

COVID-19 Guidance for Farmers', Fresh Food & Holiday Markets

The following recommendations are intended to help organizers, staff and vendors participating in farmers', fresh food and holiday markets reduce the spread of COVID-19. These markets primarily sell local goods, fresh fruits, vegetables and foods that do not require onsite food preparation.

Toronto is currently in the Grey Zone of the provincial regulations ([O. Reg. 82/20](#)). Owners, operators and vendors are responsible for ensuring that their market is in compliance with these public health guidelines, all emergency orders made under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#), and [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#).

As every market will be different, it is the responsibility of owners/operators and vendors to review their own policies, procedures, and site-specific operations, while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control measures are implemented and maintained. More information about COVID-19 can be found in the [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

Businesses that May Open during Lockdown ([O. Reg. 82/20](#))

- **Indoor farmers' markets** may open if they primarily sell food.
 - Review [COVID-19 Guidance for Food Stores](#) for more information.
 - Other businesses within the indoor farmer's market must remain closed unless they primarily sell food, or are one of the following, operated in accordance with the provincial regulation:
 - Safety supply store, business that sells, rents or repairs assistive/mobility/medical devices, aids and/or supplies, or optical store selling prescription eyewear (each by appointment only).
 - Store that sells alcohol, including beer, wine and spirits (subject to 25 per cent capacity).
 - [Food or drink establishment](#) permitted to open only for the purposes of providing take-out, drive-through or delivery service.

Review [COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings](#) for more information.
- **Outdoor markets** may open if they meet the following conditions:
 - They primarily sell food to the public.
 - Products must only be provided to customers:
 - in a manner that allows members of the public to remain in an outdoor area at all times, or
 - through an alternative method of sale that does not require customers to enter the indoor area, such as curbside pick-up or delivery.

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- If an area at the market is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning or other element, at least two full sides of the entire area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- If an area at the market is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- Nothing in the provincial Order precludes a business or organization from operating remotely for the purpose of:
 - providing goods by mail or other forms of delivery; and
 - providing services online, by telephone or by other remote means.

Protective Measures to Keep Everyone Safe

- Stay home when you are sick, even if symptoms are mild.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from people you don't live with, when possible.
- Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a mask or face covering when you are in indoor public spaces, and when you cannot maintain a two metre/six foot distance outdoors.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Measures for All Workplaces, Businesses & Organizations

Every business owner should develop and communicate policies concerning staff and customer health and safety. Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and customers safe, including:

- **Staff attendance and operations**
 - Implement attendance policies for staff, including maintaining a list of the names, contact information and attendance records of all staff.
- **Health screening for staff and customers**
 - [Actively screen](#) staff before each work shift. Questions can be completed online, on paper or asked directly.
 - Require customers to [self-screen](#) prior to entering the market.
- **Mask/face coverings for staff and customers**
 - Appropriate personal protective equipment that covers the eyes, nose and mouth must be worn if, while providing service in an indoor area, the person:

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- is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
- is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person described above.
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
 - Provide hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) by entrances and throughout the market for staff and customers use.
 - Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer when they enter.
- **Cleaning and disinfection**
 - Implement appropriate infection prevention and control measures in all areas accessible to the public, including washrooms, check-out counters, concession stands, and other high-touch surfaces.
 - Shopping carts and baskets must be sanitized between each customer. Items that cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g. cloth bags).
 - Do not hand out any coupons, samples, testers, or flyers.
- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**
 - See [guidance document](#) for more information.

Safety Plan

Operators must prepare and make available a [safety plan](#), and the plan must:

- Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Include measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning, disinfecting and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Be in writing and made available to any person for review, on request.
- Be posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.

Increase Public Awareness

- Communicate COVID-19 measures and market expectations with all vendors prior to attending the market.
- Provide information to customers about market operations (e.g. public health measures, advance order options, curbside pickup).
- Encourage staff, vendors and customers to download the [COVID Alert app](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Post signs at the entrance instructing customers and staff not to attend the market if they are sick.

