

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FARMERS' MARKETS – STEP 2

Last revised: January 7, 2022

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently in a modified Step 2 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance and clarity for food premises that are in Step 2 by following [Ontario Regulation 263/20: Rules for Areas in Step 2](#) (O. Reg. 263/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Approach to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

Effective **January 5, 2022**, the province has introduced 50 per cent capacity limits and additional protective measures for certain indoor settings, including farmers' markets. Further **indoor dining** at farmers' markets is prohibited. More information can be found in the province's [news release](#) and [O. Reg 263/20](#).

All businesses and organizations in the County of Simcoe, District of Muskoka and Cities of Barrie and Orillia must also adhere to the SMDHU's medical officer of health's [Letter of Instruction](#) (amended November 23, 2021) which sets out specific additional measures to control the spread of COVID-19 inside workplaces and public places.

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 are provided to assist you in opening and operating your farmers' market.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Singing and dancing are prohibited, except by workers or performers. Performers must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from spectators or be separated by an impermeable barrier.
- It is recommended that any music played not exceed a decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.
- No more than 10 people may be seated together at a table **outdoors** unless everyone is from the same household (with the exception of one other person from outside the household who lives alone or is a caregiver for any member of the household).
- 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.
- Providing food samples is not recommended.

SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location including but not limited to, screening, physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowds.
- Additional guidance on how to develop a safety plan can be found [here](#).

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PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND CAPACITY LIMITS

- The total number of members of the public permitted to be at a farmers' market at any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment and in any event may not exceed 50 per cent capacity, whichever is less. This includes between customers and vendors.
- The person responsible for the establishment must not permit patrons to line up or congregate **outside** of the business or place, at an outdoor attraction or feature within the facility, unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons.
- The person responsible for the establishment must not permit patrons to line up **inside** an indoor part of the facility unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons and are wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in [O. Reg. 263/20](#). Crowd control measures should be put into place to ensure physical distancing. This can occur through measures including, but not limited to:
 - Assign staff or volunteers to monitor capacity limits, and to remind individuals of physical distancing measures in areas where people naturally gather.
 - Use floor markings and signs for one-way directional movement to reduce crowding. Implement 2 metre (6 feet) visual markings on the ground in front of vendor stalls.
 - Have one entry point to the market for the public to control access (though there should be multiple exits in keeping with fire code requirements).

SCREENING OF STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, VENDORS AND PATRONS

- All staff, volunteers and vendors must be [actively screened](#) before attending work each day. Staff, volunteers and vendors should conduct a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before attending the farmers' market and follow the direction provided.
- Please see the province's [website](#) for direction on screening staff, volunteers and vendors.
- Advise patrons to complete a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before attending the facility and follow the direction provided.
- Post self-screening [signs](#) at all entrances to the business in a location visible to the public that inform patrons on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 before entering.

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Masks or [face coverings](#) must be worn at all times indoors and outdoors in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin unless exceptions apply as per [O. Reg. 263/20](#).
- It is recommended that all individuals (e.g., staff, volunteers, vendors, patrons), wear a [well-fitted](#) high quality 3-layered non-medical mask, medical mask or respirator (i.e., N95s, KN95).
- Staff, volunteers, and vendors are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection in addition to a mask or face covering when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose and chin.
- Post [signage](#) that promotes wearing a mask or face covering at entrances.

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. Glove use does not replace hand hygiene.

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- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters in areas that can be clearly seen. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- Encourage patrons to sneeze and cough into their elbow or use single-use tissues followed by hand hygiene. Post [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen around the premises.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines, baby change tables, and shopping carts/baskets.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- It is recommended to maintain logs of cleaning and disinfection. More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Health Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection, as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.

SIGNAGE

Post signs promoting wearing masks/face coverings, hand hygiene, capacity limits, and physical distancing and make them visible to staff and customers. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

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

Markets that have less than 51 per cent 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](#).

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

While the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit aims 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. No one should act, or refrain from acting, based solely upon the materials provided in this guidance, any hypertext links or other general information without first seeking appropriate legal or other professional advice. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website regularly for updates and additional guidance.