

COVID-19 Guidance for Farmers' and Fresh Food Markets

The following recommendations are intended to help organizers, staff and vendors participating in farmers' and fresh food markets reduce the spread of COVID-19. These markets primarily sell fresh fruits, vegetables and food that do not require onsite food preparation.

Determine what current legislative zone applies to the market

Review the provincial regulations for farmers markets requirements in each Step:

- [O. Reg. 82/20 \(Step 1\)](#)
- [O. Reg. 263/20 \(Step 2\)](#)
- [O. Reg. 364/20 \(Step 3\)](#)

Please also refer to the Ontario [Roadmap to Open](#), for a summary of the regulatory requirements under each step.

Screen market staff, vendors and employee prior to attending the market

- Market organizers must have market staff and vendors complete a screening questionnaire before each work shift and prior to participating in the market.
 - Questions can be completed on a paper-based questionnaire, asked directly to employees with answers recorded, or be completed electronically.
 - Consider using the [Ontario Ministry of Health's self-assessment tool](#) and asking vendors/staff to bring a copy of the result to allow entry to the market (they can save the result on their phone or printed out).
- **An individual that lives with someone who has symptoms must stay home and cannot attend the market, [as per the following Provincial direction](#):**
 - Everyone in your household must stay home if anyone has COVID-19 symptoms or is waiting for test results after experiencing symptoms.
 - Stay home until the person with symptoms gets a negative COVID-19 test result, or is cleared by public health, or is diagnosed with another illness.

Post passive screening signage for the general public

- Post signs at all entrances to the premises in a conspicuous location visible to the public to inform individuals on [how to self-screen themselves for COVID-19](#) prior to entering the premises.

Implement attendance policies for staff, vendors & employees

- Maintain a list of the names and contact information of market staff, vendors, and their employees that attend the market.
- Ensure sick staff/vendors/employees do not attend the farmers' market and as per the direction above under the “screening” section, individuals with symptomatic household members must also stay home.
- Remind staff/vendors about the importance of reporting illness to their supervisor/manager.
 - If a staff/vendor becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms while attending the market, they should go home immediately and [self-isolate](#).
 - **Staff/vendors experiencing symptoms should book an appointment with an [assessment centre](#) for a COVID-19 test.**
 - For medical advice, individuals should call [Telehealth](#) (1-866-797-0000) or their health care provider.
- Anyone who has [travelled anywhere outside of Canada](#) must stay home and quarantine for 14 days after returning to Canada. There is an exemption for fully vaccinated individuals entering Canada, from quarantine, hotel stopover and day 8 COVID testing if they meet [specific conditions](#).
- Establish criteria for staff/vendors to return to work:
 - If a staff/vendor tests positive for COVID-19, they will be advised by public health about how long they must isolate.
 - If the individual receives a negative COVID-19 test **AND** they have not been identified as a “close contact” of someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days, then they can return to the market once they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours.
 - Clearance tests are not required for return to work.

Implement measures to maintain physical distancing in the Market

Physical distancing refers to the practice of avoiding close contact by keeping a distance of two metres (six feet) from others. Market Organizers must plan and modify the layout of the farmers' market to ensure enough space is provided for customers, vendors and market staff to maintain physical distancing. Strategies to ensure physical distancing among customers and staff can include:

- Encourage “one person per family” shopping and shorter periods of shopping time
- Designate a single entry and exit point to control the number of customers entering the market.
 - Post signage at the entrance welcoming customers and indicating the conditions for entry. See the Farmers' Market Ontario's [COVID-Fact/InfoSheet](#)

as an example.

- Close all other access points to the market:
 - Use existing barriers/structures. For example, position the market near an existing building so that the walls of the building enclose the market perimeter. If this is not possible, install barriers, fencing or other equipment to enclose the market perimeter.
- Monitor and manage customer lines:
 - Place visual markers/cues spaced two metres (six feet) apart (e.g., tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and guide customers waiting in line.
 - Assign staff to monitor the line and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres (six feet) apart.
- Limit the number of customers permitted into the market at any given time:
 - Position staff at the entrance to control customer entry.
 - Monitor the number of people entering and leaving the market.
 - Stagger/delay customer entry into the market.
 - If the maximum number of customers is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
 - **See applicable Ontario Regulation above from page 1 of this document for applicable capacity limits in each Step** (also see the [Ontario Store Capacity Calculator](#)).
- Encourage physical distancing between customers attending the market:
 - Design a shopping flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.
 - Do not provide communal tables, seating, or kids' play areas in the market.
- Arrange and modify vendors booths to maintain physical distancing and reduce contact:
 - Increase spacing between vendors booths
- Support vendors that are providing online and/or telephone ordering services:
 - Establish and clearly identify pick-up points for advance orders (e.g., drive-thru/pedestrian pick-up)
- Stagger load in and load out times, and designate locations for vendor areas prior to market opening.

Implement measures to maintain physical distancing at vendor booths

- Limit the number of employees working within the booth at any one time:
 - Employees should maintain physical distancing from each other and customers, where possible.
 - Assign each employee a specific workstation and task to reduce overlap.
- Offer an online and/or telephone ordering service that allows customers to order items in advance.
- Use tables and other barriers to ensure customers keep a safe distance from you and your products (including the sides of your booth)
- If possible, place impermeable physical barriers at the point of sale (e.g., plexiglass).
- Encourage electronic payment by debit or credit card, and to tap instead of using the PIN pad, and assign one employee to process all transactions.
- Place visual markers/cues (e.g., pylons, signs) two metres (six feet) apart to direct line-ups at vendors' booths.
- Ensure there is ample space for lines to form in front of each booth, ensuring customers can maintain a two metre distance from each other.
- Leave the customers purchases on the counter or set-up a side table for the customer to pick it up while maintaining a two metre (six feet) distance from employees.
- Avoid lengthy conversations with customers and remind customers not to congregate near the booth once they have completed their purchase.
- Post [physical distancing](#) signs in highly visible areas.

