



Division of Food and Recreational Safety

April 28, 2020

Guidance for Farmers Market Vendors and Consumers

The [Safer at Home Order](#) designates farmers markets as essential businesses. Keeping these markets open during the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring public safety is a priority.

Farmers markets must implement necessary precautions and amend market operations to abide by public safety guidelines. Market managers and vendors must examine their business practices, and initiate sensible safety changes to increase the likelihood that markets can stay open.

This guide will help communities, market managers, vendors and customers by offering:

- Best practices related to communication, social distancing and preventing contamination.
- Alternative market arrangements to consider.
- Resources to achieve food safety goals.

The following guidance is subject to change.

Guidance for Communities

If your community hosts a farmers market, make an assessment of what existing practices need to change and what additional safety measures need to be taken. Coordinate preparations with market managers to ensure a safe opening.

Reach out to county health departments for

guidance, and visit the [Department of Health Services COVID-19 website](#) for the latest updates. Most importantly, communicate new safety practices to the public to build confidence in the measures taken.

Guidance for Market Managers

After identifying operating practices that must change to prevent the spread of illness, communicate those changes to your vendors and customers through all available means. Use signs, social media or newsletters, in addition to your usual advertising.

At minimum, all farmers markets **must** do the following:

- Close seating intended for consuming food.
- Prohibit food samples.
- Consider closing areas that require customers to use tongs or scoops, as these spaces are discouraged. Vendors must frequently sanitize tongs and scoops, if these tools are used.
- Follow social distancing requirements between all individuals to the greatest extent possible.
- Adopt policies to prevent vendors from entering the premises if they display respiratory symptoms or have had contact with someone with COVID-19.



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Division of Food and Recreational Safety

2811 Agriculture Dr., P.O. Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708

<https://www.datcp.wi.gov>

Self-dispensing unpackaged food areas (including fresh produce) can remain open.

Besides these mandated practices, there are several operational best-practices that markets can adopt to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Each market must determine which measures can be reasonably implemented to provide a safe shopping environment. Not all recommendations are suitable for all markets:

- Pause or delay opening markets if safety measures cannot be established or adequately maintained.
- Communicate with customers and vendors:
 - Let customers know if your market is open, delayed or closed.
 - If your market is open, be certain both customers and vendors know what you are doing to protect their safety, and what they can do to protect themselves.
 - If your market is closed, connect your customers with vendors who are willing to explore alternative safe delivery methods.
- Consider alternative shopping methods, such as:
 - A one-sided drive-thru market.
 - Online or phone ordering with market pickup.
 - Appointments for market shopping to minimize crowds.
- Consider changing the market layout to minimize crowding and provide a safe distance; consider placing vendors on one side or having vendors face outward.
- Consider other methods to minimize shopper time at the market.
- Provide handwashing or sanitizing stations for vendors and customers.

- Increase the spacing between vendors to allow customers and vendors to maintain social distancing. Spacing of no less than 6 feet is recommended.
- Post messaging and signage on physical distancing and other safety precautions.
- Allow only vendors to touch product before sale; do not permit customer contact with product. This reduces the likelihood of customer crowding.
- Do not permit nonessential, non-food vendors (however, food plants may be sold).
- Do not permit music, tabling, nonessential activities, promotions or pets.
- Encourage vendors to adopt credit/debit card, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) or check payments whenever possible to minimize contact resulting from cash exchanges.
- Require that prepared foods are prepackaged for consumption offsite.
- Suspend fines for no-shows to ensure sick vendors don't feel obligated to appear.
- Continue to visit [DHS](#) and [CDC websites](#) for updated COVID-19 information.

Guidance for Vendors

Contact market managers to learn what changes and precautions are being implemented. Consider which of your business practices will have to change, and ensure your employees understand and comply with the changes. **Do not go to the market if you or one of your employees are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, or have come into contact with someone who is sick;** follow [DHS Business Guidelines](#) if any of these things happen.

In addition to guidance from your market managers, consider adopting the following best practices to improve customer safety:

- Clean and disinfect all surfaces, including tables and tablecloths, before the market.



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Division of Food and Recreational Safety
2811 Agriculture Dr., P.O. Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708

<https://www.datcp.wi.gov>

Use a disinfectant from the list of EPA recommended disinfectants and follow the disinfectant manufacturer's directions.

- [Wash hands regularly](#) with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Wear a cloth face covering; follow [FDA guidance](#) on proper use.
- [Use hand sanitizer properly](#) on visibly clean hands; hand sanitizer is not effective on visibly dirty hands.
- Use single-use gloves where needed; follow these [guidelines on how to properly use gloves](#).
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly during market hours.
- Maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from customers and other vendors when possible.
- Remind customers to maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between each other while waiting their turn.
- Use barrier tables (an extra 3-foot-wide table between the customer and the product); put a check out table in front of the product; or put an X on the ground where customers are supposed to stand.
- Only allow staff to handle products.
- Sell pre-weighed packaged items to limit food handling and lingering.
- Do not allow customers to use their own bags for purchases; provide single-use bags.
- Have only one employee handle payments to limit contact and possible transmission.

Guidance for Customers

While your community, market managers and vendors have taken enormous precautions to ensure safety while shopping, the ultimate

responsibility for the community's and your family's health remains with you. **Do not go to the market if you or anyone in your family are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, or if you have come into contact with someone who is sick;** visit this [DHS website](#) to learn what you should do instead.

Before going to your community farmers market, check the market website or local paper for changes to operating hours and procedures. While at your farmers market, please consider implementing all of the following measures:

- Using alternative shopping methods if available, such as a drive-thru market, online ordering with market pickup, or direct sales from the farm.
- Going to the market at off-peak hours to avoid crowds.
- Washing your hands before going to the market; while at the market, frequently use handwashing or sanitizing stations, if available.
- Maintaining at least 6 feet of distance from other customers and vendors when possible.
- Wearing a cloth face covering; follow this [FDA guidance](#) on their proper use.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with your elbow.
- Minimizing the number of people coming with you to the market; this helps minimize crowd size.
- Leaving children at home if child care is available.
- Leaving pets at home, especially if your market prohibits them.

Additional questions for DATCP can be sent to safeproduce@wisconsin.gov.

Additional resources for businesses and employers, including cleaning and disinfection protocols, can be found at the [DHS website](#).



Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Division of Food and Recreational Safety

2811 Agriculture Dr., P.O. Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708

<https://www.datcp.wi.gov>