

March 13, 2020

Official Statement Regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Nova Scotia's Farmers' Markets

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) has been working closely with the Nova Scotia Health Authority regarding news of the potential spread of COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus. This virus is new and has been rapidly spreading around the world, with the first cases in Canada reported in late January, 2020.

Nova Scotia's public health officials are presently working closely with colleagues across the country to prepare and respond to the increased likelihood of more COVID-19 infections in Canada. FMNS maintains that it is prudent that all precautions are taken to minimize the potential spread of the virus. FMNS encourages Nova Scotians to stay informed.

The public health risk of COVID-19 is continually reassessed, and Nova Scotians can stay up to date by visiting this website: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

Both the Nova Scotia Health Authority and Canada's Chief Public Health Officer have advised that all Nova Scotians planning to travel outside of Canada should take precautions while traveling, and additional precautions—including self-isolation if necessary—upon their return. It is mandatory for all public service workers, including teachers, health care professionals, and public servants, to self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon returning from travel. It is recommended that *all* Nova Scotians should self-isolate and closely monitor their health for at least 14 days upon returning home after international travel.

FMNS greatly respects and appreciates the economic importance of our province's farmers' markets to the thousands of independent businesses that call farmers' markets home. Farmers' markets represent essential economic infrastructure. Farmers' Markets should remain open where possible while exercising strict health and safety precautions. Shoppers should continue to visit farmers' markets with the intention of making economic transactions, supporting their local producers, and exiting the establishment. Do not treat farmers' markets as social gathering places during this time.

As of 12:30 pm on March 13, 2020, FMNS does not recommend that any farmers' market voluntarily shuts down, unless otherwise instructed to do so.

All farmers' market managers and staff must closely monitor the abovementioned Nova Scotia website to ensure they are in compliance with the Chief Public Health Officer's order.

However, given recent and rapid developments, FMNS recommends that precautions should be exercised at all times to prevent the spread of the virus. FMNS recommends that the following precautions be exercised:

- **FMNS recommends that all farmers' markets in Nova Scotia take the following measures:**
 - Where possible, limit the total occupancy of your farmers' market to no more than 150 individuals at any given time.
 - Ramp up your market's cleaning protocol to include washing bathroom taps & door knobs and eating area tabletops every hour while your market is in operation.
 - Make a statement (or use this one) on your market's website, newsletter (if applicable), and social media channels informing your vendors and guests that health and wellbeing is a key priority, and ask them not to shop at or visit your market until 14 days after international travel, and not to visit under any circumstances if they have fever, cough, sneezing, or if they are taking antibiotics until prescribed treatment is completed.
- FMNS recommends that all farmers' markets in Nova Scotia take measures to promote **social isolation**:
 - Discourage crowding or concentrations of people in your establishment by maximizing real estate usage. Spread out your tables wherever possible.
 - Mandate that all food vendors only offer food to go.
 - Prohibit all dining in your establishment.
 - Cancel all musical performances and acts to discourage social gathering.
- *All Nova Scotians returning from out-of-country travel to any country* are encouraged to take the following precautions **for a two-week (14 day) period, even if they are feeling well**:
 - Self-isolate, wherever possible. You must self-isolate if you are a public services worker.
 - Avoid attending large gatherings, including farmers' markets.
 - Delay visiting elderly people or anyone with underlying medical conditions.
 - Call 8-1-1 for instructions if experiencing any new symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- FMNS asks that any individual who is feeling unwell should refrain from visiting a farmers' market at all times.
- FMNS **requests** that *all* farmers' market staff and vendors returning from *any* out-of-country travel should self-quarantine for a minimum of 14 days, and recommend that you do not participate in any farmers' market operations as requested by Canada's Chief Public Health Officer.
- FMNS recommends that **everyone** follows the routine preventative measures listed below to stay healthy:
 - Washing hands frequently with soap and water.
 - Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.
 - If ill—especially if with acute respiratory symptoms—stay home wherever possible.
 - Limit touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Don't share items like drinking glasses and water bottles.

- Frequently clean surfaces like taps, doorknobs and countertops.
- Practice **social isolation**; refrain from touching others, shaking hands, or being overly close to others, where possible.

Please stay up to date by visiting www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus

FMNS wishes to stress that it's important to stay informed while taking all necessary precautions during these times. We recognize and appreciate the importance of farmers' markets as essential economic infrastructure for vendors, small businesses, and shoppers alike, and encourage all individuals to exercise the necessary precautions to ensure that farmers' markets remain a safe, healthy, and clean space. Shoppers should continue to visit farmers' markets and support Nova Scotia's local producers, but treat farmers' markets, for the time being, as centres for economic transactions.

Sincerely,



Justin Cantafio
Executive Director