



New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

***Maintaining Social Distancing and Safe Food Handling Practices:
Guidance for Farm Markets***

Updated 4/6/2020

For more information: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/covid-19/>

1. What social distancing measures can community farmers markets and on-farm retail outlets take to protect the well-being of staff and customers?

- Limit and control access at the market to ensure proper social distancing by establishing clearly marked entrance and exit points for customers.
- Post ample and prominent signage indicating proper social distancing (i.e. keep 6 feet away from others), hand washing, cloth face covering use and hygiene etiquette. Post information at the sales location, websites, and social media platforms.
- Post signage indicating that customers feeling ill should not enter, for example: “If you feel ill, please do not shop today”
- When possible offer shopping assistance to those who may be ill and unable to shop themselves.
- Consider online ordering, designated pick-up times, alternative pickup locations or delivery options.
- Keep customers at a distance from product and staff by using stanchion posts with retractable belts or other low-tech solutions.
- Postpone any scheduled events other than product sales.

2. What measures should be taken to disinfect areas of markets accessible to the public?

For hard surfaces such as tables, bins, and other surfaces:

- Follow the four-step process for your regular cleaning and sanitizing of surfaces:
 1. Remove all visible debris from the surface.
 2. Use a detergent appropriate for the surface and scrub as necessary.
 3. Rinse the surface completely of debris and detergent,
 4. Use a food contact surface approved sanitizer and always follow the label directions.
- To disinfect a surface the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends bleach OR 70% alcohol.
 - To make a bleach solution, mix: 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
- Visit the [EPA list of disinfectants](#) for use against coronavirus for more information.

For soft surfaces such as tablecloths, clothing, and towels:

- Following CDC guidelines:
 - Use soap and water, or other appropriate cleaners for use on these items.
 - For items that can be laundered, consult the manufacturer's instructions and use the warmest appropriate water and dryer settings.
 - As alternatives to soap and water or laundering, disinfect by following the label instructions of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered product.

- 3. What personal sanitation measures should be implemented at the market?**
 - Provide hand sanitizer at the entry/exit from the market.
 - Do-it-yourself cleaning products are not typically recommended, however scientifically valid solutions like [homemade hand sanitizers](#) are available:
 - Establish hand-washing stations at the entry/exit of the market for customers and in a designated location for staff/vendors.
 - Designate responsibility of monitoring and restocking these facilities.
 - Employees should follow [NJ Food Code](#) requirements for handling ready to eat food.
 - Touchless payment options can reduce cross-contamination risk. Consider supplying hand sanitizer, single-use gloves, and implementing frequent sanitizing of electronic payment touch surfaces.

- 4. What should a farm market manager/employee do if you believe a customer or employee with COVID-19 has been in the market?**
 - Follow [CDC recommendations](#) for cleaning workplace facilities if someone was discovered to be sick. These recommendations are not specific to food facilities, but food is not currently thought to be a transmission vehicle for COVID-19.

- 5. What procedures should farm markets implement to ensure proper food/agricultural product handling?**
 - All standard good food handling practices apply. Prevent cross-contamination of ready-to-eat food by properly using utensils such as tongs, single use gloves, or other suitable dispensing tools.
 - Provide single-use gloves for staff. Conduct training on how to properly use gloves.
 1. Wash hands prior to putting on gloves.
 2. Remove gloves prior to taking a break, eating, using the restroom, or any other time they may become damaged or contaminated.
 3. Wash hands and replace with a new set of gloves.
 - The CDC recommends the use of cloth face coverings.
 1. Maintain face coverings in accordance with [FDA's Model Food Code](#)
 - Launder between daily use
 - Store clean coverings separate from used coverings
 2. Follow [CDC guidelines](#) for proper use of face coverings
 - Remove self-service option for customers, instead have staff handle and package produce as the customer dictates.
 - Vendors may want to display samples of produce items, with produce available for sale secured in coolers or other protected areas.
 - Vendors/staff should designate one person to handle produce, and one person to handle payments.

6. What point of sale information should be posted for customers?

- Provide science-based information for your customers so they understand what risk reduction measures you are taking, and why.
- Fresh produce should be washed prior to use, unless packaging indicates it does not need washing. Hard rind produce, such as melons, can be scrubbed with a brush.

7. Can COVID-19 be transmitted by handling or consuming food?

- There are no documented cases of COVID-19 transmission from food.
- CDC states: [“Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food”](#)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states: [“Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19.”](#)

8. Can COVID-19 be transmitted from packaging and other surfaces?

- FDA states: [“Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19.”](#)
- It may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- × Taking temperatures is not recommended, as this is a medical procedure, and must be done by a medical professional to be accurate.
- × We do not recommend that fresh produce be washed with soap.
- × We do not recommend treating fresh produce with bleach.