

Official statement from Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia

March 23, 2020

Farmers' markets during a state of emergency: Recommended measures to continue safely serving Nova Scotians

On Sunday, March 22nd, Premier Steven McNeil declared a Provincial State of Emergency and reduced social gatherings to 5 people. All Nova Scotians returning from out-of-province travel must self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days. Please go to <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/> to stay updated on the situation.

The Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) Cooperative continues to closely monitor the Government of Nova Scotia's updates to contain the spread COVID-19. We've been tirelessly working with Public Health Officials and our partners across North America to ensure we recommend and follow the best practices. FMNS continues to work with farmers' markets across Nova Scotia to ensure *all* of the most up-to-date NSHA and Federal health and safety precautions are being followed at all times.

With a Provincial State of Emergency now in effect, FMNS recommends that our markets go above and beyond with strict measures to minimize risks and ensure that our markets continue to operate as essential economic infrastructure in Nova Scotia. FMNS has not called for the closure of farmers' markets. However, FMNS believes that running market days as they used to be is no longer feasible during this time of mandatory social isolation. We're working to help our markets take innovative measures to ensure our farmers' markets continue to operate safely.

As of 5:00 pm on Monday, March 23rd, 2020, FMNS continues to recommend that *all* farmers' markets in Nova Scotia should cease holding market events. Instead, all markets should immediately shift to pre-orders and pick-ups only. FMNS will continue to work with *all* markets to assist with this shift, and has secured funding to **cover the cost of establishing online stores for our markets.**

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 are the foundation to thousands of jobs and the go-to point for healthy food and nutrition for tens of thousands of Nova Scotians. Now more than ever, our farmers' markets can play an integral role in supporting our local producers while feeding Nova Scotians.

With this in mind, FMNS believes the time is now to quickly adapt our farmers' markets to these fast-changing times. This unique challenge will give us an opportunity to temporarily shift our business models to continue supporting our local producers, while safely providing food and necessities for Nova Scotians.

Police throughout Nova Scotia have been authorized to enforce orders under Nova Scotia's *Health Protection Act*. This means that if an individual or business does not follow strict social distancing and self-isolation practices, they can be charged with a fine of \$1,000 for individuals, and \$7,500 for businesses.

In order to ensure that we continue to safely provide food and necessities for Nova Scotians, help to flatten the curve and prohibit the spread of COVID-19, and continue operating in compliance with the requirements of the Provincial State of Emergency, we encourage all farmers' market managers, staff, volunteers, and vendors to review and follow the measures below.

The following measures should be observed at *all* farmers' markets in Nova Scotia, effective immediately:

- Do not hold a farmers' market event. Direct your clients to your websites and/or social media.
- All farmers' markets should be operating through pre-purchasing and pick-up only.
- **Strictly follow and enforce social distancing practices at all times.**
 - Ensure that all staff and volunteers engaging in order packing, distribution, and delivery remain a minimum of 2 metres apart from each other.
 - You may wish to post your market's phone number on the window or door where pick-up occurs, giving your customers the option of phoning when they arrive, so they may stay in their vehicle, pop their trunk, and have staff deposit the order into the trunk.
- Strictly control the population of clients arriving for pick-ups.
 - Create dedicated pick-up spaces with strict boundaries.
 - **No more than 5 customers or clients must be present in a dedicated space at any given time.**
 - Stagger the times for your pick-ups.
 - Do not allow members of the public to enter your space unless they have purchased product ahead of time.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers continue to follow safe food handling practices at all times.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers have ready access to hand washing stations and hand sanitizer.
- Ensure that all vendors do not charge higher than fair market prices for goods and services. Failure to adhere to this directive could result in an enforceable offense by police under the *Emergency Management Act*.
- *All* Nova Scotians returning from out-of-province travel must self-quarantine for a period of at least 14 days.
- **Any person exhibiting any symptoms must refrain from being involved in any aspect of a farmers' market at all times.**
- Post this statement (or your own) to your website, social media, and newsletter.

During these times, we wish to stress that we must continue monitoring updates and taking all necessary health and safety precautions. The situation can change at any time, and we owe it to all Nova Scotians to stay informed. FMNS wishes to stress that it's important to stay informed while taking all necessary precautions during these times. We encourage all farmers' market managers, staff, and vendors to constantly monitor Nova Scotia's updates on COVID-19 by going to www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus.

More information about FMNS support for your market

FMNS wishes to stress that our farmers' markets can use innovative approaches to continue operating, without the need for market days for the time being. With support from FMNS, farmers' markets can pivot and adapt to new conditions: shifting their business model to continue supporting as many local producers as possible while finding new and innovative ways to safely provide food and necessities to Nova Scotians.

FMNS is working to implement necessary changes rapidly and help our markets adapt to the new market conditions and emerging needs of Nova Scotians. People need safe spaces to pick up food, and until this subsides, people will need food delivered to their door.

Please note the following:

- FMNS has secured funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture to help *all* farmers' markets in Nova Scotia create online marketplaces to help make pre-ordering, pick-ups, and even door-to-door deliveries easier.
- We will launch a public volunteer drive to recruit groups and individuals that can safely provide technical assistance remotely from their homes. If your market or your vendors require assistance with website building, social media, or launching an online store, please reach out to us immediately.
- Any farmers' market that hasn't yet been contacted by FMNS is encouraged to reach out to us immediately to join our program.
- **We will provide this service free of charge to all of our markets.** Seasonal markets may join as well.
- Markets currently operating are encouraged to contact us immediately.

FMNS will continue to work tirelessly with farmers' markets across Nova Scotia to rally our community and get our food and our message out to people over the internet and through news outlets at a time when more people are using social media and checking the news than ever.

By embracing innovative practices and by working cooperatively, we can continue to serve Nova Scotians in a safe manner, while continuing to support our local producers.

Sincerely,



Justin Cantafio

Executive Director