

COVID-19 GUIDANCE for CONNECTICUT FARMERS' MARKETS

Updated April 1, 2020

The practices and protocols below are for farmers' markets and even on-farm markets and stands to implement as necessary in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations are in addition to guidance provided by the [CDC](#), [USDA](#), and other federal agencies.

Per Governor Lamont's [Executive Order 7H](#), and [7S](#) and [DECD's guidance on essential services and Safe Stores](#), farmers' markets and farm stands are essential and should be treated akin to a grocery store.

FARMERS' MARKETS ARE DEEMED AN ESSENTIAL ACTIVITY.

Local markets can and should reinforce to shoppers that their local farmers' market is:

1. Essential to the local community
2. A venue to buy healthy, local food
3. An opportunity for shopping while practicing social distancing
4. An avenue for the customers to connect with the person who grew their food. When a shopper can see a healthy farmer, it reinforces the benefits of the food they're buying from the market.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture wants to reinforce that farmers' markets can continue to operate in some capacity during this time and is issuing this document to provide guidance on how safely operate a farmers' market. Food is needed and consumers want to purchase it in a less crowded environment. However, managing markets and selling at farmers' market(s) during this time will mean changing, rethinking, and being innovative to execute the market and sell farm products. This is how farmers regularly persevere and the Connecticut Department of Agriculture is committed to supporting the market managers and farmers throughout this pandemic.

In order to provide a safe and reliable nutritious food source, all market staff, volunteers, farmers, and vendors must be committed to adhering to health and safety standards identified by the [CDC](#) and this guidance. Markets should promote these efforts and use them as a tool to encourage people to shop at the market.

This document cannot and does not cover every scenario that could arise at a farmers' market (and we all know there are many!) The recommendations provided herein represent best practices *at the moment* surrounding and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance will be updated as we progress through the market season and as we approach the start of the WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program season.

Most importantly, be sure to follow the recommendations from the [CDC](#):

- Wash hands regularly, at least 20 second each time, multiple times throughout the market day.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth with a bent elbow when sneezing or coughing. If a tissue is used, dispose of it immediately and follow with proper handwashing.

- Maintain the recommended social distancing protocols of six (6) feet of separation between individuals.
- Limit access to and disinfect common areas regularly.
- Stay home if you are sick.

RUNNING A “TRADITIONAL” FARMERS’ MARKET

The practices and protocols below are for market managers and farmers to implement as necessary in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at farmers’ markets.

Market Managers

Goal: To provide a safe market environment for farmers to sell farm products for sustained food accessibility while limiting potential exposure to market managers, volunteers, vendors, food, and consumers.

- Prevent customers from congregating and visually remind them of the six (6) foot separation by placing cones, spray chalk dots, or other items able to be sanitized, six (6) feet apart in front of vendors and around the market where necessary.
- Separate vendors as far from one another as reasonably possible, at least six (6) feet, to allow for increased social distancing.
- Post signage stating the farmers are happy to assist customers and will select products for consumers.
- Limit the number of customers within the market at one time.
- Consider a defined entrance and defined exit to allow for a one-way flow of traffic.
- Tablecloths, unless they can be cleaned and sanitized, should not be allowed.
- Samples should not be allowed for any reason during this time.
- Remove all sit down and eating areas.
- Post signage re: washing all produce before eating, frequent handwashing, do not touch your face, etc. Here’s a poster, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), from the CDC that should be posted around the market.
- Have a central handwashing station and/or hand sanitizer for market staff/volunteers, vendors, and shoppers.
- Tokens for SNAP, credit cards, etc.: Do not use the same token more than once during the market day. After a farmer turns in their tokens, soak them in a disinfectant solution and air dry, ideally in the sun, to clean them in preparation for the next market. To find a disinfectant solution, please take a look at the [EPA-Approved List of Disinfectants](#)
- Wipe down the EBT/credit card terminal with an approved disinfectant (see link above) after each use and/or provide single-use Q Tips for button pushing and easy disposal.
- Separate and group (being mindful of social distancing) farmers selling food from vendors selling non-food respectively together.
- Plastic and Reusable Bags: Remind customers the \$.10 plastic bag fee has been waived per [Executive Order 7N](#) through May 15, 2020. If a customer brings a reusable bag, vendors are not required to handle the bag or fill the bag and can provide the customer with a plastic bag at no additional expense through May 15, 2020.
- Limit the number of volunteers to only those that are essential.
- Have an abundance of disposable, single-use gloves available. This [video shows proper glove removal](#).

