



MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Whatever role you serve at your farmers market, we know that not only are you dedicated to ensuring shoppers have access to healthy, locally grown food and other high-quality products – but you’re also deeply committed to the safety of shoppers and the products they purchase. Never in MIFMA’s history has this mission been more important. In response to COVID-19, we want to share with you the following guidance and considerations on operating farmers markets in Michigan during this period of heightened public safety. *The guidance below, originally issued by MIFMA on March 27, 2020, has been updated on March 30, 2021 based on the most recent, applicable guidance from the State of Michigan and other reputable sources. New information is indicated in blue italics.*

Farmers markets are critical infrastructure because of the role they play in our food system and they can operate provided they follow health and safety practices.

Farmers market managers should consult their local health departments and the State of Michigan for information pertinent to COVID-19 and current conditions in their community. You can regularly read the updates and recommendations available on their websites and sign up for any alerts offered by state or county-level health officials to stay the most up-to-date with what is being recommended or required.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DECIDING HOW TO OPERATE YOUR FARMERS MARKET:

1. The State of Michigan has determined that farmers markets are among critical infrastructure that can remain open when certain non-essential businesses are temporarily suspended. The guidance listed in this document for modified operations should be implemented to support the safe operation of farmers markets for customers, vendors, and market staff. However, due to rapidly evolving conditions and local variations in the intensity of the pandemic, county health departments may need to make different determinations about whether markets can operate safely in their locality. Contact your county health department to review these recommendations together and discuss their guidance for your community.
2. Farmers markets are being allowed to stay open because they are a critical component of our food system; however, market operations will need to be modified to focus on executing this function in the safest possible way. This may make for a very different farmers market experience from what you may typically provide, so your market should consider whether it can operate under these new conditions.
3. Consult with your vendors, particularly your farmer vendors who have perishable products which they may be relying on your market to help them sell.
4. Whether or not your market chooses to operate, consider alternative ways you can support vendors and customers, such as:
 - Helping to connect customers with farms directly through their websites
 - Helping to facilitate online sales, product aggregation, delivery and/or pick-up options
5. Communicate proactively with both vendors and consumers regarding your decision to operate or suspend the farmers market, including noting that the situation can change at any point. Make sure they know which channels you will use to communicate any changes (emails, website, social media, etc.).



FARMERS MARKET GUIDELINES

The table below lists modifications to farmers market operations that markets are either required or recommended to make at this time. The table is color-coded as follows for each modification:

- Required modifications for markets
- Recommended modifications for markets
- Allowable activities for markets

MODIFICATION	Status
<p><i>Ensure that all safety measures are applied to both the retail operations of your farmers market and any non-essential areas and activities incorporated in your market space such as music, special events, cooking demonstrations, and children’s activities. These special features and functions can resume at your market as long as the proper precautions are put in place for your customers to safely participate and enjoy these features.</i></p> <p><i>Groups of people participating in an activity together beyond the incidental gathering of shoppers in the market are limited to 25 people in an indoor setting and 300 people in an outdoor setting. In these activities, people should be prevented from mingling with or engaging in physical contact with people outside of the group they came to the market with. Groups should be able to remain social distanced 6 feet away from other groups at all times.</i></p>	
<p>Limit the number of customers who can be in the market at one time in order to ensure that everyone within the market is able to maintain proper social distancing of 6 feet of space between people.</p> <p><i>For indoor markets: Limit attendance to 50% of the capacity set by the State Fire Marshal or local fire marshal, or 100 persons total- whichever is less.</i></p> <p>For outdoor markets: Limit attendance to 30 persons per 1,000 square feet, including within any distinct area within the event space.</p>	
<p>Ensure that product sampling is conducted according to all applicable guidelines and is done in a way that minimizes person-to-person contact to the greatest extent possible.</p> <p>The best practice for sampling at this time is to prepare samples in advance of arriving at the market by prepackaging individual samples into covered containers. At the market, prepackaged individual samples should be spaced out for consumers to pick up in a way that allows the consumer to touch only the sample they will consume. Spacing should allow for the vendor and all consumers to maintain social distancing while waiting for, selecting, and consuming the sample, and while disposing of the sample container.</p> <p>Dispensing a sample from a large container of product at the market directly into the hand of the consumer and/or transferring a sample from the hand of the vendor to the hand of the consumer is not recommended at this time.</p>	

Markets must post signs instructing customers of their legal obligation to wear a face covering if they are medically able to do so while indoors and when outdoors and not able to maintain 6 feet of space between themselves and others. *Customers must wear masks at all times except when eating or drinking in designated areas.*

Market staff and/or volunteers may not assume that someone who enters the market without a face mask falls within one of the approved exceptions of this mandate. However, if the customer verbally reports that they are not wearing a face mask because they fall within a specified exception, they may be permitted to enter without a mask. Approved exceptions currently include: under 5 years of age, cannot medically tolerate wearing a mask, are eating or drinking in a designated seating area, are exercising outdoors and at least 6 feet from others, are communicating with someone who is deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing, and a few other reasons outlined in [section 8 of this order](#) that are less applicable to a farmers market setting.

If provided, seating areas must allow groups to maintain a 6 foot distance from other groups and the area must be sanitized after each use.

Consumption of food or beverages should only be allowed in areas where customers can be seated, where shopping groups can be separated by at least 6 feet, where no more than 6 people are seated at a table at one time, and where groups of customers do not intermingle.

