

Official farmers' market sector-specific COVID-19 prevention plan

February 18, 2022: Recommended Measures for Farmers' Markets to Continue Safely Operating

Disclaimer

As of Monday, February 14, 2022, Nova Scotia has adopted a new [Reopening Plan](#) and will be gradually easing restrictions. [Phase 1](#) began on February 14 with several changes coming into place immediately. All farmers' markets should observe the measures outlined in the directives on pages 2-4 of this document and adopt a regionally appropriate COVID-19 prevention plan for their farmers' market's operations. Additional resources are available at the end of this document (page 5).

Nova Scotia remains under a Provincial State of Emergency, and farmers' markets must continue to adhere to restrictions contained in the most current Nova Scotia [Health Protection Act order](#). Please note that the situation can change at any time. Go to <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/> to stay updated on the situation.

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) continues to hold that public markets are essential food infrastructure providing essential economic services. FMNS bases our farmers' market sector-specific COVID-19 prevention plan on the rules and regulations created by Nova Scotia Public Health.

Farmers' markets have and continue to be allowed to operate in all regions throughout Nova Scotia. The Province of Nova Scotia recognizes farmers' market vendors as essential service workers and has categorized farmers' markets and their public markets as non-discretionary business activities, meaning they are exempt from requirements for proof of vaccinations. The Province of Nova Scotia states that businesses and organizations are free to create their own vaccination policies but are not required to do so. It should be noted that any proof vaccination policy should take legal and ethical implications into consideration and that all people are required to be allowed to access essential services, which include public markets.

FMNS is Nova Scotia's farmers' market sector association and regularly provides updates and directives to farmers' markets so that they may continue to safely operate. We continue to work with various Government of Nova Scotia departments to stay updated on efforts to contain the spread COVID-19.

FMNS encourages those farmers' markets that run public markets to ensure that the primary focus of the market is on promoting commercial activity for their vendors, with an emphasis on creating safe, population-controlled spaces with social distancing measures and/or physical barriers where appropriate.

FMNS continues to hold that farmers' markets are the social, cultural, and economic backbone of communities across Nova Scotia. They're small-business incubators, job creators, and hubs for community building. By adapting and observing restrictions we'll keep ensuring that our farmers' markets continue to safely operate and support our communities.

FMNS directives effective February 18, 2022:

Note: FMNS recommends that farmers' markets post this statement to their websites, social media accounts, and newsletters.

The following measures are to be observed at farmers' markets in Nova Scotia:

General directives for all farmers' markets:

- All farmers' markets can operate a public market, indoors and/or outdoors.
- **Farmers' markets can operate at 100% capacity.**
- **Farmers' markets must ensure 2-metre social distancing protocols are maintained and/or physical barriers are used.**
- All public markets must take place in a clearly demarked building and/or designated outdoor area.
- Rules for face masks:
 - **All vendors, staff, volunteers, and customers must wear a face mask while attending an indoor public market or any interior space of a farmers' market.**
 - **Customers may remove their mask while eating or drinking only in a designated indoor eating area and must be seated to do so.**
 - Please observe the following conditions for face masks:
 - Non-medical masks should fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops. They should be made of at least two layers of tightly woven material fabric and be large enough to completely cover the nose and mouth.
 - Face shields are not an acceptable alternative for face masks.
 - Face masks may be temporarily removed in designated eating areas in indoor spaces when eating or drinking.
 - Those exempt from wearing a mask include children under the age of 2, or children aged 2 to 4 if they cannot be persuaded, or individuals with underlying medical conditions.
 - FMNS and Public Health encourage vendors to wear face masks at outdoor public markets.
- Rules for proof of vaccination:
 - Public markets are considered a non-discretionary business and are **not required** to ask for proof of vaccination during their hours of operation.
 - A non-discretionary business can operate in a discretionary business space, and when the non-discretionary business is running, proof of vaccination is not required. Public markets are exempt from needing to provide proof of vaccination during their hours of operation, even if they occur in a building that normally requires proof of vaccination, as public market rules supersede whatever rules are in place for the building in which the public market operates.
- Rules for eating areas:
 - Indoor designated eating areas may only operate at 75% of that area's capacity.
 - **2-metre social distancing protocols and/or physical barriers are not mandatory in designated eating areas but are encouraged wherever possible.**
 - Tables in eating areas have a limit of 25 people per table.

