

## 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 local goods, fresh fruits, vegetables and foods that do not require onsite food preparation.

Owners, operators and vendors are responsible for ensuring that their market is in compliance with these public health guidelines, all emergency orders made under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#) and [O. Reg. 493/17: Food Premises](#). As every market will be different, it is the responsibility of owners/operators and vendors to review their own policies, procedures, and site-specific operations, while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control measures are implemented and maintained. More information about COVID-19 can be found in the [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government's reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

### Measures for All Workplaces, Businesses & Organizations

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and customers safe. Operators must also consider the following:

- **Health screening for staff and customers**
  - [Actively screen](#) every person that works at the business or organization before they enter the premises of the business or organization. Questions can be completed online, on paper, or asked directly. See sample [Staff Screening Questionnaire](#).
  - 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.

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
  - Provide hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) by entrances and throughout the market for staff and customers use.
  - Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer when they enter.
- **Cleaning and disinfecting**
  - Implement appropriate infection prevention and control measures in all areas accessible to the public, including washrooms, check-out counters, door handles, and other high-touch surfaces.
  - Re-usable items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected should not be provided for customer use (e.g. cloth bags).
- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**
  - In the event that a case of COVID-19 is reported in a staff member or customer, it is not necessary for the vendor/market to discard any food that they may have been in contact with.

## Safety Plan

- Operators must prepare a safety plan, which:
  - Describes measures and procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
  - Includes measures for screening, physical distancing, masks or face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE), and preventing and controlling crowds.
  - Is in writing and made available to any person for review, upon request.
  - Is posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.
- Use the [COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist](#) to develop your safety plan.

## Use of Masks and Face Coverings

- The use of non-medical masks or face coverings is required in all indoor public spaces, as per a City of Toronto [bylaw](#) and [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- City of Toronto [bylaw](#) requires that businesses with indoor spaces that are open to the public must develop a policy on the wearing of masks. Use the [Mask By-law Checklist and Sample Policy](#).
- Masks are strongly recommended when physical distancing cannot be maintained outdoors.

## Limit Capacity

- Capacity must be limited so that members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the establishment.

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- The person responsible for the establishment should post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits under which the establishment is permitted to operate.

### **Control and Monitor Entry**

- Establish protocols to control and monitor entry of patrons into the market, and ensure capacity limits are adhered to. Some examples include:
  - Designating a single entry and exit point.
    - Post signage at the entrance indicating the conditions for entry. See the [Farmers' Market Ontario's COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#) as an example.
  - Closing all other access points to the market using existing barriers/structures.
  - Positioning staff at the entrance to control customer entry and monitor the number of customers entering and leaving.
  - If the maximum number of customers is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.

### **Tents, Canopies, Retractable Roofs**

- If an area at the market is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning or other element, at least two full sides of the entire area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- If an area at the market is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.

### **Implement Measures to Maintain Physical Distancing**

- Plan and modify the layout of the market to ensure enough space is provided for customers, vendors and market staff to maintain at least two metres [physical distancing](#).
- Design a shopping flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.
- Arrange and modify vendors booths to maintain physical distancing and reduce contact:
  - Increase spacing between vendors booths (e.g. keep an empty area between each booth).
- 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.
- Remind customers not to congregate near the booth once they have completed their purchase.

- Post [physical distancing](#) signs in highly visible areas.
- Stagger load in and load out times, and designate locations for vendor areas prior to market opening.

### **Monitor and Manage Customer Lines**

- Operators must ensure that customers lining up or congregating outside their establishment:
  - Maintain at least two metres from other groups of persons, and
  - Wear a mask or face covering indoors, unless entitled to an exemption. Masks are recommended for customers waiting in lines outdoors.
- Place visual markers/cues spaced at least two metres apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and guide customers waiting in line.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres apart and wear a mask or face covering.

### **Reduce Contact during Purchases**

- Offer online and/or telephone ordering services that allow customers to order items in advance.
  - Establish and clearly identify pick-up points for advance orders (e.g. drive-through/pedestrian pick-up).
- Install [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.
- Leave the customers purchases on the counter or set-up a side table for the customer to pick it up while maintaining at least a two metre distance from employees.

### **Implement Measures to Protect Food from Contamination**

- Prepackage foods offered for sale to reduce handling and direct contact.
- Keep food out of the customer's reach to discourage handling.
- It is recommended that food sampling be served in a prepackaged format, for take-home consumption.
- Do not handle reusable containers/bags supplied by the customer.
- Encourage customers to take their purchased foods home and wash them thoroughly with water before eating.

### **Practice Proper Glove Use**

- Glove use is not mandatory for food vendors. Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene.

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- If vendors/employees use gloves they should be changed every hour, or more often as necessary.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water for 20 seconds before putting on and after taking off gloves.
- Change gloves when changing tasks, after touching your face, or coming in contact with an item that may have germs.
- When gloves are removed, new gloves must be used each time.

### **Food and Beverage Preparation and Consumption**

- Indoor and outdoor dining is permitted. Operators should review [Guidance for Food Premises](#) for more information.
- It is strongly recommended that vendors engaged in onsite food/beverage preparation in temporary establishments (e.g. tents/booths) provide a handwashing station for food handlers which is adequately supplied with hot and cold running water, an enclosed waste collection tank, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels.
- Discourage customers from consuming food or drink while they are walking around/through the market area.

### **Live Entertainment**

- Performers must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from any spectators or be separated from any spectators by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.

### **Increase Public Awareness**

- Communicate COVID-19 measures 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).
- Encourage staff, vendors and customers to download the [COVID Alert app](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Post signs at the entrance instructing staff, vendors and customers not to attend the market if they are sick.
- Post educational materials to encourage healthy behaviours that reduce the spread of COVID-19:
  - [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
  - [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

## Other Resources

[COVID-19 Guidance for Food Stores](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants, Bars, and Other Food Service Premises](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

## More Information

For more information, visit our website at [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19) or call us at 416-338-7600.

## 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>

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>.