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# Best Practices and Public Health Protocols for Operating a Multi-vendor, Multi-stand Farmers' Market

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*[Farmers' Markets Ontario](#) would like to acknowledge and thank the [Peterborough Regional Farmers' Network \(PRFN\)](#) for developing and agreeing to share their Market Operations Guideline document. The PRFN worked with Peterborough Public Health in the development of the specific Public Health Protocols that enabled their market to open during the Covid-19 Pandemic.*

*We have revised the PRFN document to be more generic and easier for you to edit as required. We encourage markets to use these guidelines as you create your plan in co-ordination with your local public health unit.*

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This guide summarizes best practices, operational modifications, and appropriate personal behaviors to keep vendors and customers safe at your market during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the following pages you will find:

1. Best practices for staff and market organizers
2. Public Health recommendations and requirements
3. Stand set-up, customer interaction and sales, and social media supports

These are challenging times and Market operations have had to change to ensure customer and vendor safety. In order for Markets to continue to operate, Market staff, vendors and customers will need to all work together and adapt to the recommended policies and procedures from public health officials. This will not be easy as Markets are usually very social and hospitable places, but during Covid-19, **it is not business as usual**. We ask all Market stakeholders to be flexible, kind, and accommodating in order to continue supporting farmers' markets, farmers, small businesses and a resilient local food system.

## 1. Best Practices for Staff and Market Organizers

- No seating areas or kids play areas.
- Physical distancing between vendors (at least 10 feet between stalls).
- Hand washing/sanitizing stations throughout the Market.
- Signage promoting measures the Market is taking during Covid-19.
- Signage and arrows promoting one direction circulation for vehicles and customers through the Market, as much as possible.
- Market staff and volunteers in safety vests so they are highly visible for vendors and customers.

Market staff and volunteers have an especially important role to play in supporting vendors in adapting and following best practices for booth set up and customer flow management as outlined in Section 0.

## 2. Public Health Recommendations and Requirements

The overall purpose of these recommendations and requirements is to:

1. Promote and enforce physical distancing - 2 metres (6 feet) from others
2. Minimize common hand-touch surfaces and provide supplies to promote proper hand hygiene.

## **Public Health recommendations and requirements:**

- Establish/enforce a “one person per family” shopping requirement.
- Develop a plan including stand layout and circulation routes for vehicles and people. Try to establish one-way traffic/customer circulation. Use barriers (traffic cones/pylons) with arrows to direct the flow through the Market.
- Have clear “enter market here” and “exit market here” designations. Separate entrances and exits will allow for easier active monitoring and control over crowds.
- Limits need be set as to how many people can enter the Market area. Coordinators need to get in the practice of crowd-limiting techniques before it becomes an issue.
- Volunteers or staff should be present to direct people into and out of the Market and to ensure customers do not hang around and socialize within.
- Organizers/vendors must have e-commerce options available for customers to pre-order and pre-pay to reduce cash handling at market.
- Public messaging to promote shorter periods of shopping time.
- Have a plan to control line-ups for individuals waiting to get into the Market. This should include physical distancing in line and encouraging “no smoking”.
- Hand sanitizer and/or hand-washing supplies must be readily available for all vendors and customers.
- Only essential items, such as food, shall be sold or offered for sale.
- No food samples can be distributed to customers.
- No seating areas or ‘play areas’ can be set-up.
- Vendors should minimize displays and offer pre-packaged foods at rounded prices, to reduce cash handling.

### **3. Stand set-up, customer interaction and sales, and social media supports**

#### **Stand Set-Up**

- Use tables and other barriers to ensure customers keep a safe distance from you and your products. For example, a double table setup (a table in front of the table you store your products on) is effective in achieving physical distancing between vendors and customers.
- Consider all sides of your booth. To prevent customers being tempted to approach your booth from the side, ensure that area is also blocked or expanded to ensure a safe distance is maintained.
- Ensure there is ample space for lines to form in front of your booth, with customers keeping a 6-foot distance from each other. Use line delineated barriers (pylons or stanchions) provided by the Market or that you construct.
- Have hand sanitizer available for both you and your customers.

#### **Customer Interactions/Sales**

- Ensure all products are packaged and kept behind your table as recommended in the above section. This ensures customers will not handle your products before they have been purchased.
- Consider a plexiglass barrier hanging from your tent to separate shoppers from you and your products.
- Masks are recommended. Knowing that PPE is in short supply, use equipment that is homemade.
- Keep a 2 metre (6 foot) distance from customers at all stages of making a sale. This may involve having an alternative vessel for customers to put cash in that is a safe distance from you, having a pick up table to the side of your booth where you place purchased products so customers can pick it up from there, rather than you handing it to them.
- Consider alternatives to cash, such as online pre-order/pre-pay, or portable debit/credit systems.
- If using cash, it is recommended that, you keep the cash you receive separate from the cash you use to make change. Viruses can live on surfaces for up to 72 hours. If the cash you are using to make change has been isolated for this length of time, you will be handing clean cash back to your customers, stopping potentially infected cash from circulating throughout the Market.

- Try to round your prices to dollar values that will not require change. Have a designated area on the buffer table for customers to leave cash. When cash from a number of customers accumulates, put on gloves and remove it, keeping it separate from the clean cash that you are using to make change.
- Avoid lengthy conversations with your customers. The goal is to have customers **get in and get out**, so please encourage this in your own interactions as well.
- Sanitize your hands after every customer interaction.
- If customers touch your product without purchasing it, sanitize that item, remove it from your stock, or require the customer to purchase it.

### **Customer recommendations and expected behaviours at Market**

Since it is not business as usual at the Market, customers also have to adapt their behaviours. Signage should be created for the market to prompt these behaviours and vendors can help educate their customers on these new expectations, which include:

- Sending only one family member if possible to do shopping.
- Visit the Market website and connect via email or online store to preorder and prepay for products so that they can be easily picked up at market.
- Read and follow all market signs that communicate pedestrian traffic flows and other Covid-19 measures.
- Maintain physical distancing from other vendors and customers (2 meters).
- Do not eat food at the Market.
- Get in and get out.

### **Best Practices for Social Media**

Social Media Platforms (Facebook and Instagram) should be used by the Market to:

- Inform the public about Covid-19 measures in place.
- Inform the public about new Covid-19 measures being implemented.
- Inform the public about Vendors attending the Market and facilitate access to pre-orders through contact with individual vendors.
- Provide a preview of products available at the Market to make shopping efficient.
- Provide a platform for farmers/vendors to communicate and sell - promoting pre-order/prepay and pick-up/ delivery options.

We understand this is an enormous change from business as usual at the Market. We need to remain diligent with these measures now so that we can return to all the fun and enjoyment the Market brings in the the near future.

Be Safe!