



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Commissioner



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

CTGrown.gov

COVID-19 GUIDANCE for CONNECTICUT FARMERS' MARKETS

Updated February 23, 2021

The practices and protocols below are for farmers' markets and on-farm markets and stands to implement as necessary in an effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations are in addition to guidance provided by the [CDC](#), [USDA](#), [DECD](#), and other federal agencies.

FARMERS' MARKETS REMAIN AN ESSENTIAL ACTIVITY FOR PEOPLE TO ACCESS FOOD.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to reinforce that farmers' markets can operate in a safe capacity throughout the pandemic and is issuing this document to provide guidance on how to do so. Markets should work with their local health department to ensure everyone's needs are being met.

In order to provide a safe and reliable nutritious food source, all market staff, volunteers, farmers, and vendors must be committed to adhering to health and safety standards identified by the [CDC](#) and this guidance. Markets should promote these efforts and use them as a tool to encourage people to shop at the market.

This document cannot and does not cover every scenario that could arise at a farmers' market. The recommendations provided herein represent best practices *at the moment* surrounding and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance will be updated as we progress through the market season.

Updated July 1, 2020: Markets that participate in the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) should be aware that WIC and Senior participants using the checks no longer have to sign the checks at the time of use with a farmer.

Updated July 1, 2020: Markets offering online ordering only must make accommodations to accept FMNP checks and SNAP benefits on-site. If that is not feasible, the market cannot be listed as an FMNP Authorized Location.

Updated November 6, 2020: The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has extended the redemption dates for the S/FMNP program. S/FMNP checks may now be used at authorized locations until November 23, 2020.

Updated August 14, 2020: Personal Protection for Customers: Customers are required to bring and wear facemasks or other cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth.

- (Per [Executive Order 7NNN](#).) Any person who declines to wear a mask or face covering because of a medical condition shall be exempt from this order and any requirement to wear masks in Sector Rules or other rules issued by the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), but only if such person provides written documentation that the person is qualified for the exemption from a licensed medical provider, the Department of Developmental Services or other state

agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency. Such documentation need not name or describe the condition that qualifies the person for the exemption.

Updated September 17, 2020: While Executive Order 9B allows for the issuance of fines for any person or business who organizes, hosts, or sponsors a gathering that violates the gathering size restrictions set forth in the DECD Posted Guidance, **occurrences at a farmers' market or on a farm which occur within standard business practices shall not be construed as "events" for the purposes of this order. Tickets being sold in an effort to control capacity or appropriately stagger entry to maintain social distancing guidelines are permissible.**

Updated November 6, 2020: Many of our farmers' markets will be moving indoors for the winter season or operate year-round. As we roll back to Phase 2.1 it is important to remember that farmers markets have been deemed essential. As such, farmers' markets are akin to grocery stores, and are guided not by gathering limits but by space capacity. Please refer to DECD SAFE STORE Guidance regarding capacity limits.

Updated February 5, 2021: The sharing of equipment and supplies is now allowed by the Department of Public Health, provided that the equipment and supplies are sanitized and isolated for 24 hours between uses.

Most importantly, be sure to follow the recommendations from the [CDC](#):

- Consider health checks for staff/ volunteers and vendors.
- Wash hands regularly, at least 20 second each time, multiple times throughout the market day. If hand soap and water are not available use hand sanitizer frequently.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover mouth with a bent elbow when sneezing or coughing. If a tissue is used, dispose of it immediately and follow with proper handwashing.
- Maintain the recommended social distancing protocols of six (6) feet of separation between individuals.
- Limit access to and disinfect common areas regularly.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- **Updated 2/23/2021:** Wear a cloth face covering or higher level protection when in public per [Executive Order 7NNN](#).

RUNNING A "TRADITIONAL" FARMERS' MARKET

The practices and protocols below are for market managers and farmers to implement as necessary and through conversations with your local health department in an effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19 at farmers' markets.

Market Managers

Goal: To provide a safe market environment for farmers to sell farm products for sustained food accessibility while limiting potential exposure to market managers, volunteers, vendors, food, and consumers.

- Prevent customers from congregating and visually remind them of the six (6) foot separation by placing cones, spray chalk dots, or other items able to be sanitized, six (6) feet apart in front of vendors and around the market where necessary.

- Separate vendors as far from one another as reasonably possible, at least six (6) feet, to allow for increased social distancing.
- Post signage stating the farmers are able to assist customers and will select products for consumers.
- Limit the number of customers within the market at one time.
- Consider a defined entrance and defined exit to allow for a one-way flow of traffic.
- **Updated 2/23/2021:** Tablecloths, unless they can be cleaned and sanitized, are not be allowed.
- **Updated 2/23/2021:** Samples are not allowed for any reason during this time.
- Remove all sit down and eating areas – unless there's a plan for sanitizing between uses and signage advising of social distancing. Tables used for food consumption must be spaced at least six feet apart.
- Post signage re: washing all produce before eating, frequent handwashing, do not touch your face, etc. Here's a [poster, in English and Spanish](#), from the CDC for posting around the market.
- Have a central handwashing station and/or hand sanitizer for market staff/volunteers, vendors, and shoppers.
- Tokens for SNAP, credit cards, etc.: Do not use the same token more than once during the market day. After a farmer turns in their tokens, soak them in a disinfectant solution and air dry, ideally in the sun, to clean them in preparation for the next market. To find a disinfectant solution, please take a look at the [EPA-Approved List of Disinfectants](#).
- Wipe down the EBT/credit card terminal with an approved disinfectant (see link above) after each use and/or provide single-use Q Tips for button pushing and easy disposal.
- Separate and group (being mindful of social distancing) farmers selling food from vendors selling non-food respectively together.
- Plastic and Reusable Bags: The \$.10 plastic bag fee is in effect as of July 1, 2020. Shoppers may place their purchased items in their personal reusable bags in lieu of purchasing a plastic bag.
- **Updated 2/23/2021:** Per [Executive Order 7NNN](#), all market managers, staff/volunteers, and vendors must wear face masks at all times if they're interacting with customers and/or handling products.
- Suspend cooking demos and sampling.
- Food trucks and food prepared on site for sale are at the discretion of market management in partnership with the local health department.
- If you are providing entertainment, follow this recommendation from Re-Open CT [Sector Rules for June 17th reopen](#).
 - Outdoor performers are exempt from wearing a mask when they are performing and are at least 12 ft away from the nearest person (including other performers).
- Remind vendors to stay home if they feel sick.
- If a vendor has a sick person at home or has been in contact with someone who has either tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19, they should follow the CDC's guidance on [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#).
- Remind vendors that if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 to inform the market managers and stay home.

