

Updated Recommended Measures for Farmers' Markets to Continue Safely Serving Nova Scotians

Important Disclaimer

Nova Scotia is under a Provincial State of Emergency, effective Sunday, March 22nd. The situation can change at any time. Please go to <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/> to stay updated on the situation.

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) is providing updates and direction to farmers' markets so that they may continue to safely operate with restrictions and new temporary business models. We have provided recommendations that apply to indoor farmers' markets and for open-air farmers' markets.

FMNS continues to closely monitor the Government of Nova Scotia's updates to contain the spread COVID-19. FMNS continues to work with farmers' markets across Nova Scotia to ensure all of the most up-to-date Nova Scotia Health Authority and federal health and safety precautions are being followed at all times.

With a Provincial State of Emergency in effect, FMNS recommends that our markets adopts strict measures to minimize risks and ensure that our markets continue to operate as essential economic infrastructure in Nova Scotia.

All farmers' markets should observe the measures outlined in this directive and adopt a regionally appropriate model for their market operations.

Update from FMNS as of 5:00pm on Friday, May 29th, 2020:

- For health and safety reasons, FMNS continues to recommend that farmers' markets **adopt and use a pre-ordering system** with designated population-controlled pick-up areas.
- Farmers' markets in Nova Scotia can operate a public market event, provided that **social distancing protocols are maintained at all times**.
- Farmers' markets that do operate a public market must have a plan clearly demonstrating their market's health and safety measures, **including an appropriate population limit to ensure 2-metre social distancing**.
- If social distancing is not possible, then a 10 person limit must be observed.

Please note:

With strict social distancing measures in effect for the foreseeable future, FMNS believes that farmers' markets will be able to serve more customers and generate more sales for vendors if they work collectively and adopt a province-wide model of pre-ordering and pick-ups. However, FMNS acknowledges that the pre-ordering model is not possible for all markets. Strictly controlled market day events *are* possible, but it should be noted that it may result in lower sales volumes for vendors, with an added element of risk to the public that must be controlled. Furthermore, it should be noted that if you have begun a pre-ordering system and/or an online marketplace, it may be in your market's best interest to keep that system in place, as the COVID-19 situation can change at any moment, including the potential for farmers' markets to be barred from operating a public market event.

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.

Please note that 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 observe the measures below:

Directives for Indoor and Open-air Farmers' Markets

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

- All farmers' markets should be operating through pre-purchasing and pick-up or drop off only, where possible.
- Public market events may occur either inside or outside the market premises, or as open-air markets.
- Post this statement (or your own) to your website, social media accounts, and newsletter.
- For whatever model(s) your market adopts and operates, **you must have a plan prepared and ready to share that clearly demonstrates how your market is complying with the *Health Protection Act* Order and public health directives, including a population limit that guarantees 2-metre social distancing is possible.**
- The plan does not need to be verified by a Public Health Officer, but you must have it ready to present it if asked for it.
- Your vendors should be aware of your plan.
- **You must monitor and strictly enforce a population limit based on the amount of customers your space can accommodate to ensure 2-metre social distancing for all individuals, at all times.**
- **If social distancing is not possible, then no more than 10 people may be present in a given area.**