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- Post educational materials to encourage healthy behaviours that reduce the spread of COVID-19:
 - [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
 - [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

Use of Masks and Face Coverings

- The use of non-medical masks or face coverings is required in all indoor public spaces, as per a City of Toronto [bylaw](#) and [O. Reg. 82/20](#). Operators are required to develop a policy on the wearing of masks. More information is available [here](#).
- Masks are strongly recommended when physical distancing cannot be maintained outdoors.

Control and Monitor Entry

- Designate a single entry and exit point to control the number of customers entering the market.
 - Post signage at the entrance indicating the conditions for entry. See the Farmers' Market Ontario's [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#) as an example.
- Close all other access points to the market using existing barriers/structures.
- Limit the number of customers permitted into the market at any given time to ensure everyone is able to maintain at least two metres/six feet physical distancing.
 - This can be calculated as one person for every two metres square (four squared metres) of floor space.
- Indoor farmers markets must also ensure the number of people occupying any room that is open to the public does not exceed **50 per cent of the capacity** of the particular room.
 - This can be calculated by taking the total square metres of floor space accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures, dividing that number by 8 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
- Operators must post a sign in a location visible to the public that states the maximum capacity they are permitted to operate under.
- Position staff at the entrance to control customer entry and monitor the number of people entering and leaving.
- If the maximum number of customers is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.

Implement Measures to Maintain Physical Distancing

Plan and modify the layout of the market to ensure enough space is provided for customers, vendors and market staff to maintain at least two metres/six feet [physical distancing](#).

- Design a shopping flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.

- Do not provide communal tables or seating in the market.
- Arrange and modify vendors booths to maintain physical distancing and reduce contact:
 - Increase spacing between vendors booths (e.g. keep an empty area between each booth).
- Limit the number of employees working within the booth at any one time:
 - Employees should maintain physical distancing from each other and customers, where possible.
 - Assign each employee a specific workstation and task to reduce overlap.
- Remind customers not to congregate near the booth once they have completed their purchase.
- Post [physical distancing](#) signs in highly visible areas.
- Stagger load in and load out times, and designate locations for vendor areas prior to market opening.

Monitor and Manage Customer Lines

- Operators must ensure that customers lining up or congregating outside their establishment:
 - Maintain at least two metres/six feet physical distancing from other groups of persons, and
 - Wear a mask or face covering, unless entitled to an exemption.
- Place visual markers/cues spaced two metres/six feet apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and guide customers waiting in line.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres/six feet apart and wear a mask.

Reduce Contact during Purchases

- Offer online and/or telephone ordering services that allow customers to order items in advance.
 - Establish and clearly identify pick-up points for advance orders (e.g. drive-through/pedestrian pick-up).
- Install [physical barriers](#) at the point of sale (e.g. plexiglass).
- Encourage electronic payment by debit or credit card, and to tap instead of using the PIN pad, and assign one employee to process all transactions.
- Leave the customers purchases on the counter or set-up a side table for the customer to pick it up while maintaining a two metre/six foot distance from employees.

Implement Measures to Protect Food from Contamination

- Educate employees on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
 - [Wash your hands](#) with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration), provided hands are not visibly soiled.

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- [Cover your cough](#) or sneeze with your elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- Prepackage foods offered for sale to reduce handling and direct contact.
- Keep food out of the customer's reach to discourage handling.
- Food sampling may resume if served in a prepackaged format for take-home consumption.
- Do not handle reusable containers/bags supplied by the customer.
- Suspend accepting product returns.
- Encourage customers to take their purchased foods home and wash thoroughly before eating.

Practice Proper Glove Use

- Glove use is not mandatory for food vendors. Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene.
- If vendors/employees use gloves they should be changed every hour, or more often as necessary.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water for 20 seconds before putting on and after taking off gloves.
- Change gloves when changing tasks, after touching your face, or coming in contact with an item that may have germs.
- When gloves are removed, new gloves must be used each time.

Food and Beverage Consumption

- Dining at the market is not permitted.
- Ensure customers do not consume food or drink while they are in the market area.

Other Resources

[COVID-19 Guidance for Food Stores](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

More Information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

BC Centre for Disease Control (2020). *Farmer's Markets*. Retrieved from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/community-settings/farmers-markets>

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