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Produced in partnership with



COVID-19 GUIDANCE for CONNECTICUT FARM STANDS, STORES and COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)

UPDATED : February 23, 2021

The practices and protocols below are for farm stands and stores and CSAs to implement as necessary in an effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19. These recommendation are in addition to guidance provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [USDA](#), [Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development](#), and other federal agencies.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to reinforce that farm stands/stores and CSAs can operate in a safe capacity during this time and is issuing this document to provide guidance on how to safely do so with regard to Governor Lamont's Executive Orders.

In order to provide a safe, reliable, and nutritious food source, all farm owners, employees, and volunteers must be committed to adhering to health and safety standards identified by the [CDC](#) and this guidance. Farmers should promote these efforts and use them as a tool to encourage people to shop at the farm stand/store or purchase a CSA membership.

This document cannot and does not cover every scenario that could arise. 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 growing and harvest season.

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

- Wash hands regularly, at least 20 second each time, multiple times throughout the market day.
- 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 at least six (6) feet of separation between individuals.
- Limit access to and disinfect common areas regularly.
- Stay home or seek medical attention as needed if you are sick.
- Wear a cloth face covering or higher level protection when in public per [Executive Order 7NNN](#).
- Consider conducting daily health checks for staff

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 Sector Rules](#), **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.**

Farm Owners and Employees

- Provide information to employees related to COVID-19 from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), including:
 - What COVID-19 is and [how it is spread](#).
 - [Preventing the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick](#).
 - [Symptoms of COVID-19 and when to seek medical attention](#).
- The CDC has released the [Agricultural Employer Checklist for Creating a COVID-19 Assessment and Control Plan](#). Agricultural employers can use this checklist to create a COVID-19 assessment and control plan for applying specific preparation, prevention, and management measures to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. The checklist is divided into five sections: assessment, control plan, shared housing, transportation, and children.
- Communicate your plan and procedures to protect employees from COVID-19 illness. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued Guidance on [Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) that includes information on how a COVID-19 outbreak could affect workplaces and [steps all employers can take](#) to reduce workers' risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Immediately send employees with acute respiratory illness symptoms to medical care as needed.
- Establish procedures to notify local health officials upon learning that someone has a COVID-19 infection. These officials will help employers determine a course of action.
- Stress the importance of not coming to work if employees have a frequent cough, fever, or difficulty breathing.
- If an employee 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](#).
- Inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace if an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19. Employers should maintain confidentiality about individual employees' identities.
- CDC and Governor Lamont's [Executive Order 7NNN](#) recommends the use of cloth face coverings. Face coverings should:
 - fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
 - be secured with ties or ear loops
 - include multiple layers of fabric
 - allow for breathing without restriction
 - be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.

NOTE: The cloth face coverings recommended by CDC are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance

 - **NOTE:** Business have the right to refuse service if a customer or client does not wear a mask.

- Stagger break and lunch times. Provide additional seating to allow employees to take breaks while staying at least six (6) feet apart.
- If possible, stagger work shifts or increase the number of work shifts.
- Disinfect common/high touch areas frequently with a disinfectant from the [EPA-Approved List of Disinfectants](#).
- Provide a staff/patron hand washing or hand sanitizer stations with proper signage. Restock hand washing supplies, including soap, paper towels, and/or hand sanitizer and empty garbage cans frequently.
- For employee transportation - consider allowing employees to drive to the area. If farm vehicles are used:
 - Utilize open-air farm vehicles
 - Limit the number of people per vehicle as much as possible
 - Provide hand sanitizer on the vehicle
 - Sanitize handrails and surfaces between trips
 - Owners/operators should maximize opportunities to place farmworkers residing together in the same vehicles for transportation and in the same cohorts to limit exposure.
- Connect with your insurer to understand your insurance limits, etc. to help determine to what extent the farm stand/store or CSA can operate.
- Consider online ordering platforms to limit the number of customers in the store. A list of options can be found on our [COVID-19 Resources for Farmers](#).
- Additional information can be found in the [COVID-19 Food Safety Guidance](#)

