



New Jersey Agricultural  
Experiment Station

***Guidance for Maintaining Social Distancing and Safe Food Handling Practices  
at Direct Market Farm Product Sales Locations***

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

- Post ample and prominent signage indicating proper social distancing (i.e. keep 6 feet away from others), hand washing, and hygiene etiquette. Post information at the sales location, websites, and social media platforms.
- Enforce a policy that staff and customers are not permitted in the market if they are showing symptoms or if they have been in contact with someone showing symptoms.
- Limit and control access at the market to ensure proper social distancing by establishing clearly marked entrance and exit points for customers.
- 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. (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>)

**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: ([https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Homemade-Hand-Sanitizer\\_COVID-19\\_Flyer\\_031620.pdf?fw=no](https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Homemade-Hand-Sanitizer_COVID-19_Flyer_031620.pdf?fw=no))
- 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 ([https://www.state.nj.us/health/ceohs/documents/food-drug-safety/chapter24\\_effective\\_1207.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/health/ceohs/documents/food-drug-safety/chapter24_effective_1207.pdf))
- 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 a customer or employee shows signs of illness?**

- Ill customers or employees should be asked to leave the premises immediately and seek medical attention.
- Have a plan in place for who is responsible for asking an ill customer to leave the property, how this will be done, and if additional security measures/resources are needed.
- Follow CDC recommendations for cleaning workplace facilities if someone was discovered to be sick: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html> 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.
- 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.

**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” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>
- 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.” <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-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.” <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-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.

**DO NOT**

- × Face masks for employees are not recommended, as they are designed to prevent sick people from spreading disease and are not designed to protect healthy people.
- × 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.