If the seated space for dining is indoors, you must display in a prominent location the [MDHHS "Dining During COVID-19" brochure](#). Indoor seating areas for food purchased to be consumed on-site must also maintain accurate records of the names and phone numbers of customers who purchase food for consumption onsite including the date and time of entry.

Increase market stall spacing and aisle widths to allow customers and vendors to distance themselves at least 6 feet away from others.

Mark the ground around booths with items such as tape, chalk, driveway markers, or traffic cones to instruct customers to distance themselves at least 6 feet apart while they are waiting in line.

Form lines outside of vendor booths and/or limit the number of customers within a booth at a time.

Limit entrances to ensure customers enter where a handwashing station is available.

Develop a [daily screening policy](#) that identifies and prevents market employees and volunteers from entering the market if they display respiratory symptoms or have had contact with a person with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. *These records must be retained for 28 days.*

Upon request, a market must provide names and phone numbers of individuals with possible COVID-19 exposure to MDHHS and their local health department to aid in contact tracing and case investigation efforts. This should include all market staff and volunteers you have a record of being present during the possible exposure period. Daily vendor attendance logs of businesses present can also aid MDHHS and the local health department in notifying farm and business owners whose employees may also have been exposed.

Have vendors set up in a way that minimizes/eliminates a customer's ability to touch the products.

Post signs at the market entrance informing customers not to enter if they are or recently have been sick.

<p>Provide customers with relevant, up-to-date information about what your market is doing to ensure their health and welfare at the market. Post signs with your precautions and procedures, and communicate this information on your website and through social media.</p>	
<p>Provide handwashing and sanitizing (when available) at entrances and throughout the market. Ensure someone's job at the market is to make sure stations are continuously stocked with soap, paper towels, waste receptacles, and hand sanitizer (when available).</p>	
<p>Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like point-of-sale devices tokens, etc.</p>	
<p>If your indoor market has more than 50,000 square feet of customer floor space, create at least 2 hours per week of dedicated shopping time for vulnerable populations including: people over 60, pregnant women, and those with chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.</p>	
<p>Place additional handwashing stations near outdoor seating and dining areas.</p>	
<p>The employer of market staff must have a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan in place and available at the market. The plan must be consistent with the Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).</p>	
<p>The employer of market staff must train their employees on at least the following: workplace infection-control practices, the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), steps to notify their employee of any symptoms or confirmed COVID-19 cases, how to report unsafe working conditions, how to manage symptomatic customers upon entry to the market, and how market management will notify staff if they learn that a confirmed case of COVID-19 has visited the market.</p>	
<p>Consider developing curbside pickup and/or drive-through options where customers can select and purchase items without getting out of their car. <i>Note: When adapting a curbside pick-up or drive through option, consider ways in which customers can safely participate in the market if they do not have a car.</i></p>	
<p>Consider the use of disposable gloves for market staff who handle money, tokens, or vouchers, and remind staff about proper glove use and handwashing procedures. Ask vendors to consider using disposable gloves appropriately as additional protection, but remember that gloves do not replace the need to wash hands and practice good hand hygiene.</p>	
<p>Be flexible with vendor attendance, eliminate penalties or absence fees.</p>	
<p>Place visible signage throughout the market with safety and behavior guidelines recommended by the CDC.</p>	

STEPS FARMERS MARKET VENDORS SHOULD TAKE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND CONSUMERS:

- Do not attend the market if you have a compromised immune system or you would answer Yes to any of the [screening questions](#) for market staff and volunteers.
- Develop a [daily screening policy](#) that identifies and prevents your employees from attending the market if they display any symptoms or have had contact with a person with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Ensure that all employees have access to a mask or face covering. Masks should be worn in any enclosed space by anyone who is able to medically tolerate wearing a mask and whenever you are interacting with customers.
- Sanitize your market equipment and containers. Look to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#) for guidance.
- Have a handwashing station (preferred) or hand sanitizer at your booth and use it often.
- Pre-package all items before coming to the market as applicable.
- Clearly and legibly post product lists with prices so that customers can distance themselves from you and your booth and still see what you have to offer.
- Set up your booth in a way that minimizes/eliminates a customer's ability to touch your products. For example, set up a table in front of you with a product list and a table behind you with the product. Customers can tell you what product(s) they want and you can get it for them.
- When possible, staff your booth with two people with distinct roles where one person handles the currency transaction with the customer while a second person handles the product. These two individuals should maintain their distinct roles and wash their hands if/when they switch between the task of handling currency versus handling product.
- Put less product out for display and restock more often.
- Only use market table covers that can be sanitized throughout the market day, such as plastic or vinyl.
- Minimize cash transactions and round prices to the nearest whole dollar to reduce the need to exchange coins.
- During the market, routinely clean and disinfect "high touch" items such as tables, cash boxes, and touch screens on point-of-sale devices.
- Train your employees on at least the following: workplace infection-control practices, the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), steps to notify their employee of any symptoms or confirmed COVID-19 cases, how to report unsafe working conditions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- State of [Michigan Coronavirus Website](#)
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Food and Dairy Division Call Center: 1-800-292-3939
- Farmers Market Coalition [COVID-19 Best Practices, Examples, and Resources](#)
- Michigan State University Extension [Coronavirus FAQ Series](#)
- Michigan Agritourism Association (MATA)- [Guidance & Best Practices for Michigan Farm Markets & Agritourism Operations](#)
- Resources compiled by [Taste the Local Difference](#) and [Michigan Food and Farming Systems](#)
- [Getting Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready](#), CDC

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The Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) works with and for farmers market organizers, managers, farmers, vendors, and friends to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products.



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