Face coverings and eye protection

- **Market organizers and Indoor vendors** must ensure [Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act Class Order](#) is implemented requiring vendors/staff and customers to wear face coverings and alcohol-based hand rub to be available at all entrances and exits
 - Non-medical/cloth masks **are required** for all members of the **public** in the **indoor** areas of the market and are strongly recommended in any other areas of the market, including outdoors, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- When indoors, a face covering and eye protection (e.g. face shield, safety glasses) are required when workers are within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering. However, it is strongly advised that a face covering and eye protection is used anytime a worker is within 2 metres of any person, even if both are persons are wearing a face covering.

- Train employees on the [proper use of masks](#), and how to safely put on and take off a mask.
- Masks do not replace the need for physical distancing, hand washing, and staying home when sick.
- [Proof of exemption from mandatory face mask order not required](#)
- Please review the [Section 22 Class Order](#) for details on people who are exempt from wearing a face covering

Encourage and practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- Educate employees on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
 - [Wash your hands](#) with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol concentration), provided hands are not visibly soiled.
 - [Cover your cough or sneeze](#) with your elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer in dispensers within the booth for employee use. Monitor and refill as needed.
- Remind employees to avoid touching their face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Sanitize your hands after every customer interaction.

Support hand hygiene & Practice proper glove use

- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations for customer use (e.g., wall mounted/upright sanitizer stations) throughout the market including entrances and exits to indoor areas. Use sanitizers with 60-90% alcohol concentration.
- Designate washroom facilities for market staff and vendors/employee use only.
- Monitor and refill hand hygiene supplies such as hand sanitizer, soap and paper towels in public areas and washroom facilities.
- Glove use is not mandatory, and gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene.
- If vendors/employees use gloves they should be changed every hour, or more often as necessary. For example, vendors should change gloves when changing tasks, after touching your face, or coming in contact with an item that may have germs.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water for 15 seconds before putting on and after taking off gloves.
- When gloves are removed, new gloves must be used each time.

Market Organizers to increase communication with customers and vendors

- Communicate COVID-19 preparations and market expectations with all vendors prior to attending the market.
- Provide information to customers about market operations (e.g., public health measures, advance order options, curbside pickup) through different communication platforms (e.g., market webpage, email, social media accounts).
- It is a requirement to post signs at the entrance instructing customers and staff not to visit the farmers' market if they have any COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. [Screening Sign](#))
- Post signage to encourage healthy behaviours that reduce the spread of COVID-19:
 - [Section 22 Order for Face Coverings](#)
 - [Maximum Occupancy Poster](#)
 - [Physical Distancing](#)
 - [How to Safely Use a Non-Medical Mask or Face Covering](#)
 - [Wash Your Hands](#)

Vendors to implement measures to protect food from contamination

- Practice proper hand hygiene often.
- Offer prepackaged foods for sale to reduce handling and direct contact.
- Minimize food displays and keep food out of the customer's reach to discourage handling.
- Samples may only be provided to customers to enjoy at home.
- Do not handle reusable containers/bags supplied by the customer.
- Suspend accepting product returns.
- Encourage customers to take their purchased foods home and wash thoroughly before eating.

Enhance environmental cleaning and disinfection protocols

- Market Organizers to assign dedicated market staff to complete cleaning and disinfection duties to ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects in public areas (e.g., handrails, doorknobs, tabletops) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
- Vendors to ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces in vehicles (e.g., steering wheel, door handles, controls, knobs/dials), and within the booth (e.g., tabletops, stands, mobile payment terminals) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.

- Review Public Health Ontario's [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
- Refer to Health Canada's [list of hard surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- Educate market staff on how to use cleaning agents and disinfectants, and ensure:
 - Required disinfectant contact times are followed (i.e., amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection).
 - Follow manufacturer's instructions for use, including safety precautions and requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Directions for where and how to securely store cleaning and disinfectant supplies.
- Maintain cleanliness of staff/vendor washrooms and other areas, as necessary.
- Provide waste receptacles lined with a plastic bag, and empty as often as necessary.

For more information, visit our website at wdgpublichealth.ca or call us at: 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4753.

References

BC Centre for Disease Control (2020). *Farmer's Markets*. Retrieved from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/community-settings/farmers-markets>

BC Centre for Disease Control (2020). *Food businesses*. Retrieved from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses>

Centre for Disease Control (2020). *Disinfecting Your Non-Emergency Vehicle*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

Farmers' Markets Ontario (2020). *Public Safety Protocols for Ontario's Farmers' Markets*. Retrieved from <https://www.farmersmarketsontario.com/covid-19-modifying-market-operations/>

Government of Alberta (2020). COVID-19 Information: *Guidance for Farmers' Markets and Public Markets*. Retrieved from <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-farmers-markets-and-public-markets.pdf>

Toronto Public Health (2020). *COVID-19 Guidance for Food Stores*. Retrieved from <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/90fd-COVID-19-Fact-Sheet-Food-Stores.pdf>

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health