



MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKETS RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Whatever role you serve at your farmers market, we know that not only are you dedicated to ensuring shoppers have access to healthy, locally grown food and other high-quality products – but you’re also deeply committed to the safety of shoppers and the products they purchase. Never in MIFMA’s history has this mission been more important. In response to COVID-19, we want to share with you the following guidance and considerations on operating farmers markets in Michigan during this period of heightened public safety. *The guidance below, originally issued by MIFMA on March 27, 2020 has been updated based on the May 7, 2020 Executive Order 77. New or modified information is in italics.*

Farmers market managers should consult their local health departments and the State of Michigan for information pertinent to COVID-19 and current conditions in their community.

You can regularly read the updates and recommendations available on their websites and sign up for any alerts offered by state or county-level health officials to stay the most up-to-date with what is being recommended or required.

As a follow up to the March 23, 2020 Executive Order 21, Governor Whitmer's Executive Order 2020-77 issued on May 7, 2020 provides further instructions and specifications to the Michigan public. This latest guidance instructs all Michigan residents to “stay at home or their place of residence” but allows individuals to leave their homes “to perform tasks that are necessary to their health and safety, or to the health and safety of their family or household members (including pets).” The order further clarifies which businesses and operations provide critical infrastructure and may remain in operation during this time, including which food and agriculture related functions are deemed critical. Additionally, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development clarified on March 24, 2020 that workers in Michigan’s food and agriculture sector who support “retail that sells food and beverage products” constitute “critical infrastructure workers.” *Furthermore, Executive Order 2020-71 provides additional instructions for any business that sells food including farmers markets.*

ACCORDINGLY, FARMERS MARKETS AND FARM STANDS SELLING FOOD PRODUCTS CAN CONTINUE TO OPERATE.

WHEN DECIDING WHEN/IF TO OPEN YOUR MARKET:

1. The State of Michigan has determined that farmers markets are among critical infrastructure that can remain open while non-essential businesses have been temporarily suspended. The guidance listed in this document for modified operations should be implemented to support the safe operation of farmers markets for customers, vendors, and market staff. However, due to rapidly evolving conditions and local variations on the intensity of the pandemic, county health departments may need to make different determinations about whether markets can operate safely in their locality. Contact your county health department to review these recommendations together and discuss their guidance for your community.
2. Farmers markets are being allowed to stay open because they are a critical component of our food system; however, market operations will need to be modified to focus exclusively on executing this function in the safest possible way. The recommendations in this document intentionally limit the function and features of a farmers market to *food, plants, and personal hygiene purchases* at this time. This makes for a very different farmers market experience from what you may typically provide, so your market should consider whether it can operate under these new conditions.
3. Consult with your vendors, particularly your farmer vendors who have perishable products which they may be relying on your market to help them sell.
4. Whether or not your market chooses to open, consider alternative ways you can support vendors and customers during this time, such as:
 - a. Helping to connect customers with farms directly through their websites.
 - b. Helping to facilitate online sales, product aggregation, delivery and/or pick-up options.
5. Communicate proactively with both vendors and consumers regarding your decision to operate or suspend the farmers market, including noting that this situation can change at any point. Make sure they know which channels you will use to communicate any changes (emails, website, social media, etc.).



FARMERS MARKETS MUST:

- *Limit the types of vendors that can facilitate in-person sales to only those selling essential items which consist of food, personal hygiene products, pet food/treats, and plants and gardening items.*
 - *Vendors selling essential items may also sell non-essential items if the sale of such items does not require any additional measures.*
 - *Vendors selling only non-essential items, such as cut flowers and craft items, may not attend the market for in-person sales at this time, but may facilitate sales through remote sales and curbside pick-up.*
- Eliminate all non-essential areas and activities such as music, seating areas, special events, and children's activities.
- Suspend all product sampling and cooking demonstrations.
- Mark the ground around booths with items such as tape, chalk, driveway markers, or traffic cones to instruct customers to distance themselves at least 6 feet apart while they are waiting in line.
- Limit the number of customers who can be in the market at one time in order to ensure that everyone within the market is able to maintain proper social distancing- 6 feet of space between people.

For indoor markets:

- Markets of less than 50,000 square feet of customer floor space should limit the number of people in the space (customer, vendors, employees and volunteers) to 25% of the total occupancy limit established by the State or local fire marshal.
- Markets with more than 50,000 square feet of customer floor space should limit the number of customers (excluding employees) to 4 people per 1,000 square feet.

For outdoor markets:

- Calculate the total square footage of customer floor space in your market and divide that by 113 (the square footage of a circle with a 6 foot radius) for the maximum number of people that should be in your market at one time. For example, if your market's footprint is 5,000 square feet, limit the number of people in your market at one time to 44 people (5,000/113).

