



COVID19 Response and Best Practices Guide for Utah Farmers Markets Updated 4/14/2020

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of fresh and local food to rural and urban communities throughout Utah. Farmers markets, farm stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs serve as vital food access points for Utahns while also contributing to the livelihood of farmers and food producers. Governor Herbert's [Executive Order](#) issued on March 6, 2020 states that agriculture and food are considered essential for public health and safety. The Utah Farmers Market Network, under the support and guidance of Utah State University Extension, considers farmers markets, farm stands, and CSAs as essential services as long as they are selling essential food/household items and are operating in compliance with local health and public safety officials. Current state and local directives can be found here: <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/special-orders/>.

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food has been working with the Utah Dept. of Health and all local health departments on developing guidelines for safe operating procedures and regulations for farmers markets. This guidance is forthcoming and will be incorporated into this document when available.

Below are general guidance and recommendations for farmers markets compiled from various sources including other state's farmers market guidelines, farmers market associations, health departments, the Farmers Market Coalition, and the Centers for Disease Control. This guide should be used as a starting point for managers in planning their market operations in 2020. Please note that additional modifications may be required by public health authorities. This guide will be updated regularly.

General guidance

The CDC has issued interim guidance for larger public gatherings¹. Some key points include:

- **Remain up to date with the latest COVID-19 recommendations** from your local health department website. Sign up for newsletters or alerts by local or county-level health officials.
- Build and **expand collaborative relationships** with essential community partners such as local health departments as COVID-19 information evolves.
- **Discourage people who are sick** from attending your events.
- **Create a contingency plan** if an outbreak occurs in your community, causing a need to postpone or cancel the market.

¹ [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

Considerations before opening your market:

- Assuming you have permission to open your market, do you have the capacity to comply with the regulations?
- Additional help may be needed to maintain safe operations – Do you have a plan for mobilizing additional volunteers and staff should you need to?
- Given that only certain items will be allowed to be sold at the market, will you have enough vendors for your market to be viable?
- Consider ways you can shift or change your market to meet the needs of vendors and customers such as market aggregated CSAs or curbside pick-up of preorders.
- Communicate with your vendors and customers about the status of your market well before your market is supposed to open, even if the status is uncertain. *See more about communication with vendors and customers in the section below.*
- Be prepared to respond to negative feedback from customers regarding your decisions.

If you can't open your market:

- Include vendors in decision-making and brainstorming of additional ideas for revenue streams and an alternative to the market.
- Assist your customers in connecting to sources to locally grown food when possible.

For market operations

As COVID-19 evolves, some of these precautions may become more or less important to implement, but you should determine at what point your market will make operational changes.

- Only allow vendors who are selling approved products. Markets taking place while under COVID19 precautions, arts and crafts will not be allowed. Please stay abreast of approved items per state and local regulations.
- Limit entrances; provide handwashing stations and signage on handwashing and other procedures at each entrance.
- Restrict foot traffic to 50 customers (or less) at a time; move your 'Information Booth' to front, add fences or ropes with signs that state you are limiting entry.
- Prohibit customers from congregating, eating on the premises and lingering.
- Eliminate music performances, community events and non-essential activities.
- Place markings on the ground and signage to remind visitors to observe social distancing.
- Encourage customers to wear masks while shopping
- Follow recommended procedures for payments, *see Payments at the market section*
- Employees should be washing hands frequently and wearing gloves if handling money or tokens. Follow proper handwashing and [glove safety guidelines](#).
- Design market for 10 ft. space between vendor booths.
- Provide guidelines to your vendors, *see section Vendor Guidelines and Communication*
- Opening early to allow for senior citizens and medically compromised individuals to shop.
- Suspend or alleviate penalties for vendor cancellations.
- Encourage use of touchless device systems as much as possible.

Guidelines for payments at the market

- For POS systems - Disable signature function on POS, and let customers slide their own card.

- For EBT machines - allow customers to slide their own card and wipe down the device between customers.
- Note that SNAP customers wishing to use their EBT card CAN order online, but CAN NOT pay online. Payment must take place at pickup, often called the 'Click and Collect' method..
- Use a Venmo, Paypal, or Google Pay service or other touchless form of payment when possible; [see resource on various mobile payment apps](#).
- Wipe all devices down frequently according to [CDC guidelines](#)
- Require market staff and vendors handling money or tokens to wear gloves and change them often..
- Round up totals to the nearest dollar to avoid exchanging coins with customers.
- For handling and sanitizing wooden SNAP tokens and metal DUFEB tokens, refer to this guide - <http://mifma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/How-to-Clean-SNAP-Tokens-document.pdf>

Vendor guidelines and communication

Provide vendor guidelines according to the recommendations below. As the situation could change throughout the season, establish a form of communication with vendors on a regular basis whether through an email, newsletter, or a weekly call.

- Frequently sanitize surfaces according to CDC guidelines.
- Employees should be washing hands at least once an hour. Gloves are recommended and can be used up to 4 hrs if you are doing the same activity. ²
- Maintain 6 ft from customers at all times.
- Restrict the number of customers per booth to 4 or less at a time.
- Prepared food must be packaged and consumed offsite.
- Establish a safe system for moving between handling money and produce.
- Eliminate sampling and self-service. Consider having one of each item in view and allow customers to request items.
- Utilize whiteboards or chalkboards to continuously update product lists so it will be visible to customers.
- Do not handle reusable bags.

Customer communication

In the weeks leading up to the opening of your market, and throughout your market season, ensuring accurate information on a regular basis will be essential to the success of your market during this time. Customers need to be informed that coming to the market may not be the same experience as before, but that the market is dedicated to mitigating the effects of COVID19 by staying in compliance with regulations, and ensuring a safe place to purchase food and essentials. Below are a few things to consider when communicating about your market:

- Provide customers with up-to-date guidelines and actions your market is taking to ensure their safety.
- Identify and display precautionary measures at market using large format signage.
- Prepare your customers to abide by the new rules at the market.

² http://foodsafety.psu.edu/angel/fssbook/unit_2/module_4/docs/Bare_Hands_or_Gloves.pdf

- Share the list of vendors participating, what items they will be selling, and how they will take payments with customers (including SNAP and DUFEB transactions)
- Remind customers that there is no evidence to support the transmission of COVID-19 associated with food, as per the CDC³.

Additional resources for farmer market managers

- Farmers Market Coalition website shares [guidelines and other resources](#) for markets; FMC also hosts a [free national listserv](#); check here for national updates for markets
- The California Alliance of Farmers Markets [has created response and best practices guide](#)
- The Michigan Farmers Market Association, [guidelines and recommendations](#)
- The Community Farm Alliance (Kentucky), [guide for farmers market operations](#), a [brochure for vendors](#) and a [guide for customers](#)
- The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, [sample letter to advocate](#) for your market during the COVID19 pandemic
- Additional [template](#) for advocating for your market

General Resources

- Utah Department of Health has a designated [COVID-19](#) page with the most up-to-date information in our state
- The **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** has an up-to-date [FAQ COVID 19](#) page
- [CDC Interim Guidance](#) for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID19
- [CDC Disinfecting facilities](#)
- Find more information from USDA here: [Coronavirus information](#)
- Find more information from FDA here: [COVID 19 Guidance](#)
- Find more information from WHO here: [COVID-19 advice for the public](#)

³ [CDC Coronavirus FAQ](#)