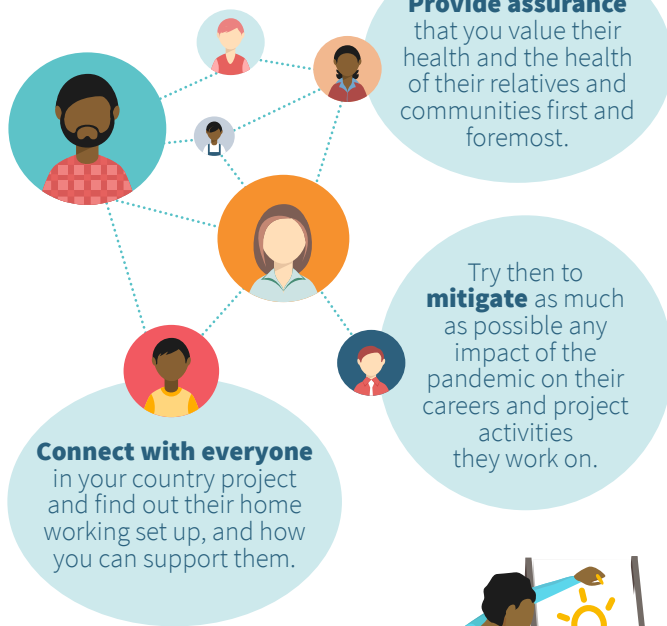


The coronavirus pandemic has forced many of us out of our office space and into working from home without much time to prepare for it. In this guide, the Resilient Food Systems Programme Co-ordination Unit (PCU) offers some tips to our country teams on how to adjust to this new work environment and rapidly changing situation.

# To get started and stay on track, try these 9 strategies

## 1 MANAGE PEOPLE WITH EMPATHY

### Manage your team



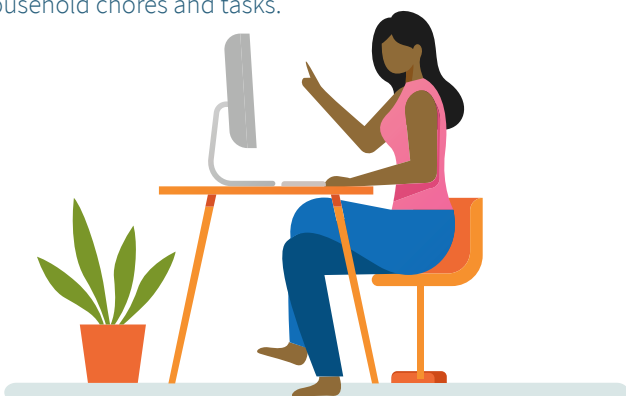
Recognize that team **members might be facing additional constraints** at home, such as having to care for relatives, home-school children, or attend to household chores – and be patient.



## 3 LIMIT AND MANAGE DISRUPTIONS AND INTERRUPTIONS

### Set down clear boundaries

for family and friends as you are able to within your home set up. Give your family a set up of your day and when you might have a call or need 'quiet time'. Don't underestimate the distractions from pets, TV or household chores and tasks.



## 2 SHARE THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) PROTECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE CORONAVIRUS



### Wash your hands

regularly and thoroughly with an alcohol-based hand rub or with soap and water.



### Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth



### Maintain social distancing

of at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and other people when going out.



### Follow good respiratory hygiene

Make sure mouths and noses are covered with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing.



### If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early

Follow the directions of your local health authority.

## 4 KEEP TO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

It's easy to fall into the trap of poor discipline – ditch your daily routine, sleep late and eat unhealthy food.

Get ready for work as you would on a normal day. Take lunch and tea or coffee breaks away from your work space to rest between tasks.



## 5 MAKE A TO-DO LIST

At the beginning of the day, **prioritise the tasks** you need to accomplish, and plan your time accordingly.

Work out realistic **deliverables and goals** during this time, acknowledging that certain elements of your work won't be possible – like face-to-face training sessions or attending events.



## 7 STAY “IN THE LOOP”

When working from home, it's easy to miss out on the casual exchange of “**office updates**” and to feel isolated.

Keep up the “**office chat**” and tea-break conversations with colleagues in a virtual way – by phone, WhatsApp or social media – and make the effort for frequent check-ins with teams and co-workers.



## 6 MIX UP TASKS



- Use this time to catch up on **report reading**, and focus on **writing and data analysis**.
- Now could be a good time to **call mentors** and field experts and ask them about your project observations and best practice scenarios.
- It could also be an opportunity to **forge new partnerships** in responding to COVID-19 impacts, especially with bilateral partners and NGOs working to improve smallholders' resilience.

## 8 MAINTAIN YOUR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH



Very diligent workers are at risk for burnout as the boundaries between work and home blur, and employees may also feel the need to prove that they are being trustworthy and productive. **Set boundaries for when your workday starts and ends.**

## 9 STAY HEALTHY



- **Eat well, exercise regularly** (as possible)
- **Keep to your sleeping routine**
- Limit non-work-related screen time and **connect with your family and friends**, even if via phone, online chat or social media.
- **Practice the virus preventative measures** – see point 2.

# Ideas to make things easier

## LET'S FIRST ADDRESS THE NO. 1 ISSUE FOR REMOTE WORKING: Internet connectivity - if you have some connectivity at all...

If you have a computer at home, and broadband connectivity problems arise, or you rely on your phone for internet, you can resort to using your smartphone's hot spot feature, which turns the device's cellular connection into a miniature Wi-Fi network. Cellular networks are designed to handle larger numbers of users, so chances are that your smartphone's data connection will be faster than broadband anyway. Apple and Google offer instructions on their websites on **how to turn iPhones and Android phones into hot spots**.



