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

# March 21, 2022: Recommended Measures for Farmers' Markets to Continue Safely Operating

## Disclaimer

Starting Monday, March 21, 2022, Nova Scotia will shift into [Phase 3](#) of its [Reopening Plan](#). During Phase 3, gathering limits, social distancing, and mask restrictions are lifted for indoor and outdoor farmers' markets.

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia (FMNS) bases our farmers' market sector-specific COVID-19 prevention plan on the rules, regulations, and recommendations laid out by Nova Scotia Public Health. Nova Scotia Public Health is encouraging *everyone* to continue wearing masks in indoor settings where possible, even after March 21.

Your farmers' market may wish to consider creating and enforcing its own masking policy. However, according to the Government of Nova Scotia, "Businesses and organizations can set their own policies, but must consider the legal and ethical implications of those policies." If you choose to set your own policy, FMNS must stress that your market only does so at your own discretion.

FMNS stresses that where possible, all farmers' markets should continue to work to limit the spread of COVID-19 in their public markets and can do so by observing the measures outlined in the directives on pages 2-3 of this document and maintain a regionally appropriate COVID-19 prevention plan for their farmers' market's operations. Nova Scotia Public Health continues to recommend that 2-metre social distancing and/or physical barriers continue to be used where possible.

Nova Scotia has lifted its Provincial State of Emergency as of March 21, 2022. However, please note that the situation can change at any time, and the Province reserves the right to resume COVID-19 restrictions at any given notice. Go to [www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus/](http://www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus/) to stay updated on the situation.

FMNS continues to hold that public markets are essential food infrastructure that provide essential economic services. Farmers' markets have always been 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.

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 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 community hubs. By adapting and observing restrictions where possible, we'll keep ensuring that our farmers' markets continue to safely operate and support our communities.

## FMNS directives effective March 21, 2022, and in place until further notice:

*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:***

- Farmers' markets can operate at 100% capacity.
- While not required, FMNS continues to recommend that 2-metre social distancing protocols and/or the use of physical barriers are in place where possible.
- Masking restrictions are lifted for indoor and outdoor farmers' markets, however **FMNS continues to recommend that markets encourage vendors, staff, volunteers, and customers to wear a face mask while attending a public market or any interior space of a farmers' market, except when eating or drinking.** This is in line with Nova Scotia Public Health's recommendations.
- Indoor designated eating areas may operate at 100% of that area's capacity with no limit for the number of people sitting at a table.
  - 2-metre social distancing protocols and/or physical barriers are not mandatory in designated eating areas but are encouraged by FMNS wherever possible.
- Sampling is permissible at farmers' markets without any restrictions.
- Indoor farmers' markets must provide public access to a washroom.
- Live music is permitted at farmers' markets.
- 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.
- FMNS recommends that farmers' markets continue to have a COVID-19 prevention plan prepared.
  - FMNS has created a plan template, which is available upon request.
- All vendors, staff, and volunteers must continue to follow safe food handling and hygiene practices in all areas of your market.
- Farmers' markets can host special events without restrictions.
- FMNS recommends that farmers' markets continue to ensure that all customers, vendors, staff, and volunteers have ready access to hand washing stations and hand sanitizer.

### *Voluntary guidance for farmers' markets operating public markets:*

- To accommodate those who prefer to stay masked and be around masked people, your farmers' market may wish to consider setting aside dedicated times where masking is required by vendors and all those who attend your market. This could be for 30 to 60 minutes at the start of your market, for example.

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- 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.
  - Vendors should not allow customers to touch their products unless they intend to purchase that product.
  - 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 measures for controlling the population and ensure 2-metre social distancing of customers:
    - You may 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.