

March 25, 2020

Honorable Douglas H. Fisher, Secretary
New Jersey Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 330
Trenton, NJ 08625-0330

Dear Secretary Fisher,

In an effort to slow community spread of COVID-19, Governor Murphy's Executive Order 107 directs the temporary closure of all non-essential retail businesses. EO107 further identifies "essential retail businesses" that are excluded from this directive and may remain open during their normal business hours. Among them are: "farmer's markets and farms that sell directly to customers."

Please find, attached, a synthesis of recommended/best practices that will allow community farmers markets and other farm retail outlets to operate in a manner that continues to allow residents access to food and agricultural products while advancing social distancing and other measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations were compiled by experts at the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers University. The team, led by Dr. Don Schaffner, includes Dr. Robert Goodman, Dr. Mark Robson, Ms. Meredith Melendez, Ms. Jennifer Matthews, Dr. Wes Kline, Mr. Rick VanVranken, Ms. Lauren Erickson, and Dr. Margaret Brennan-Tonetta. These recommendations, as well as informational resources that will aid farmers, may be found at a dedicated page on the experiment station website: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/covid-19/>.

NJAES stands ready to support the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and our state's farmers during this difficult time. Please call on us if we can be of further assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Schilling
Director, Rutgers Cooperative Extension