- Clarification regarding the use of tents and outdoor coverings:
 - A farmers' market with a large tent or structure that covers multiple vendors is considered an indoor farmers' market and must follow indoor public market rules.
 - A popup tent that a single vendor uses to protect their product from contamination and the vendor from the elements is considered an outdoor vendor.
- Rules for sampling:
 - Alcohol samples are permitted.
 - Samples should only be made available by the vendor when requested.
 - Sampling rules for our outdoor public markets:
 - Samples may be consumed at the vendor booth at outdoor public markets.
 - Sampling rules for indoor public markets:
 - Vendors may provide individual, prepackaged samples.
 - Signage should be placed at vendor booths for vendors offering samples, as well as throughout your farmers' market, to indicate where the samples can be consumed.
 - Customers must always wear face masks at indoor public markets and must not remove their masks at vendor booths.
 - Samples may only be consumed in designated eating areas or outside of the market.
- If your farmers' market experiences a COVID-19 exposure, please follow Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia's *Recommended Measures for Farmers' Markets Following a COVID-19 Exposure*
 - <https://farmersmarketsnovascotia.ca/2021/04/23/april-23-2021-recommended-measures-for-farmers-markets-following-a-covid-19-exposure/>
- A farmers' market operating in an indoor space *must* provide public access to a washroom.
- Rules for live music:
 - Live music is permitted at farmers' markets.
 - Musicians must wear a mask while performing, except when singing or playing a wind instrument.
- Rules for animals:
 - Dogs are allowed at outdoor public markets.
 - Service dogs are allowed at indoor and outdoor public markets.
 - Emotional support animals may be permitted at indoor and outdoor public markets only if they do not pose a risk to the public and/or food safety protocols.
- You must have a COVID-19 prevention 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 how your market is ensuring 2-metre social distancing.
 - You must have a printed copy of your plan ready to present to a public health officer if asked for it. Your vendors should be aware of your plan.
 - FMNS has created a plan template, which is available upon request.
- All vendors, staff, and volunteers must follow safe food handling and hygiene practices in all areas of your market.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers have ready access to hand washing stations and hand sanitizer.

Voluntary guidance for farmers' markets operating public markets:

- Farmers' markets may wish to adopt a pre-purchasing and pick-up system, which may include operating an online marketplace. Should you require support to do so, contact FMNS immediately.
- Strictly follow and enforce social distancing practices for vendors, staff, volunteers, and customers.
- All customers should be encouraged by staff and volunteers to enter and exit the designated public market 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-package all products in units with set prices, and not sell by volume or weight.
- 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 may wish to 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.

Voluntary guidance for farmers' markets conducting pre-purchase pick-ups:

- Stagger the times for your 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.

Notes for controlling the population and ensure 2-metre social distancing of customers:

- You should choose to set an appropriate limit on the number of people in a designated space at a time to ensure physical distancing.
- 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.
- Structure your space to encourage customers to come in and out as quickly as possible.
- Encourage all customers to secure their order and leave the premises as quickly as possible.

Additional Resources

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- Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia's *Recommended Measures for Farmers' Markets Following a COVID-19 Exposure*
 - <https://farmersmarketsnovascotia.ca/2021/04/23/april-23-2021-recommended-measures-for-farmers-markets-following-a-covid-19-exposure/>
 - Government of Nova Scotia's Reopening Plan:
 - <https://novascotia.ca/reopening-plan/>
 - Government of Nova Scotia's COVID-19 information website:
 - <https://www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus>
 - Restated Order of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (section 32 of the *Health Protection Act*)
 - <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf>
 - Government of Nova Scotia's COVID-19 Prevention Guide for event organizers, theatres, and performance venue:
 - <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Events-theatres-and-venues-COVID-19-prevention-guidelines.pdf>
 - Farmers' Market Coalition webinar – *Farmers' Markets Physical Redesign for Covid-19 Mitigation*:
 - <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/resource/webinar-farmers-markets-physical-redesign-for-covid-19-mitigation/>
 - 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>