Beware this can become expensive, though, so use it sparingly – for important (and short) calls only, avoiding video transmissions. You can stay offline while drafting a number of emails and then send them off in a batch once you are back online, while allowing new emails to download.



For many though, your phone will be your computer over this time - you'll need to use it to download emails and stay in touch with colleagues. Discuss the data needs with your team and check the availability of funds for this.

For those who do have internet connection, when it comes to remotely collaborating with a team of colleagues, the path to success has less to do with tools than having empathy for one another when we use tech. At any organisation, the main thing to understand is that people have different levels of tech literacy. So, it's best for you and your team to choose a set of versatile tools, and make sure everyone is able to use them.

# Keeping the lines of communication open

Under these conditions, the simplest, most-widely used communication tool is usually the best. Encourage those who don't already have WhatsApp, to download it and use it.



[www.whatsapp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com)

Remember, it has capabilities beyond just messaging - **you can share documents and images, and video call up to four people at once**. It's a good idea to decide as a group on regular times everyone logs in – perhaps mid-morning, and mid-afternoon so real-time conversation can take place.



It's also really important to keep in touch with farmers and field work teams, not only to understand how they are adapting, but also to share important information on safety around the virus and how it's spreading.



A nice idea for weekly check-in – perhaps on a Thursday morning – is to ask everyone to message a few lines on:

- **What they worked on yesterday**
- **Progress they plan to make today**
- **Things blocking their progress**



[www.skype.com](https://www.skype.com)

A useful platform most colleagues will already be using is Skype. It is easy to create an account and it works well for simple conversations – which can be a **call or a type chat using the chat box, as well as small group calls**. It also serves as a useful area to quickly share documents or screenshots.

The video function is often a bit unstable, so it is advised to use this without video for small group calls. The Skype App also works well on phones, making it a useful way to stay in touch if you don't have access to a desktop computer.



<https://zoom.us/download>

Your team check-in could also take place on a video call, if possible. Many of you would know Zoom, a **video and audio conferencing platform** that enables both simple online meetings and group messaging. Staff can participate in Zoom meetings from mobile devices and laptop or desktop computers. You can also call in to a Zoom conference using a traditional phone (for audio only of course).

**All these are apps that can be downloaded on your computer, or smartphone**

# Preparing and Conducting Online Meetings

## PREPARING A MEETING

Only hold a video meeting if it's absolutely necessary and the same outcomes can't be reached via a quick phone call, email or text.



To make sure the meetings remain private, and to keep hackers out, ensure password access is required by each invitee, and the meeting host accepts each person into the meeting.



If you are leading the meeting, be mindful of those with unstable internet connection – ensure everyone is properly connected before going on.

Start the meeting asking everyone to mute themselves, and make it clear who is facilitating the meeting, the length of the meeting and the key agenda. If the meeting is being held on Zoom, members can use the 'raise hand' button if they have a question.



## CONDUCTING VIRTUAL MEETINGS



1

**Aim to keep the meeting short:** set an agenda and the desired outcome going into the meeting.



2

**Be punctual.** It can be easy to get lost in a project report, only to look up and see that your meeting started five minutes ago.

For some reason, being a few minutes late to an online meeting just feels longer than when it happens in person.



3

**Agree on next steps,** allocate specific responsibilities to individuals and set due dates (this is especially important to avoid needing follow-up meetings).



4

After important meetings or webinars, **send a recap** and ideally even a recording of the session. This is especially useful to those signing in with unstable internet connectivity and whose connection may drop periodically during the meeting. Those without internet can also get an idea of what was discussed.

**Never use a meeting simply to communicate information** — that's what email or WhatsApp is for.

# Document management and collaboration



Working remotely is also about being able to **easily share and co-edit documents in real time**, which can be critical to getting projects done or grant proposals out the door.



**Google Drive** is a fast way to create a document repository in the cloud, which means content and data are backed up too. Files in Drive are private, until you decide to share them. You can quickly invite others to view, comment, and edit any file or folder you choose, making online collaboration easy. You can also make files available offline so you can work on them, or view them when your device loses internet service.



You can also use **Dropbox** to securely send large files to anyone, and collaborate on the files you send. You can create a link for any file in your Dropbox that you can paste into an email, chat, or text. Recipients won't need a Dropbox account - they can click the link to view and download the file.

**Dropbox Paper** is also a useful tool for reviewing and drafting work collaboratively. It functions like a live online document and multiple authors can be working on it at the same time, with easy functionality to add in photos, tables, to do-lists and assigning tasks.



**WeTransfer** is probably the simplest platform to send large files for free. When you are ready to send a file, go online to the site, simply type in the recipient's email address, upload the file and hit send.



For any online **document storage** and collaboration solution, you should take a moment to think about the access and permissions you want on different folders, particularly if you are dealing with sensitive data about donors or constituents that requires compliance.

## Transitioning from face-to-face events to virtual options

### Planned events and training need to go virtual where possible.

Where it's not possible, consider the communication requirements for postponing or cancelling such events, so no one's left feeling unsure. Think of online training sessions, workshops and classes. Zoom is a good platform to use and it includes webinar features, break-out rooms and polling that you can enable from the Advanced Settings. Again, make sure you make use of the security settings – password access only, and accepting people into the meeting.

In places where internet connectivity is not an option, training may need to be simplified down to an **extended phone call, or even into basic text messaging**. Make use of a WhatsApp group to share photos and responses on a specific training session. At least you will have recorded or written down content to reuse and re-share to others if relevant.

We know it's challenging to make such adjustments as circumstances change so rapidly. We feel it too. Hopefully this information and these resources will help you adapt to this new working environment.

**Please reach out to PCU Co-ordinator, Rodrigo Ciannella, if you need anything to help support your project work.**





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