- Suspend cooking demos and sampling.
- Suspend special programming, musicians, and incentives.
- Remind vendors to stay home if they feel sick, have a sick person at home or have been in contact with someone who has either tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Remind vendors that if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 to inform the market managers.
- Be flexible with last minute vendor cancellations. Vendors may need to cancel if they're short staffed and should be encouraged to remain home if they're ill or have been caring for someone who is ill.
- Put information on websites and social media and hang signage around the market to explain any changes, delivery options, or extra precautions taken to limit exposure to COVID-19.
- In any marketing/promotional messaging, encourage families to limit the number of people coming to the market to the primary buyer only.
- Encourage your vendors to promote/advertise that the market is taking place with additional precautions in place to ensure the safest shopping experience for consumers and farmers/vendors.
- Connect with your insurer to understand your insurance limits, etc. to help determine to what extent the market can operate.

Farmer Vendors

Goal: To sell farm product(s) direct to the consumer while limiting potential exposure to yourself and the product(s) for sale while selling at farmers' market.

- Put a sample of the product(s) available for purchase, covered with cellophane, out on display. Pack for individual customers from the truck as they make a purchase.
- Pre-package loose fruits, greens, and vegetables, among other items (precut cheeses, etc.) to prevent shoppers' from directly touching food.
- Handle produce with food grade gloves with frequent changes. This [video shows proper glove removal](#).
- If customers wants to see/inspect an item, hold it for them (e.g.: open the egg carton for them), don't allow the customer to handle any product they may not purchase.
- Remember to keep a six (6) foot distance between you and the customer(s) whenever reasonably possible – there's only three feet between you and a customer on the other side of a typical market table. Put a cone or spray paint a chalk line behind your market tables to visually remind yourselves and your employees where the six (6) foot mark is.
- If attending the market with multiple staff, have one person handle product and one person handle money/tokens/coupons. If that's not possible, wash hands or sanitize after handling any form of payment.
- If attending the market with multiple staff, locate the register for payment as far from the product for sale as possible.
- Tablecloths, unless they can be cleaned and sanitized (such as oilcloth), should not be used.
- Avoid sharing equipment and supplies.
- Pens: consider getting inexpensive pens and letting the customer keep them or sanitize between uses.
- Wipe down the credit card terminal with an approved disinfectant from the [EPA-Approved List of Disinfectants](#) after each use and/or provide single-use Q Tips for button pushing and easy disposal.

- Samples should not be allowed for any reason during this time.
- Wear gloves while setting up/breaking down, etc and wash hands and changes gloves frequently.
- Have a handwashing station and/or hand sanitizer and use frequently. Bring a bottle of sanitizing spray to use as well (one (1) part bleach to nine (9) parts water) to clean and disinfect tables during and at the end of each market prior to loading them into a vehicle.
- Plastic and Reusable Bags: Remind customers the \$.10 plastic bag fee has been waived per [Executive Order 7N](#) through May 15, 2020. If a customer brings a reusable bag, you are not required to handle the bag or fill the bag and can provide the customer with a plastic bag at no additional expense through May 15, 2020.
- Promote through social medias, e-newsletters, etc. that you're selling at a market and that the market is open and taking place with additional precautions in mind.
- Left over produce at the end of the market? Reach out to [CT Food Bank](#) or [Food Share](#)
- If you don't take credit card, consider using [Venmo](#) as a form of payment to limit the amount of exchange.

RUNNING A MODIFIED MARKET STRUCTURE

Necessity: Due to a high infection rate in a given area, a market has identified a need to modify its market structure to allow for farmer sales and food accessibility.

Online services for farmers' market pre-ordering:

[Farmspread](#) | [Market2Day](#) | [WhatsGood](#)

Some markets have already tackled this. Please reach out to Jaime Smith, Jaime.Smith@ct.gov, for more information.

For additional guidance for the agricultural industry, please visit the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's page, [Resources for Farmers During COVID-19](#).

If you have a farmers' market or farm stand *currently open* and you'd like to be listed on [CTFarmMap.com](#), please complete this [online form](#).

For ideas and additional outreach on social media platforms that encourage Connecticut residents to [#StayHomeBuyCTGrown](#), take a look at the [Social Media Toolkit](#) on the agency website.

This guidance was compiled through the review of the following resources

CA Dept of Food and Ag | CT Food Assoc Safety Guidelines for Grocery Stores

DECD's Safe Stores Guidance | PA Department of Agriculture | MA Farmers' Market Assoc

COVID-19 Guidance | NY Farmers' Market Federation Guidance during COVID-19 | Grow NYC