

COVID-19: Relevant financial supports for Horticultural Producers and their Employees

Teagasc Horticultural Development Department, in producing this short communication, aim to compile information available from the relevant competent authorities (mainly DBEI) regarding relevant financial business supports being made available by government.

We are particularly mindful of the impact that reduced sales will be having on cash flows at this time, particularly for those businesses exposed to the food service sector and the amenity plant sector including bedding plants, pot plants, hardy nursery stock, perennials, semi mature trees and shrubs. It will be important that cash shortfalls during this critical time are addressed sooner rather than later.

While making every effort to validate the information contained herein, we would advise that you read the terms and conditions applying to each support measure and engage directly with the provider.

As the COVID-19 pandemic scenario is a fast moving situation, for the most up to date information please visit the Government's [coronavirus information website](#) on a daily basis.

BUSINESS SUPPORTS

1. If you are experiencing cash flow difficulties as a result of COVID-19 please contact your bank. Most banks have announced that they will offer flexibility to their private and business customers experiencing difficulties as a result of COVID-19, and they may be able to provide loan payment holidays or emergency working capital facilities.
2. If you are a micro enterprise (**10 employees or less**) [Microfinance Ireland](#) (MFI) can provide loans typically up to 3 years from **€5K-€50K** (with an interest rate of between 7% and 8%) to help businesses cope with this loss of income. MFI can also provide an **interest and repayment free loan** for up to 6 months for loans that are needed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. **Note there are no early repayment penalties either.** You can apply through their website - [Microfinance Ireland](#) (Tel: 01 260 1007) or through your [Local Enterprise Office](#) (LEO). Horticulture businesses are not excluded from applying for this scheme.

3. If you are an Enterprise Ireland client, please contact your relationship manager or visit [Enterprise Ireland](#) for a suite of supports available. The Government has approved a **€200m Package for Enterprise Supports** including a Rescue and Restructuring Scheme available through Enterprise Ireland for vulnerable but viable firms that need to restructure or transform their business. There are a number of Horticultural companies who are Enterprise Ireland clients.
4. A further support that may be accessible by certain horticultural businesses is the Working Capital Loan Scheme which is a government supported product operated by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) from the banks. The scheme can be used by businesses to obtain loans to support changes they need to make in response to COVID-19 and provides an 80% guarantee by the government to participating banks and businesses. Your business can apply for loans from **€10,000 of up to €1 million** at the three pillar banks i.e. AIB, Bank of Ireland or Ulster Bank. Loans can be for terms of up to 7 years and please note that there is a number of qualifying credit criteria applied by the banks also.

INCOME PROTECTION

[Temporary COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme](#)

The Temporary COVID-19 Wage Subsidy is a scheme which allow employers to pay their employees during the current pandemic. Employers will be refunded up to **70 percent** of an employee's wages - up to a level of **€410**. The employer is expected to make their best efforts to maintain as close to 100% of normal income as possible for the subsidised period. This payment replaces the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's Employer Refund Scheme announced on 15th March, and any business that received refunds under that scheme do not need to reapply. Revenue will contact them directly to confirm that they meet the conditions for this new scheme.

INCOME SUPPORT

A number of income supports are available from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for your employees during a COVID-19 (Coronavirus) related absence or temporary lay-off from work:

[COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#)

The COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment is a payment of €350 per week. It is available to all employees and the self-employed who have lost their job due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The payment will be in place for the duration of the crisis. If you have been temporarily placed on a shorter working week, you may qualify for Short Time Work Support. The application form can be downloaded [here](#) or contact the **Emergency Payments Line on - 1890 8000 24**

Short Time Work Support is a form of Jobseeker's Benefit and is an income support payment if you have been temporarily placed on a shorter working week. The payment is made in respect of your regular salary for the days that you are no longer working. For example, if your working week has been reduced from a 5-day work pattern to a 3-day work pattern, you can receive support for the other 2 days. This might be particularly relevant for the horticultural producers supplying the food service sector who have recently had to reduce length of working weeks.

SELF-EMPLOYED

Self-employed who qualify will also be paid the [COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment](#) of €350 rather than through the Revenue scheme. They will be eligible on a similar basis as the Revenue scheme for employees. The application form can be downloaded [here](#) or contact the **Emergency Payments Line on - 1890 8000 24**

Additional staff supports can be found at www.gov.ie (Tel: 01 238 4000)

COMPANIES REGISTRATION OFFICE (CRO)

The Registrar of Companies has decided that all annual returns due to be filed by any company now and up to 30th June 2020 will be deemed to have been filed on time if all elements of the annual return are completed and filed by that date. This date may be extended depending on the situation as it develops. Further information can be found on the [CRO website](#).

RATES

While only some horticultural producers have retail premises, on the 20th March, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government agreed to defer rates payments due from the most immediately impacted businesses - primarily in the retail, hospitality, leisure and childcare sectors, for three months, until end-May.

This measure will be implemented by each Local Authority in its own area. Any commercial rate-payers that have had to temporarily close or significantly curtail operations during the COVID-19 response period should contact their local authority immediately in relation to any rates payments falling due in the period to end-May. Ratepayers that can continue to pay their outstanding Local Authority rates should continue to do so in the normal way. Further details can be found [here](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Much of the information contained in this document has been furnished by Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation to whom we are grateful. Visit the website [here](#).

TEAGASC CONTACT

We remain available to discuss any issues of concern regarding your business. Please continue to engage with us by phone.

For a full list of Horticulture Staff contacts please see <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/horticulture/>



*This communication has been produced by the
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