

OFMA COVID 19 Resources

This is a "living" document, and will be updated as we learn more.

POLICY

Last updated, 3/26/2020

Under the Governor's most recent executive order (week of 3/23), farmers markets remain exempt from shut-down and are still considered "essential businesses."

For current information from the Oregon Department of Ag on this topic and more related to COVID-19 go to <https://oda.direct/COVID19>

Allowed Vendor Types:

Your vendors may continue vending, regardless of product type, as long as they are practicing safe social distancing; HOWEVER any vendor who cannot, by definition, maintain social distance (mousseuses, face painters, etc.) may NOT be allowed at market for the time being and until further notice.

Social Distancing Officers:

Markets AND Vendor booths all need to each establish one "social distancing officer" (that's one per market and also one per each booth). That officer must (a) know they are the officer and be able to answer affirmatively if questioned, and (b) take responsibility for enforcing the social distancing policies in their own spaces. The vendor-officers will be responsible for their spaces and the market-officer will be responsible for the common spaces in the market. This can be done in addition to other duties, but needs to be a priority for that individual.

See below for approved guidance on social distancing and public health strategies

PRACTICES

There have been a variety of resources and best practices put together as to how farmers markets can adjust their operations to minimize risk to the public of transmission of COVID 19. We have drawn on those resources and synthesized these practices into a list of recommendations below, and will continue to update it as new strategies emerge. Oregon regulatory officials from ODA have reviewed and verbally approved the following:

Market Operations

- Reenvision your **market layout with social distance in mind**. For example, make aisles wider and space market booths farther apart (3ft if possible).
- **No samples**, and no exposed food on display; everything needs to be covered or packaged where possible.
- Restrict **hot food sales to take out only**.
- **Suspend durable dishware programs** and insist on disposable or compostable options for hot food vendors.
- **Cancel all nonessential programming**, display or partner booths, and interactive activities, such as kids crafts or music.
- **NOT ALLOWED: Vendors or volunteers whose services or products inherently require physical contact** or proximity, such as face painters or masseuses are NOT allowed under current government regulations (3/26/2020).
- **Remove all seating** - for example, food court tables and chairs.
- Add **more hand washing stations** and hand sanitizer.
- Continue to **run your nutrition incentive programs**, such as SNAP, DUFEB, WIC/Senior FDNP - if anything, more families are going to find themselves in need in the coming days!
- Implement a **zero-tolerance policy for coming to market when sick**, for both staff and vendors. Allow your staff paid sick days if needed - no questions asked.
- Consider **relaxing restrictions about buying “before the bell”** to cut down on long lines and crowding.

Booths spaced out, and handwashing stations prominently displayed at Oregon City Farmers Market

- Consider **limiting the number of customers** in the market at a given time if (a) your market has limited space and tends to get crowded and (b) you have the staff capacity to manage it. This could be done by giving out tickets or having volunteers stand at entrances to market with a customer count ticker.
- **Follow all rules and guidance from the OHA and your local government.**

Customer Expectations

- **You MUST require your customers to maintain safe distances from each other, preferably 6 feet apart.** There are lots of creative ways to do this, through signage, colorful tape, or other visual cues throughout the market to remind them. **Enforcing this is the responsibility of the Social Distancing Officer** (see Pg 1 for details).
- Ask customers to **stay home if they are sick** themselves, have possibly been exposed to COVID-19, and/or are high risk. Consider having a “senior hour.”
- **Recommend the following safety practices** for your customers:
 - Thoroughly wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds, and if not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
 - Sneeze or cough into a tissue or into the crease of your elbow
 - Wash all produce thoroughly when you get home
 - Wash your reusable produce bags between market visits



Blue tape on the ground helps customers visualize 6 ft social distance requirements.

Vendor Practices

- Ask vendors to **collect and bag all items for customers.** This can be enforced through signage, by putting the cash register at the front of the booth, and other visual and verbal guidance.
- Require vendors to have market **booth layouts that promote safe social distancing.** Provide them with the space to do this, and consider waiving fees if it requires extra space or equipment. A good [booth layout strategy](#) is to put an empty table at the front of the booth, with the table with products behind it, then the vendors behind that table., enforcing social distance and [putting products out of reach of customers.](#)

- Emphasize that vendors handling money, tokens or vouchers should not handle food products until they have washed their hands. If possible, encourage vendors with more than one person manning their booth to **designate one person to handle and bag purchases for customers, while a second person handles money and transactions.**
- Ask each vendor to have **hand sanitizer available to customers** at checkout.
- Encourage vendors to **bring their own handwashing gear** if possible, in addition to hand sanitizer, to keep their own hands clean.
- Require vendors to **stay home when sick or if at risk.** Facilitate that policy by removing all barriers, such as fines or loss of seniority for cancellations. If a vendor shows up to market visibly ill or becomes ill at market, send them home immediately.
- Require vendors and staff to **wipe down high touch areas**, such as tables, screens and cash boxes, frequently.
- Encourage vendors to **round their prices to the nearest dollar** amount, where possible, to cut down on the number of coins and cash changing hands per transaction.
- Recommend that vendors **bring plastic tablecloths** (or clear plastic to cover cloth tablecloths) for easier wipe-downs.
- While handwashing is the most effective way to cut down on disease transmission via touch, **if any of your staff or vendors have a habit of touching their faces frequently, it may be useful for them to wear disposable gloves** that they change frequently, as a reminder not to touch their faces.

Communications

- Emphasize in ALL communications that **protecting public health is your number one concern.** You *really* care about your farmers market community, and that should shine through as the core of every communication you put out.
- Provide customers with relevant, up-to-date information about **whether your market is open, and what your market is doing to ensure their health** and welfare at the market. Use all the electronic communications tools at your disposal: social media, email listservs, webpages, etc.
- **Visual cues** are important at a farmers market - most markets don't have time to stop every customer on the way in to explain new expectations to them! **Post signs** with your precautions and procedures all around the market, including the vendor booths. If you have spacing expectations for the customers, colored tape can be helpful too! It is best for markets to print and provide any new signage for vendors, rather than relying on them to do it themselves.
- Really **support customer compliance at market by reminding them of the rules** in a firm but polite way! This could be a great project for volunteers who would normally be doing other activities that your market has discontinued for now (kids' programs, etc.).
- Do **communicate your "why's" to the public**, for those markets who continue to stay open...
 - You provide essential services and food to your community

- You support X# of local businesses;
- You ran \$X of SNAP transactions per year and therefore serve a vital food access role for families of all income levels;
- Your market layout allows for social distancing, and your vendor practices and short supply chains allow for higher sanitation levels than are achieved in most grocery outlets;
- Etc....
- Consider making a press release or working with local media to get a story published. [This article](#) does a great job of laying out the value proposition of shopping at farmers markets right now.

OTHER RESOURCES

- There is an **Oregon farmers markets email listserv**, where a robust conversation has been taking place about COVID 19 strategies. You can [join it here](#), if you're not already on it.
- The **Farmers Market Coalition** has put together an excellent [webpage](#) with resources for farmers markets, including best practices, sample press releases, facebook posts, emails, etc. (Many of our recommendations came from this page)
- **OSU Extension** has put out a [great handout](#), which will be especially useful for your farm vendors, but pertinent to market operators too
- **Oregon Health Authority** has a [COVID-19 page](#)
- The **CDC** has a [FAQ COVID 19](#) page
- **USDA**: [Coronavirus information](#)
- **FDA**: [COVID 19 Guidance](#)
- **WHO**: [COVID-19 advice for the public](#)

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