



Agriculture and Markets

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Interim Guidance for the Operation of Farmers' Markets

March 31, 2020

This guidance is provided for farmers' market operators and vendors in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Background: In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was discovered. COVID-19 is caused by a virus (SARS-CoV-2) that is part of a large family of viruses called coronaviruses.

On March 20, 2020, Governor Cuomo signed [Executive Order 202.8](#), as a part of "[New York State on Pause](#)," a 10-point policy to reduce community transmission of COVID-19. This policy included a directive that all non-essential businesses throughout the state close in-person employee functions effective at 8:00 PM on Sunday, March 22, 2020. Essential businesses are exempt from this directive. Empire State Development (ESD), which has issued [guidance](#) on essential businesses and services, considers farmers' markets an essential retail business, providing healthy food for communities. Farmers' markets are also exempt from the mass gatherings restrictions set forth in Executive Order 202.8, but should institute the guidance below to the greatest extent possible to protect New Yorkers.

Farmers' Markets:

To maintain the designation as an exempt operation, it is important that all farmers' markets meet the following requirements for the duration of the Executive Order. These requirements are meant to maintain outlets for healthy local foods, while safeguarding our farmers, consumers, and communities from the spread of COVID-19.

The requirements are:

- No forms of entertainment.
- No cooking demonstrations or sampling.
- No craft or non-food vendors, except for soap or hand sanitizer.
- Space out vendors as much as possible.
- Minimize amount of food on display with customer access.
- Increase the number of handwashing stations and make hand sanitizer available.
- Manage customer traffic within the market to eliminate congregating and to promote social distancing (i.e., maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet between customers).

- Know and understand the [Food Safety at Farmers' Markets Guidelines](#).
- Frequently check the [Department of Agriculture and Market's website](#) for updates and additional resources.

Farmers/Vendors:

In addition to food safety protocols that are taken by farmers on the farm, farmers' market operators should implement their own sanitary protocols. While the [CDC and FDA have stated that COVID-19 is not known to be transmitted in food or food packaging](#), farmers/vendors are required to adhere to the following requirements:

- Do not permit customers to spend an excessive amount of time near the booth or table.
- Frequently clean and sanitize surfaces and other frequently touched points of contact.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available. (Gloves are recommended while handling products at the market.)
- Pre-package raw agricultural products, such as apple, potatoes, onions, etc. to the extent possible. All other foods, such as breads and baked goods, must be sold pre-packaged. Please refer to existing [food labeling laws](#).
- Be knowledgeable about the [Food Safety at Farmers Markets Guidelines](#).
- Frequently check the [Department's website](#) for updates and additional resources.

Consider other approaches to facilitate the direct sale of farm markets. Alternative options may include:

- Online ordering, or other creative purchasing solutions, with pick up at the market. This is to help reduce crowds and the handling of cash or other currencies.
- A market-wide, community supported agriculture (CSA) or food box for pick up.

Cleaning/Sanitizing and Hand Hygiene

Clean and disinfect buildings and equipment following the New York State Department of Health's (DOH) [Interim Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection of Food Manufacturing Facilities or Food Retail Stores for COVID-19](#).

This [signage](#) providing guidance to STOP the SPREAD of COVID-19 should be posted in prominent locations. Alternative languages for the [signage](#) are also available.

Regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:

- Before and after eating;
- After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing;
- After touching face, hair, cellphone and/or clothing;
- After using the restroom;
- Before handling food;
- After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; and
- After using shared equipment and supplies.
- If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

For Additional Information:

New York State Department of Health's Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>