

A Chilean port worker union has threatened strike action if the government does not implement a nationwide lockdown to contain the Covid-19 outbreak.

Ports and export operations have so far been functioning as normal during the pandemic, but on March 25 the Central Port Union wrote a letter to the government demanding that it takes tougher measures.

The union represents workers at ports including San Antonio, from where the largest proportion of fruit exports depart.

As of Sunday, there were over 2,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Chile. The government as of Thursday night put several neighborhoods in the capital Santiago under lockdown, and many have criticized the decision not to apply the measure to the whole country.

"As is widely known, the national and international situation related to the coronavirus has demonstrated the fragility of current protocols, as well as the weakness of the current public health system in providing for the whole population," the letter said.

"There is no evidence of the efficiency of the protection measures adopted by employers, nor is there evidence that the port operators are minimizing or mitigating the risks in the workplace."

The union demands that President Sebastián Piñera "prioritize public interest, life, and the health of the people above any other consideration" and declare an immediate lockdown of the whole country.

The union has given the government a deadline of March 31.