Farm Stand/Stores

- Be mindful of how many people can fit in the farm store while implementing the social distancing requirements. You may need to limit the number of customers within the farm store at one time.
- **Updated 2/23/21:** Per [Executive Order 7NNN](#), cloth face coverings are required in public.
- **Updated 2/23/21:** Do not allow pets.
- Use non-porous plastic tables that can be easily disinfected whenever possible. Do not use tablecloths.
- **Updated 2/23/21:** Eliminate special programming, samples, any on-farm activities/children play areas, and picnic/eating areas, except as described below.
- Install Plexiglas shields to separate employees from customers at checkout lines where practical.
- Have employees to handle product and separate/additional employees to handle money, reminding them to wash their hands per the CDC recommendations or use hand sanitizer after every transaction
- **Updated 2/23/21:** Prevent customers from congregating, including at the checkout area. Visual signage is required to remind customers to maintain 6-foot social distancing. Here's a [poster, in English and Spanish](#), from the CDC for posting around the market and take a look at [DECD's signage options](#) as well. You can also utilize floor markers, cones, etc. Signage produced for farmers' market may also be utilized in your farm store and can be found on the [COVID-19 Resources for Farmers](#).
- If you have two doors, designate one as an entrance only and one to be an exit only.
- If you're able to implement a one-way flow of traffic throughout the store or in the store isles, do so. Be sure to clearly communicate this through floor markers and eye-level signage.

- Wipe down the EBT/credit card terminal with an approved disinfectant ([EPA-Approved List of Disinfectants](#)) after each use and/or provide single-use Q Tips for button pushing and easy disposal. (use of credit card/EBT is highly recommended instead of cash transactions)
- Pens: consider getting inexpensive pens and letting the customer keep them or sanitize between uses.
- If you don't take credit card, consider using [Venmo](#) or [PayPal](#) as a form of payment to limit the amount of tender exchanged.
- 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.
- Encourage customers to come during off-peak hours.
- Encourage customers to limit the number of family members shopping, ideally to the primary shopper only.
- If the farm stand/store is also a check in area for [Pick-Your-Own](#), pre/online orders, or CSA members, have the area located outside the store to limit the number of people entering and exiting the store that are not making a purchase.
- Consider removing free-standing displays and taking other measures to rearrange the store to enable social distancing and limit store congestion.
- Put a sample of the product(s) available for purchase, covered with cellophane, out on display. Pack for individual customers from behind the farm stand 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.
- For honor-system farm stands, consider pre-bagging loose fruits and vegetables to prevent customers from using their hands and touching produce beyond what they'll purchase.
- Signage must be posted to remind patrons that food purchased should be taken home to be consumed.
- Post signage and/or provide materials for customers reminding them to wash produce before consumption, dispose of paper/plastic grocery bags and sanitize counters.

CSAs

- Stagger pick up times by having members identify what time they'll be coming through [SignUpGenius](#) or other online system if pick up is done on defined days.
- Consider asking members to remain in their vehicle and have an employee bring their share to their vehicle.
- Consider pre-packing shares in lieu of an open or free choice CSA. Communicate to your customers that this change is being made for their safety.
- Reusable bags for packing shares are currently discouraged. Plastic or brown paper bags for members to receive their CSA share is recommended. Farmers and consumers should follow CDC guidelines; don't touch their face, eyes, nose, etc. after touching paper/cardboard/plastic; and wash their hands immediately after disposing of the covering from food.
- Potentially hazardous foods, those foods which are in part or wholly composed of meat, fish, milk, eggs need to be kept cold (cold foods need to be kept below 40 degrees F.)
- Use non-porous plastic tables that can be easily disinfected whenever possible. Do not use tablecloths.
- **Updated 2/23/21:** Do not offer food samples or food demonstrations.
- Procedures for frequent hand washing, changing gloves, and disinfecting surfaces, should be established with appropriate signage wherever required.

Outreach

- Put information on websites, social media and hang signage around the farm stand/store to explain any changes, delivery options (if available), or extra precautions are taken to limit exposure to COVID-19.
- In any marketing/promotional messaging, strongly encourage families to limit the number of people coming to the farm stand/store or to pick up their CSA share. Remind them to wear face masks or face coverings when they visit.
- Promote/advertise that there will be additional precautions in place to ensure the safest experience for everyone.
- Farm owners should communicate to their members that they should not come to the farm if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, or have come in contact with someone who has.
- Share that you will be requiring all members to maintain a 6-foot social distancing amongst themselves.
- Share that there will be no entertainment or picnicking to reduce congregating on the farm.
- Emphasize that you do not allow any pets on the farm.

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

If you have a farm stand *open* and you'd like to be listed on [CTGrownMap.com](#), please complete this [online form](#).

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 you may have. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture 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:

CT Food Association Safety Guidelines for Grocery Stores | DECD's Safe Stores Guidance | CT Department of Consumer Protection Guidance for Selling Produce and Packaged Food for Curbside Pickup | New Hampshire Extension CSA Farmers Amid COVID 19 Guidance