



Guidelines for Farmers' Markets

March 19, 2020

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry understands that during this Covid-19 Pandemic, producers and consumers alike want to know where to access fresh, safe foods. Given the recent exemption by Governor Janet Mills of businesses that provide essential services including agriculture and grocer[ies] from the statewide [prohibition](#) on gatherings of more than 10 people, the Department advises farmers' markets to determine on a case-by-case basis whether to remain open. The Department recognizes that an outdoor farmers' market or a well-spaced indoor market both involve a larger physical footprint allowing for a broader degree of interaction than a typical public gathering.

The Department recognizes that farmers' markets are important food sources for many Mainers, including those living in rural areas and those using federal food benefits. For those markets that opt to remain open, we strongly urge taking steps to facilitate social distancing, providing hand sanitizer/washing stations for shoppers and vendors, and cease all food sampling. In this rapidly evolving situation, farmers' market members should stay alert for emerging guidance from the [Maine CDC](#). To the extent that farmers' markets remain open, we caution everyone involved to practice excellent personal hygiene and to stay home if unwell.

Suggested Practices for Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands

Social Distancing:

- It is recommended that people remain approximately 6 feet apart whenever possible
- Keep traffic flowing by encouraging quick transactions
- Space booths as far apart as possible
- Plan the market layout to avoid bottlenecks (such as by keeping entrances to indoor markets clear)
- Limit farmers' markets to food vendors and soap vendors only during the civil emergency
- Disallow onsite food consumption
- Indoor markets may want to allow some vendors to set up outdoors to increase social distancing
- Rely on simple signage at entries to remind customers of the importance of maintaining distance, and of where to find hand sanitizer and/or washing stations
- Eliminate causes for pauses, such as musical performances, demonstrations, and bistro tables
- Consider practicing a few friendly catch phrases to remind even your favorite shoppers that it's not a good time for long conversations
- Establish processes to allow shoppers to order ahead if possible
- Maintain SNAP food access if applicable

Sanitation:

- Offer hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations for customers and vendors
- Pre-package foods whenever possible ("grab and go" bags)
- Do not offer samples
- Ensure that staff handling money, vouchers, and credit cards wear gloves, and consider having two separate staff people to handle payments and products
- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces regularly
- Follow established disinfectant protocols (such as [these](#) from the National Pesticide Information Center)
- [Follow simple CDC rules for washing hands](#) and not touching faces.