

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FARMERS' MARKETS – SHUTDOWN

Last revised: April 22, 2021

Indoor and outdoor farmers' markets **that primarily sell food** can open for in-person retail. Annual assessments are conducted by public health inspectors (PHIs) at farmers' markets to determine if any proposed vendors meet the requirements for Ontario Regulation 493/17. In order to assist with this process, we are requesting that you submit the following documents to your public health inspector before commencing operations of a farmers' market:

- [Farmers' Markets Organizer Form](#); and
- An updated vendor list, including products.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the following best practices and guidance is provided to assist in opening and operating your farmers' market.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Implement a [safety plan](#) that outlines all public health measures and is posted in a conspicuous place where it is most likely to come to the attention of individuals working or attending the location.
- Performances, singing, and dancing are prohibited.
- It is recommended that alternate means of product retail, which allow physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) and limit interaction with the public be provided. For the purposes of retail at farmers' markets, product drop-off to vehicles ("curb-side pick-up") based on pre-ordering mechanisms (e.g. online ordering) is preferred.
- Vendor booths should be set up to reduce customer contact with food items. If applicable, items must be packaged (wrapped or bagged) as much as possible before bringing them to the market. Items that are not wrapped (such as produce, prepared food) must be stored in a manner that protects them from contamination.
- It is recommended that each vendor have one person to select customer food items and a second person to process payments. If a vendor must select customer food items and process payments, then proper hand hygiene must be practiced after each payment is processed.
- Customers may use reusable shopping bags for their purchases. It is recommended that reusable shopping bags are maintained in a clean and sanitary manner and are handled by the customer only. Reusable shopping bags should be cleaned and disinfected or laundered after each use.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND CAPACITY LIMITS

- **NEW:** Farmers' markets are limited to 25% capacity.
- Crowd control measures should be put into place to ensure physical distancing. This can occur through staff monitoring with the recommendation that the market has one entry point to the public to control access (though there should be multiple exits in keeping with fire code requirements).
- Persons waiting in line or congregating outside must also maintain 2 metres (6 feet) distance from every other person and wear a mask or face covering.
- Post signage to promote 'one to two people per family' customer limits.
- Provide directional arrows within the market area to ensure uniform travel of shoppers.
- Maintain and control 2 metres (6 feet) physical distancing between customers and vendors.
- Implement 2 metre visual markings on the ground in front of vendor stalls.

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SCREENING OF VENDORS, WORKERS AND PATRONS

- It is critical to actively screen vendors for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 at the beginning of their sales at the market. Vendors are to stay home when they are sick.
- All staff must be actively screened before attending work. Please see the [letter of instruction](#) from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Medical Officer of Health for direction on screening workers and volunteers.
- The Province of Ontario has implemented a [website for all categories of screening, including of workers and patrons](#).
- Post [screening sign](#) at all entrances. Screening will reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in the community.

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Every person indoors and outdoors shall wear a mask or face covering unless exemptions apply as per O. Reg 82/20.
- Vendors are required to wear a face shield/approved eye protection AND a mask or [face covering](#) when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone without a mask or face covering.
- Masks or face coverings are recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge and are required when waiting in line or congregating outside.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- Increase cleaning and disinfection of all food contact surfaces and surfaces frequently touched (i.e. hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines).
- Please see [Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms](#) for important information about requirements for face coverings, as well as other safety and cleaning precautions.

HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- Handwashing and hand hygiene stations (via alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content) should be provided throughout, for both the public and for vendors. Depending on the food safety vendors, some may require dedicated handwashing stations depending on the level of food contact.
- [Wash hands](#) thoroughly. Ensure hands are washed before and after handling food, using the bathroom, handling cash, etc. Gloves are to be replaced/changed at this time as well.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or use a single-use tissue and practice hand hygiene afterwards.
- Glove use does not replace hand hygiene.

MARKETS THAT DO NOT MEET THE EXEMPTION IN ONTARIO REGULATION 493/17

Markets that have less than 51% vendors producing and offering for sale their own farm product (farmer) must comply with the Ontario Food Premises Regulation 493/17. Each vendor is required to submit a [vendor application form](#).

Additional information and requirements can be found [here](#).

For more information on the safe operation of your Farmers' Market please call Health Connection and speak to a public health inspector at 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8811.