

Department of Public Health and Human Services

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Recommendations to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Farmer's Markets

NOTE: The following information is based on the most recent information from our state and federal public health partners. As more information becomes available, we will update this guidance.

Farmer's Markets MUST CONTACT THEIR LOCAL SANITARIAN to determine the current local public health orders that apply to their market. These may include size limitations, mask requirements, or other public health measures to limit the spread of this virus.

The current state directive of Feb. 12, 2021, implementing Executive Order 2-2021 states that *"any public gatherings or events should be managed in a way that accommodates [CDC social distancing guidelines](#)."*



Recommendations for Operation:

Before opening, Farmer's Market managers should contact their local sanitarian to plan for the following:

1. Preventing food and touch contamination by market staff/volunteers, vendors, and customers
2. Social Distancing—providing ways to maintain a physical distance of at least 6 feet between people
3. Communication—clear messaging on market operations to market staff/volunteers, vendors, and customers

1. Preventing Contamination

Market Managers should:

- Ensure frequently touched surfaces are cleaned and sanitized as often as possible
- Remind market staff/volunteers, vendors, and customers that if anyone shows any signs of illness, they should **not** attend the market or prepare or handle food at food establishments or commissary kitchens.
- Advise those attending the market in any capacity — customer, vendor, worker, volunteer — to wash their hands upon arrival and upon returning home.

- Set-up non-hand activated, temporary hand-washing stations, in addition to those at the vendor booths, throughout the market. If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Signage should remind customers to wash or sanitize their hands frequently.
- Ensure that all required vendor booths have handwashing stations, per permitting and licensing.
- Increase the frequency with which staff/volunteers disinfect surfaces/objects throughout the market.
- Increase cleaning and sanitizing frequency of toileting room and other high contact areas such as payment devices.
- Eliminate eating areas and direct customers to take prepared foods home to avoid crowds.



Vendors should:

- If showing any signs of illness, should **not** attend the market or prepare or handle food at food establishments or commissary kitchens.
- Wash their hands before arriving, upon leaving, and all other times handwashing is required per food handling and preparation regulations.
- Ensure that each food booth required by permit or license to have a hand-wash station, has one.
- Vendors required by permit or license to wear gloves, must wear disposable gloves to avoid contamination and/or touching their faces, and change disposable gloves whenever changing tasks as required by food handling and preparation regulations.
 - For example: Do not handle money and then handle products using the same gloves.
 - Alternately: Assign one person to handle money and another person to handle products.
- Increase the frequency of disinfection of surfaces/objects in their booth, with EPA-approved disinfectants. Contact your local sanitarian with questions.
- Ensure they only have one customer, or customers occupying the same household, at a time at their booth, and ensure that customers are maintaining 6 ft. distancing.
- Prevent customers from touching products, by bagging for them, not offering samples, consider pre-packaging of prepared foods, or if they bring their own reusable bag, set their order aside to bag themselves.
- Round prices to the nearest dollar to avoid the need for coins in making change.
- Encourage credit-card transactions whenever possible.
- Split duties for payment and bagging between two different people.
- All prepared food should be packaged for off-site consumption in order to ensure customers understand they should leave the market before consuming.
- Consider shielding protection between customer and vendor
- Consider signage for customers
 - Maintain 6 feet distance between people
 - One-way directional foot traffic between vendor booths



Customers should:

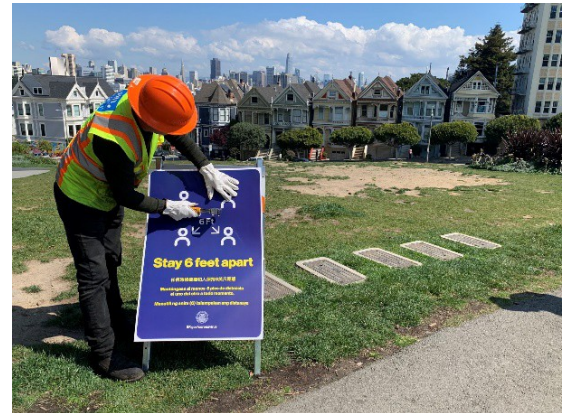
- If showing any signs of illness, **not** attend the market.
- Wash their hands before arriving and upon leaving.
- Only bring members from the same household needed to make a purchase.
- Remain at least 6 ft apart from others, including staff/volunteers, vendors, and customers in line. Members of the same household may stand together.
- Only one customer, or customers from the same household, at a time at each vendor booth.
- Wash produce at home before consumption.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer after contact with surfaces such as tables or cash.

2. Social Distancing

Market should follow [CDC social distancing guidance](#)—this recommends that all attendees maintain at least 6 ft between themselves at all times. .

Market managers should:

- Promote physical distancing by enforcing spacing between vendor booths to create at least 6 ft physical distance between vendors.
- Discontinue any activities that encourage gathering, such as kids' corners or musical performances.
- Eliminate, or cordon off, any seating and eating areas.
- Physically redesign to limit social contact and promote 6 feet distancing.
- Communicate changes with staff/volunteers, vendors, and customers, and provide staff/volunteers to educate and direct customers.



Additional logistics can encourage physical distancing and prevent community spread.

- Have vendors use extra tables or barriers to create 6-ft space between vendor and customer.
- Limit traffic to one customer, or customers from the same household, per vendor booth at a time.
- Use cones, flagging, chalk lines, signage, market volunteers, etc. to mark and maintain 6ft. distances in the market.
- Encourage customers to prepare advance shopping lists to reduce shopping times.
- Have customers remain in their vehicles if lines begin to form.
- Require that customers leave after they have completed their purchases.
- Limit the number of customers at any given time as necessary to reduce outdoor/indoor crowding and lines to meet CDC social distancing guidance.
- Offer payment chits or plastic or metal chips, purchased from market staff/volunteers before entering the market, and used to pay vendors for food instead of using cash. Vendors redeem for account credit, and market staff/volunteers discard chits or disinfect chips.

Physical Redesign Considerations

- Relocating the market to a larger space to allow adequate separation

- Keeping all booths along one side of street to avoid crowding and maximize flow
- One entrance and one exit with people flowing only one way through the market.
- Controlled number of people admitted at one time to limit crowding.
- Create a layout so that customers may shop from their cars, e.g. vendors set-up on sidewalk facing a drive, and cars travel past the booths for service.

3. Communication

Maintaining communication with local health authorities, staff/volunteers, vendors, and customers is the best way to successfully implement any new procedures or policies.

- Post signs asking customers to practice physical distancing and **not** touch products.
- Use print, radio, broadcast, and social media and newsletters to promote vendors, their products and updated policies.
- Recommend that all market attendees follow [CDC recommendations](#) on minimizing the community spread of COVID-19.

Alternative Marketplaces:

There are many possible alternatives for selling products to the traditional walk-through farmer's market that may be considered for your community, depending on the circumstances.

Consider:

- A drive-thru market — in which customers choose orders from their vehicles.
- Setting-up vendors and market staff to take orders and deliver food to waiting cars.
- Setting up an online ordering system so that people can then pick up their pre-ordered items at the market.

If you have questions regarding COVID-19 and farmer's markets, reach out to your local sanitarian (contact information available on www.fcsmt.gov).

If you have general questions about COVID-19, please visit the following site: <https://covid19.mt.gov/>.

Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

