COVID-19 Guidance for Farmers', Fresh Food & Holiday Markets

The following recommendations are intended to help organizers, staff and vendors participating in farmers', fresh food and holiday 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.

Businesses that May Open during Shutdown (O. Reg. 82/20)

- **Indoor farmers’ markets** may open if they primarily sell food.
  - Businesses within the indoor farmer’s market are not permitted to open unless they primarily sell food, or are described in sections 3 to 6 of Schedule 2 of O. Reg. 82/20. Review COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings for more information.
- **Outdoor markets**, including farmer’s markets and holiday markets, may open if they meet the following conditions:
  - They primarily sell food to the public.
  - Products must only be provided to customers:
    - in a manner that allows members of the public to remain in an outdoor area at all times, or
    - through an alternative method of sale that does not require customers to enter the indoor area, such as curb side pick-up or delivery.
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.

The outdoor market must open no earlier than 7 a.m. and close no later than 8 p.m. and must not deliver goods to patrons outside of the hours of 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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 disinfection**
  - 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:
Describe measures/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, cleaning, disinfecting and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Is in writing and made available to any person for review, on 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. 82/20](#).
- Operators are required to develop a policy on the wearing of masks or face coverings. Use the [Mask By-law Checklist and Sample Policy](#).
- Masks are strongly recommended when physical distancing cannot be maintained outdoors.

### Limit Capacity

- Limit the number of customers permitted into the market at any given time to ensure everyone is able to maintain at least two metres physical distancing.
- Indoor and outdoor markets must ensure the total number of members of the public in the market at any one time does not exceed **25 per cent of the capacity**.
  - This can be calculated by taking the total square metres of floor space accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures, dividing that number by 16 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
- Operators must post a sign in a location visible to the public that states the maximum capacity they are permitted to operate under.

### Control and Monitor Entry

- Designate a single entry and exit point to control the number of customers entering the market.
  - Post signage at the entrance indicating the conditions for entry. See the [Farmers’ Market Ontario’s COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#) as an example.
- Close all other access points to the market using existing barriers/structures.
- Position 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.
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.
- Do not provide communal tables or seating in the market.
- 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, unless entitled to an exemption.
- 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.
- Food sampling must 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.
- 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 not permitted. Food or drink establishments are permitted to open only for the purposes of providing take-away, drive-through or delivery service. Operators should review Guidance for Food Premises for more information.
- Vendors should not engage in onsite food/beverage preparation at temporary establishments (e.g. special event tents/booths).
- Ensure customers do not consume food or drink while they are in the market area.

Music/Noise
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.

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:
  o COVID-19: Posters & Graphics
  o 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 or call us at 416-338-7600.

**References**
