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Kentucky Department of Agriculture

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Good Afternoon,

As Kentucky's Agriculture Commissioner, I wanted to let you know that your Department of Agriculture is working hard to address the concerns of producers, vendors, and farmers' market managers during the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand that Kentucky Farmers Markets managers and vendors have a lot of questions at this time. I want you to know that I hear your concerns. **I want you to know that we are going to get through this like Kentuckians always overcome adversity – together.**

During this outbreak, Kentucky Farmers Markets can provide an important place for producers to sell their healthy, nutritious, and farm-fresh products to Kentucky consumers. It's also true that our farmers markets provide important food access through SNAP, Senior Nutrition Program, Double Dollars, WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and other nutrition programs. **Now, more than ever, we need to empower Kentucky's consumers to choose food produced by Kentucky's farm families.**

As you may have heard already, Kentucky is currently in a state of emergency. Yesterday Governor Beshear issued an [Order requiring the closure of many public-facing businesses by 5:00 p.m. on March 18](#). The Governor's Order makes clear, however, that businesses involving food, agriculture, retail, grocery, and consumer goods are exempt from the executive order. **Because farmers' markets are retail enterprises that provide agriculturally-produced food products that consumers need, the Governor's Order does not require you to shut down your farmers' market.**

Of course, you should continue to take appropriate measures to ensure social distancing and hygiene in accordance with guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and [your local health department](#), including the following practices:

- Setting up your market with a lay-out to maintain the recommended six-foot social-distancing;
- Following appropriate hygiene measures, including regular, thorough handwashing;
- Ensuring that your employees who are sick remain home, and telling sick customers to go home; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

To help you work through these new challenges, today I am pleased to announce the release of a new guidance document titled [Suggestions for a Successful and Safe Start for Your Farmers Market Season in 2020](#) for you to use as a resource in the months ahead. In addition, I wanted to share with you some best-practices guidance from the Farmers' Market Coalition.

- **Establish relationships with key community partners** and stakeholders such as your local health department and collaborate with them on broader planning efforts.
- **Promote the daily practice of everyday preventive actions.** Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources such as your local public health department or CDC to encourage your event staff and participants to practice good personal health habits.
- **Discourage people who are sick from attending events.**
- **Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel.**

I urge everyone to remain calm in the face of this pandemic. We are going to get through this. The KDA stands with you, and with our farmers, during this time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ryan Quarles, Commissioner of Agriculture



Suggestions for a Successful and Safe Start for Your Farmers Market Season in 2020

Kentucky's farmers markets have always played an important role for our communities to access fresh, healthy and locally-grown products while providing our farmers a location to market their items. In the face of concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and its impact on Kentucky's agricultural and food-delivery industries, Commissioner Ryan Quarles and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture have developed these recommendations to assist you in planning for a successful and safe season in 2020.

Before You Open for Business

- Communicate with key community partners such as your local health department.
 - Ask your health department what steps are necessary before you can open for business.
 - Invite your health department to be present on market days.
- Educate your vendors about appropriate sanitization steps:
 - Hand-washing at least once each hour.
 - Sanitizing frequently-touched surfaces at least once each hour.
 - Designating one employee who is wearing sanitary gloves to handle money or vouchers and another to handle food, where possible.
- Review your lay-out map to spread out the gaps between vendor tables and create wide aisles for customers.
- Display public-health messages and materials (from CDC and health departments) where they are visible to everyone.
- Set up infection-prevention equipment and supplies, especially in high-traffic areas:
 - For everyone: Sinks with soap and water, liquid sanitizer dispensers, and tissues.
 - For staff handling money and vouchers: sanitary gloves and liquid sanitizer dispensers.
- Eliminate missed-day fees or penalties that might encourage a vendor to be present while he or she is not feeling well.
- Do not schedule grand-opening or kids-day events that might encourage people to congregate.
- Design a drive-through option for customers who wish to remain in their cars.
- Use social media platforms to communicate with customers about your public health measures.

During Operating Hours

- Tell vendors, employees, and customers that protecting public health is of paramount importance.
- Encourage people who appear to be sick to go home and stay there until they are well.
- Discourage the distribution of free food samples.
- Discourage cooking demonstrations.
- Require vendors and employees to wash their hands at least once each hour.
- Use sanitary wipes to clean frequently-touched surfaces at least once each hour.
- Ensure vendors sanitize their frequently-touched surfaces as part of their end-of-day activities.

Other Resources

- [CDC Interim Guidance: *Get Your Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)*](#)
- [Farmers Market Coalition: *Farmers Markets Respond to COVID-19*](#)
- [Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, *Listing of Local Public Health Departments*](#)