



U-Pick Operations: Complying with NJ COVID-19 Executive Orders

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have no reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest coronavirus can be transmitted by food or food packaging.

U-Pick farm operations offer an opportunity for customers to purchase local fresh fruits and vegetables. Customers need to understand that picking produce at farms is about obtaining food at this time and should not be used to as an event destination or a family gathering. Farmers must follow the New Jersey Executive Orders that are specific to essential retail businesses. Each farm is unique and there are no one size fits all answers to providing a safe environment for workers and customers. Farms will need to focus on all aspects of the farm experience for the customers including parking, check-in, locating picking areas, movement through the picking area, and check-out.

Every effort should be made to notify your customers of the changes you have made at your farm due to COVID-19. Update your social media with detailed instructions, photos, and videos for customers so they understand the expectations while visiting your farm. Customers should be told not to come to the farm if they are feeling ill. Informed customers will make their time at your farm less stressful for all.

Executive order requirements are in bold with guidance discussed below.

Follow occupancy limits as announced in Executive Orders.

Social distancing outdoors at the farm.

Customers should have enough space to be able to maintain social distancing throughout their time on your farm, this includes the picking fields. Consider the normal flow of customers through your farm and consider one-way-flow options for customers. 6' of distance may require opening up every other row for picking in a field. Staff in the field will be needed to assist customers with information. Flagging and ample signage will be required to assist customers in following your policies. You may need to have additional check-in and check-out stations at the farm and consider time limits for picking in the field. Look at your farm with an online mapping tool to develop ways to have customers maintain social distancing and have a plan on how you will reduce bottlenecks in the field.

Establish hours, if possible, that permit access solely to high-risk individuals.

Depending on your farm visitor numbers this may or may not be needed. The goal of setting aside hours is to make your operation more accessible to those who otherwise may not be able to pick due to crowding and health concerns. For example, the hours of 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. could be designated for high-risk individuals.

Place signage at entrances and throughout the areas of the farm that the public accesses. Signage should include reminders about social distancing requirements, [face coverings](#), personal hygiene etiquette, and hand washing requirements. You may want to include signage about the picking process, directional signage to manage customer flow, signage indicating where restrooms and handwashing stations are located, a reminder to throw all trash into trash cans, and that customers should not be eating while at the farm.

Workers and customers are required to wear face coverings while on the premises.

Cloth face coverings are required for access to your essential retail business by both customers and employees. Face coverings are not required for those where it would inhibit the individual's health. You may not ask for proof of their health condition, and this will likely be a rare occurrence. Customers refusing to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons must be denied entry and you should make alternative purchasing options available to them. Children under the age of two are not required to wear a face covering. Face coverings are required outdoors when social distancing is not possible.

Visibly mark 6' spacing at check-out locations.

Tape can be used to space out 6' demarcations on hard floor surfaces at indoor check-out locations. For check-out areas that are outdoors marking paint can be used to indicate 6' distances on gravel or grass surfaces. Reapplications will likely be needed throughout the season. [Signage](#) should be posted reminding customers of the distancing requirements.

Install a physical barrier, when possible, to allow for distancing at check-out.

There are many ways to create a barrier at checkout to improve the safety of your staff and your customers. Plexiglass and wood have been the most common materials used to build these. A quick fix could be cellophane wrap around vertical posts or poles. In most cases it is easier to conduct payment through a gap between your check out table and the bottom of the plexiglass. This way customers will not have to lean around the divider to pay. When customers bring their own bags the customer should always maintain control of their bags and should load their goods into their bags themselves.

Provide contactless payment options, where feasible, and pickup or delivery of goods, when possible.

Consider applications such as PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, Cash app and others to facilitate a cashless pay system. Checks or exact change are better than having to make change. You may consider charging by the container size picked rather than the weight of the produce picked this season. The cost of the new container provided to the customer could be factored into the price. Consider offering pre-boxed or pre-bagged items for grab and go purchases.

Provide sanitization materials, such as hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes, to staff and customers.

Have handwashing stations at several locations on the farm. If the field is not next to the checkout area have handwashing stations out in the field. Post handwashing [signage](#) in appropriate languages at each handwashing station. Designate the responsibility of monitoring handwashing facility supplies (water, soap, paper towels) to an individual and provide ample supplies for restocking.

Require regular hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquette, proper tissue usage, and disposal.

Everyone should wash their hands often for 20 seconds with soap and water. This means as soon as customers come to the farm, when they use bathroom facilities, etc. If hand sanitizers are available customers should wash hands, then apply hand sanitizers. The sanitizer should be at least 62% alcohol.

Provide employees with ample time to wash their hands during the workday.

Farm management needs to set a good example for farm employees. Everyone should be washing their hands at appropriate times during the day, and this may feel excessive. Handwashing stations should be accessible in all work areas, monitored frequently and restocked as needed. Ample restocking supplies should be kept at the farm. Workers should be trained on how to properly wash their hands and how-to signage should be posted at all handwashing locations.

Frequently disinfect high-touch areas.

These high touch hard surfaces will vary by farm but can include tabletops, credit card machines, restrooms, keypads, scales, harvest containers, harvest tools, railings, doorknobs, etc. These areas should be cleaned and disinfected at least once a day, with frequency based on the number of customers you have at the farm. Sanitizers and disinfectants must be labeled for use on food contact surfaces and the specified instructions followed. Disinfection is recommended of high touch surfaces due to COVID-19 spread concerns. Disinfection kills germs, while cleaning and sanitizing lowers germ numbers to acceptable levels by removing them. Disinfection concentrations are much higher than sanitation rates, and caution must be used. The Center for Disease Control recommends a 1/3 cup bleach per 1 gallon of water ratio. This is 1000 PPM, and proper gloves, eyewear, and ventilation are needed when used. Surfaces must remain wet for the time allotment the directions indicate. This is typically at least one minute. More than one employee will need to be trained on the sanitation process to ensure that it happens correctly and at the desired frequency.

Visit the [EPA list of disinfectants](#) for use against coronavirus for more information.

Businesses must provide face coverings for their workers.

Businesses are required to supply their workers with face coverings and gloves for daily use. Workers may supply their own face covering if they so choose. Businesses should consider the length of their production season when ordering face coverings, and disinfection supplies as inventory is sporadic by suppliers. Cloth face coverings are not intended to replace personal protective equipment normally used for the application of chemicals including pesticides or sanitizers.

If you require workers to wear gloves when in contact with customers and goods.

Workers must wear gloves when they are handling product and interacting with customers. Workers should be trained on how to properly use gloves. Hands should be washed before gloves are put on. Gloves should be removed before the worker eats, uses the restroom, or takes a break. Gloves should be replaced if they become ripped or become compromised.

For more information on Governor Murphy's Executive Orders visit:

https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html

May 2021

Wesley Kline, Agricultural Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cumberland County

Meredith Melendez, Agricultural Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Jennifer Matthews, Senior Program Coordinator, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cumberland County

For the most recent up to date information visit our website at

onfarmfoodsafety.rutgers.edu

**on-farm food
safety team**

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Boards of County Commissioners. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station