- Update your websites and/or social media channels to clearly reflect any new temporary system(s) for your customers. You may wish to include your plan on your website.
- **Strictly follow and enforce social distancing practices for vendors, staff, volunteers, and customers at all times, noting that individuals must never be closer than 2 metres apart, at any time.**
- Strictly control the population and social distancing of customers at your public market and/or arriving for pick-ups:
 - Create clearly marked dedicated spaces with strict, well-defined boundaries.
 - Offer and encourage hand washing or the use of hand sanitizer before customers enter spaces.
 - Clearly mark out 2 metre spacing in the queue(s) or line-up area(s) leading to your dedicated space(s), and have staff or volunteer personnel on hand to let customers know when they can enter a space.
 - To encourage customers to come in and out as quickly as possible, observe the following:
 - Encourage all customers to secure their order and leave the premises as quickly as possible.
 - Do not allow any live music or entertainment of any kind on the premises.
 - Remove all customer seating areas.
 - Stagger the times for your pick-ups if possible.
 - For pick-ups, encourage your customers that only one person per household should be picking up products. Only those who have purchased product ahead of time should be permitted entry. Exceptions can be made for single parents and/or caregivers.
 - For touchless pick-ups, you may wish to post your market's phone number on your social media or the window or door where pick-ups occur, giving your customers the option of parking in a numbered parking spot, phoning when they arrive, and having staff deposit the order into the trunk.
- If appropriate, your market may wish to create a designated storefront space:
 - All of the abovementioned social distancing and population control practices must also be enforced, in addition to:
 - Provide handwashing stations for customers, and do not allow a customer to enter your storefront without first washing their hands.
 - Please note that additional permits or licences may be required.
- All vendors, staff, and volunteers must continue to follow safe food handling and hygiene practices at all times at all areas of your market:
 - Ensure that all staff and volunteers have ready access to hand washing stations and hand sanitizer.
 - **All staff, volunteers, and vendors should wear a facemask.** A non-medical face covering is appropriate (see Additional Resources below for further information).
- Managers must 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.**

Special notice: Farmers' market may operate a public market event in their facility and/or outside of their facility, or as an open-air public market. In this case, **all of the abovementioned social distancing and population control practices must also be strictly enforced, in addition to:**

- Vendor tables or booths must be widely spaced out on the premises.
- Vendors should not issue product samples to customers at any time.
- Brewed coffee or tea should not be served on the premises. Roasted beans may be sold.
- All customers should be encouraged by staff and volunteers to enter and exit the designated space as quickly as possible.
- Customers should be encouraged by staff and volunteers to refrain from stopping and chatting with vendors. Vendors should also be encouraged to refrain from engaging in lengthy conversation.
- Vendors should not allow customers to touch their products unless they intend to purchase that product.
- Vendors should pre-wrap or pre-package all products in units with set prices, and not sell by volume or weight.
- Prepared food and drink should only be served "to-go", and not to be consumed on the premises.
- Vendors should encourage the use of credit card or debit card, and refrain from accepting cash. If this is not possible, vendors should have a designated person handling cash while another person handles product.
- Vendors who must handle cash should consider rounding to the nearest dollar to avoid excessive use of coins, and should consider bringing a cash box of sanitized currency, keeping customer currency in a separate container.
- Do not allow dogs at your farmers' market.

More information about FMNS support for your market

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.

FMNS wishes to stress that our farmers' markets can use innovative approaches to continue operating. 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 to 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 may 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 easier.

- **We will provide this service free of charge to all of our markets.** Seasonal markets and open-air markets may join as well.
- All markets even if not currently operational are urged to contact us immediately for support and guidance.

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.

Additional Resources

- Farmers' Market Coalition's Webinar: Farmers Markets Physical Redesign for Covid-19 Mitigation:
 - <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/resource/webinar-farmers-markets-physical-redesign-for-covid-19-mitigation/>
- Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia's *Guide to Financial Assistance and Payment Deferrals for Farmers' Markets and Vendors in Nova Scotia*:
 - <https://farmersmarketsnovascotia.ca/2020/05/07/may-7-2020-updated-guide-to-financial-assistance-and-payment-deferrals-for-farmers-markets-and-vendors-in-nova-scotia/>
- Government of Canada's information about non-medical facemasks:
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>
- Government of Nova Scotia's COVID-19 information website:
 - <https://www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus>
- Government of Nova Scotia's *Preparing to Reopen Nova Scotia* website:
 - <https://novascotia.ca/reopening-nova-scotia/#not-required-to-close>
- Government of Nova Scotia's Order by the Medical Officer of Health Under Section 32 of the *Health Protection Act*:
 - <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf>