



# Farmers Market Guidelines and COVID-19

Farmers Markets are deemed a critical service by the state as they provide communities access to healthy food options. To prevent the potential spread of the COVID-19 illness, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) released updated guidance on February 26, 2021 for the operation of Farmers Markets. Please review the Guidances for **Large Indoor Venues** or **Large Outdoor Venues** to understand best practices for safely operating a Farmers Market. This Q&A guidance document was created to provide answers to commonly asked questions about Farmers Markets that were received by the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.

## Q: CAN FARMERS MARKETS OPEN THIS YEAR?

**A: YES.** Specific recommendations include:

- Physical distancing of six feet or more is highly recommended. Avoid crowding and bunching of guests.
- Online Farmers Markets are allowed to open. Pick up may be conducted outdoors or indoors.
- Plans are encouraged and may be submitted to the ADH for any market that seeks guidance on operating safely. Submit optional plans to [adh.ehs@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.ehs@arkansas.gov).
- Face coverings are strongly encouraged for all persons present over the age of 2 years old.
- Signs may be placed at all entrances advising the public not to enter if:
  - They have fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell.
  - They have had known exposure to someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
- Signs may be placed at all entrances advising the public that they may wish to refrain from entering if:
  - They are 65 years of age or older.
  - They have underlying health conditions including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, severe obesity, asthma, or weakened immunity.
- Hand sanitizer/Hand washing stations should be available at all entrances and exits.



## Q: WHAT CAN BE SOLD AT A FARMERS MARKET?

### A: THE MARCH 26, 2020 RESTRICTION ON THE TYPES OF PRODUCTS THAT MAY BE SOLD AT FARMERS MARKETS HAS BEEN LIFTED.

Caution is advised for food product vendors as they may have increased demand causing a situation where social distancing is not being practiced. For this reason, limit the number of permitted food manufacturers (especially mobile food vendors) whose presence may result in lines forming while waiting for service or staying on-site to enjoy their purchase. Also, no sampling allowed.

## Q: WHAT IS THE MINIMUM SPACING RECOMMENDATION FOR VENDOR TABLES?

### A: 6 FEET MINIMUM AND UP TO 10 FEET IF POSSIBLE.

Use sprayable chalk or colored tape to help vendors and customers maintain social distancing while at the market.

## Q: WHAT ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES TO FACILITATE SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR CUSTOMERS AT THE MARKET?

### A: THE BIGGEST TRANSMISSION OF THE COVID-19 ILLNESS IS THROUGH PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT.

Consider these steps to reduce this contact before opening your market.

- **Market Design:** When designing the market vendor map, create a flow for how customers park, enter the market, exit the market and drive away. Prevent any bottlenecks from occurring and use sprayable chalk or colored tape to guide customers through the market.
- **Signage:** Post signs to remind customers and vendors of new market procedures, best practices and to continue social distancing. Examples from the Arkansas Department of Agriculture are available [here](#).
- **Shifting to an Online Market:** This method reduces social gathering but will require a significant change in the structure of traditional markets.

## ONLINE FARMERS MARKET



A volunteer packing customer orders while wearing disposable gloves and mask.



Signage directing customers on how to pick up their order.



A market manager writing a customer name on a dry erase board.



A market manager displaying the name for whose order is ready.



A customer picks up their order while maintaining 6 feet of social distancing.



The manager wipes down the table with a bleach solution to sanitize between pickups.

- **Steps BEFORE online market pickup:** Collect online orders before market day (1-2 days prior if adequate cold storage available); communicate to farmers for product delivery; inventory items and pack orders using safe handling practices; communicate to customers a designated time to pick up at an outdoor location.
- **Steps DURING online market pickup:** Customers arrive and text the market manager with their name and car identification. Examples include drive up services, curb side pickup and outdoor tables with dry erase boards displaying the next customer's order.



## Q: CAN VENDORS ACCEPT CASH PAYMENT?

**A: YES.** If a vendor accepts physical payment, a best practice is to have two people managing their booth; one to only handle payment and one to only handle food.

## Q: SHOULD THERE BE HANDWASHING STATIONS SET UP AT THE MARKET?

**A: YES, HAND WASHING/HAND SANITIZER STATIONS SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AT ALL ENTRANCES AND EXITS.** There are free videos available online that provide instructions on how to build a small DIY hand washing station. If this is not feasible, set up a sanitation station supplied with 60%+ alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- **Access to handwashing stations:** Consider creating hand washing and/or sanitation stations throughout the market. Ensure these do not create a bottleneck where customers could gather.
- **Access to sanitation and hygiene supplies:** Consider providing vendors disposable gloves, masks and cleaning/sanitizer/disinfecting supplies for their booth.

*These guidelines are subject to change due to new information from the Arkansas Department of Health. Be sure to check for local requirements that may still be in effect. Small businesses, including farmers markets, may receive some liability protection under ACT 559 should COVID-19 spread at an event; owners/operators must be in compliance with directives/guidances and acting in good faith.*

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**with any questions you may have regarding Farmers Markets and  
Local Food Systems. For more resources on COVID-19, visit  
[WWW.UAEX.UADA.EDU/COVID-19](http://WWW.UAEX.UADA.EDU/COVID-19)**



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This resource was produced in partnership with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service and the Arkansas Department of Health.