



Guidelines for Farmers Marketing Direct to Consumers Updated October 2020

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry understands that during this Covid-19 pandemic, producers and consumers alike want to know where to access fresh, safe foods. As Maine's economy continues to reopens during this ongoing [civil emergency](#), farmers' markets, farm stands, and CSAs continue to play a critical role as direct-to-consumer (DTC) food sources for many Mainers, including those living in rural areas and those using federal food benefits.

The Department continues to strongly urge all of these locations to take steps to facilitate social distancing, provide hand sanitizer/washing stations for shoppers and vendors, and prohibiting all food sampling. Resources regarding COVID-19 health information, worker safety, and best practices for safe business operations are available at the websites for the [Department](#), the University of Maine [Cooperative Extension](#), the [Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets](#), and the [Maine Department of Economic and Community Development](#) (DECD). Consumers, producers, and vendors all must practice excellent personal hygiene and stay home if unwell. DTC outlets are also encouraged to exercise their best judgment on a case by case basis on whether and when to be open to the public.

Recommended Practices for DTC Sites:

Social Distancing and Market Layout:

- Indoor markets must limit the total occupancy to 5 customers per 1,000 square feet of indoor shopping space (per DECD [guidelines for retail businesses](#).)
- Space vendors/booths as far apart as possible (indoor markets should consider having some vendors outside), ensuring customers may maintain 6 feet of separation, including while in line.
- Plan site layout to avoid bottlenecks (such as by keeping entrances to indoor markets clear).
- Keep traffic flowing by encouraging quick transactions.
- Design the market floor plan to encourage one-way traffic.
- Market managers are encouraged to work with landowners (municipalities, etc.) to determine if new locations or expanded DTC footprints are possible to accommodate larger market areas.

Products and Services:

- All vendors and customers must wear masks/face coverings unless they have an underlying health condition.¹

¹ Four Executive Orders have been issued that relate to the wearing of face-coverings in publicly accessible businesses.

- [Executive Order 49](#) FY 19/20, issued April 29, 2020
- [Executive Order 55](#) FY19/20, issued May 29, 2020

- Consider limiting vendors to those selling food, horticultural products, and soap during the civil emergency to enhance social distancing. If market managers believe that they have the physical space and capacity to allow additional producers to sell non-essential goods safely, they may do so.
- Prohibit on-site sampling.
- If food is consumed on site, customer must be seated in a separate, food-court area, following the [CDC's restaurant checklist](#) for guidance on set up and cleaning.
- No musical performances, demonstrations, bistro tables, etc. should be allowed.
- Pre-package foods whenever possible (i.e., "grab and go" bags).
- Maintain SNAP food access if applicable.

Sanitation:

- Establish a schedule for regularly sanitizing commonly touched surfaces (such as credit card devices and bathrooms).
- Offer hand sanitizer and/or handwashing stations for customers and vendors.
- Follow established disinfectant protocols (such as [these](#) from the National Pesticide Information Center).
- Do not allow employee food in retail area. Employee drinks may be allowed if kept where customers cannot accidentally contact them and employees sanitize their hands after handling the container.
- [Follow simple CDC rules for washing hands](#) and not touching faces.

Other Important Activities:

- Post simple signage reminding customers to:
 - Wear face coverings;
 - Wash hands;
 - Leave 6' space between themselves and their nearest neighbor, including when waiting in line;
 - Wash all produce before consumption; and
 - Remain home if they are sick, even with mild illness
- Establish and promote processes to allow shoppers to order ahead, if possible.

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- [Executive Order 2](#) FY 20/21, issued July 8, 2020
 - [Executive Order 14](#) FY 20/21, issued October 6, 2020

Together, these orders require face-coverings to be worn by the public state-wide in publicly accessible places where physical distancing is not possible. Exceptions include children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or related medical conditions, or who is otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. A person who cannot wear a cloth face covering because of a medical condition is not required to produce medical documentation of the condition. Reasonable accommodations may be made to serve such individuals, such as allowing ordering ahead and providing curbside pick-up. Businesses may deny entry or service to a person who is not wearing a covering and is not otherwise exempt from the requirement to do so. (Executive Order 55 FY 19/20, Section I(H)). Customers refusing reasonable accommodations may be denied service.