- Be flexible with last minute vendor cancellations. Vendors may need to cancel if they're short staffed and should be encouraged to remain home if they're ill or have been caring for someone who is ill.
- Put information on websites and social media and hang signage around the market to explain any changes, delivery options, or extra precautions taken to limit exposure to COVID-19.
- In any marketing/promotional messaging, encourage families to limit the number of people coming to the market to the primary buyer only.
- Encourage your vendors to promote/advertise that the market is taking place with additional precautions in place to ensure the safest shopping experience for consumers and farmers/vendors.
- Connect with your insurer to understand your insurance limits, etc. to help determine to what extent the market can operate.
- If social distancing requirements necessitate restrictions on the number of vendors, DoAg suggests prioritizing essential service providers for any preference in receiving stall space at a market.
- Personal Protection for Employees: All employees are required to wear a face mask or other face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth. Employees that cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition must provide documentation to their employer.
- Personal Protection for Customers: Customers are required to bring and wear facemasks or other cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth. Businesses have the right to refuse service to an individual who is not wearing a mask.

Farmer Vendors

Goal: To sell farm product(s) direct to the consumer while limiting potential exposure to yourself and the product(s) for sale while selling at farmers' market.

7/1/2020: The necessity for implementing the following recommendations will vary from market to market and amongst local health districts. Please discuss the requirements/expectations with each market manager.

- Put a sample of the product(s) available for purchase, covered with cellophane, out on display. Pack for individual customers from the truck as they make a purchase.
- Pre-package loose fruits, greens, and vegetables, among other items (precut cheeses, etc.) to prevent shoppers' from directly touching food.
- **Updated 2/23/2021:** Per [Executive Order 7NNN](#), all market managers, staff/volunteers, and vendors must wear face masks at all times if they're interacting with customers and/or handling products.
- If customers want to see/inspect an item, hold it for them (e.g.: open the egg carton for them), don't allow the customer to handle any product they may not purchase.
- Remember to keep a six (6) foot distance between you and the customer(s) whenever reasonably possible – there's only three feet between you and a customer on the other side of a typical market table. Put a cone or spray paint a chalk line behind your market tables to visually remind yourselves and your employees where the six (6) foot mark is. Bring extra tables and place the extra, empty table in front of the table with product. This provides an additional barrier between the vendor and customer and a place for customers to prop their bags and informative signage.

- If attending the market with multiple staff, have one person handle product and one person handle money/tokens/coupons. If that's not possible, wash hands or sanitize after handling any form of payment.
- If attending the market with multiple staff, locate the register for payment as far from the product for sale as possible.
- **Updated 2/23/2021:** Do not use tablecloths, unless they can be cleaned and sanitized (such as oilcloth).
- Shared equipment and supplies should be sanitized and isolated for 24 hours between uses.
- Pens: consider getting inexpensive pens and letting the customer keep them or sanitize between uses.
- Wipe down the credit card terminal with an approved disinfectant from the [EPA-Approved List of Disinfectants](#) after each use and/or provide single-use Q Tips for button pushing and easy disposal.
- Samples should not be allowed for any reason during this time.
- Have a handwashing station and/or hand sanitizer and use frequently. Bring a bottle of sanitizing spray to use as well (one (1) part bleach to nine (9) parts water) to clean and disinfect tables during and at the end of each market prior to loading them into a vehicle.
- Plastic Bags: Remind customers the \$.10 plastic bag fee waiver is no longer in effect and any plastic bags used, other than plastic bags used to contain loose produce, must be charged the fee.
- Promote through social medias, e-newsletters, etc. that you're selling at a market and that the market is open and taking place with additional precautions in mind.
- Left over produce at the end of the market? Reach out to [CT Food Bank](#) or [Food Share](#)
- If you don't take credit card, consider using [Venmo](#) or PayPal as a form of payment to limit the amount of exchange.

For printable signage and additional guidance for the agricultural industry, please visit the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's page, [Resources for Farmers During COVID-19](#).

For ideas and additional outreach on social media platforms that encourage Connecticut residents to [#StayHomeBuyCTGrown](#), take a look at the [Social Media Toolkit](#) on the agency website. Please reach out to AGR.covid19@ct.gov with any COVID-19 related questions or concerns. Connecticut DoAg is actively working to support our industry and will continue to provide the most up to date information as it becomes available.

This guidance was compiled through the review of the following resources:

CA Dept of Food and Ag | CT Food Assoc Safety Guidelines for Grocery Stores | DECD's Safe Stores Guidance | PA Department of Agriculture | MA Farmers' Market Assoc COVID-19 Guidance | NY Farmers' Market Federation Guidance during COVID-19 | Grow NYC | CT Dept of Consumer Protection Guidance for Selling Produce and Packaged Food for Curbside Pickup | CT Department of Public Health