- Direct prepared food vendors and food trucks to comply with regulations for restaurants in Michigan by offering only packaged items to take home and restricting customers from eating food on-site.
- Increase market stall spacing and aisle widths to allow customers and vendors to distance themselves at least 6 feet away from others.
- Have vendors set up in a way that minimizes/eliminates a customer's ability to touch the products.
- Provide handwashing and sanitizing (when available) at entrances and throughout the market. Ensure someone's job at the market is to make sure stations are continuously stocked with soap, paper towels, waste receptacles and hand sanitizer (when available).
- Require the use of disposable gloves for market staff who handle money, tokens, or vouchers, and remind staff about [proper glove use](#) and [handwashing procedures](#).

FARMERS MARKETS MUST:

- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like point-of-sale devices, tokens, etc.
- Communicate and reinforce best practices for washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Place visible signage throughout the market with [CDC-recommended safety and behavior guidelines](#).
- Be flexible with vendor attendance, eliminate penalties or absence fees.
- The employer of market staff must have a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan in place and available at the market. The plan must be consistent with the [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) developed by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).
- *The market must ensure all employees and volunteers have access to a mask or face covering. Masks should be worn in any enclosed space by anyone who is able to medically tolerate wearing a mask and whenever you are interacting with customers.*
- *Develop a [daily screening policy](#) that identifies and prevents market employees and volunteers from entering the market if they display respiratory symptoms or have had contact with a person with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19.*
- If your indoor market has more than 50,000 square feet of customer floor space, create at least 2 hours per week of dedicated shopping time for vulnerable populations including: people over 60, pregnant women, and those with chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease.

FARMERS MARKETS MAY WANT TO CONSIDER:

- Consider developing curbside pickup and/or drive-through options where customers can select and purchase items without getting out of their car.
 - *When adapting a curbside pick-up or drive through option, consider ways in which customers can safely participate in the market if they do not have a car.*
- Provide customers with relevant, up-to-date information about what your market is doing to ensure their health and welfare at the market.
- Post signs with your precautions and procedures and communicate this information on your website and through social media.
- Limit entrances to ensure customers enter where a handwashing station is available.
- Form lines outside of vendor booths and/or limit the number of customers within a booth at one time.
- Recommend that vendors use disposable gloves appropriately as an additional tool, but remember that gloves do not replace the need to wash hands and practice good hand hygiene.
- *Prepare and provide [Critical Infrastructure Worker documentation](#) to essential market staff and essential volunteers*
- *Encourage customers who are able to medically tolerate wearing a mask to wear a mask or face covering.*

STEPS FARMERS MARKET VENDORS SHOULD TAKE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND CONSUMERS:

- Do not attend the market if you have a compromised immune system and/or are not feeling well.
- *Ensure that all employees have access to a mask or face covering. Masks should be worn in any enclosed space by anyone who is able to medically tolerate wearing a mask and whenever you are interacting with customers.*
- *Develop a daily screening policy that identifies and prevents employees from attending the market if they display respiratory symptoms or have had contact with a person with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19.*
- Sanitize your market equipment and containers. Look to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#) for guidance.
- Have a handwashing station (preferred) or hand sanitizer at your booth and use it often.
- Pre-package all items before coming to the market as applicable.
- Clearly and legibly post product lists with prices so that customers can distance themselves from you and your booth and still see what you have to offer.
- Set up your booth in a way that minimizes/eliminates a customer's ability to touch your products. For example, set up a table in front of you with a product list and a table behind you with the product. Customers can tell you what product(s) they want and you can get it for them.
- Put less product out for display and restock more often.
- *Staff your booth with two people with distinct roles where one person handles the currency transaction with the customer while a second person handles the product. These two individuals should maintain their distinct roles and wash their hands if/when they switch between the task of handling currency versus handling product.*
- Only use market table covers that can be sanitized throughout the market day, such as plastic or vinyl.
- Minimize cash transactions and round prices to the nearest dollar to reduce the need to exchange coins.
- During the market, routinely clean and disinfect "high touch" items such as tables, cash boxes, and touch screens on point-of-sale devices.

FOOD LICENSES:

Executive Order 60 creates special considerations for renewing food licenses during this critical response time. As a market manager or a licensed food vendor, please be aware of the following:

- *License and registration expiration dates for food licenses have been extended until 60 days after the end of the declared states of emergency and disaster. Late fees may not be assessed during the 2020–2021 license year.*
- *A license holder may be eligible for a special transitory temporary food unit for the 2020–2021 licensing year even if the license holder received only 1 evaluation during the 2019–2020 licensing year.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- State of [Michigan Coronavirus Website](#).
- For questions about food establishment licensing and regulations, call the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Customer Service Center at 1-800-292-3939.
- Farmers Market Coalition [COVID-19 Best Practices, Examples, and Resources](#).
- Michigan State University Extension [Coronavirus FAQ Series](#).
- Resources compiled by [Taste the Local Difference](#) and [Michigan Food and Farming Systems](#).
- [Michigan Agritourism Association \(MATA\)- Guidance & Best Practices for Michigan Farm Markets & Agritourism Operations](#)
- [Getting Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready](#), CDC.

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The Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) works with and for farmers market organizers, managers, farmers, vendors, and friends to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products.



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