

Farmers Market and U-Pick Best Practices and Regulations

Introduction

As of April 24th, 2020, along with other federal, state, and local agencies, public health officials across the country, Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals, and the Iowa Department Agriculture and Land Stewardship continue to partner to provide critical information to protect public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this document is to provide food safety guidance and examples to farmers markets and u-pick operations on how to as safely as possible open their doors for business during this COVID-19 pandemic.

General Food Safety Best Practices

Regardless of the operation type, the following six items must be established: 1) Health Policy and Procedure; 2) Social distancing; 3) Hand Hygiene; 4) Cleaning, Disinfecting and Sanitization; 5) Minimizing the number of Touches; and 6) Communication to Public.

Health Policy and Procedure

Farms should establish a protocol to monitor employees' health. Common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough but can also include symptoms similar to foodborne illness and pink eye. Symptoms of foodborne illness include diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, fever and sore throat.

Employees should be aware of potential exposure to COVID-19. A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within six feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the 48 hours prior to the individual becoming symptomatic. Sick workers should stay home or go home if they develop symptoms during the work day. Workers who have symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home or go home. Sick workers should follow CDC-recommended steps. Workers should not return to work until they meet all the criteria to end home isolation, in consultation with healthcare providers.

If a worker is confirmed infected, inform fellow workers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The employer should instruct fellow workers about how to proceed based on the CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure. The confirmed infected employee should stay home until 14 days after last exposure and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others at all times. They should self-monitor for symptoms (i.e. Check temperature twice a day and Watch for fever*, cough, or shortness of breath). Employers should: 1) Close off areas used by the person who is sick; 2) Clean and disinfect a sick worker's workspace. Wait 24 hours or, if 24 hours is not possible, as long as practical before you clean and disinfect; 3) Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the exposed area, if reasonable given food safety regulations; 4) Collect information about the worker's contacts among co-workers, up to 2 days prior to symptom onset, to identify other workers who could be considered exposed.

This same protocol should be applied to your customers. No customers with symptoms should visit your market/farm to pick up goods. Communicate these requirements to your customers through your marketing outlets such as Facebook, website, and signage on your farm. Visitors expressing symptoms of COVID-19 should be asked to leave the premises immediately and common areas cleaned and disinfected.

Social Distancing

Social distancing of six feet should be maintained as much as possible. The design should encourage customer traffic flow that only moves in one direction. At farmers markets, there must be a minimum of six feet between each booth and take effort to minimize areas where crowds congregate (such as seating). Similarly, at the farm, the entrance and exit should be at different locations to ensure flow of customers. To ensure social distancing between you and your customers, place a table, physical barrier, or floor markings to indicate the six foot mark. Limiting the number of persons who are in the market/farm and extending the hours of operation will provide additional assurances that crowding will not occur. No entertainment or contest such as petting zoos, contest, musicians. Some operations have made sign-up times to attend the market/farm, some have self-checkout system with staff on hand to assist as needed, and others have gone to a preorder curbside pickup. At U-pick farms, encourage customers to harvest 6 feet away from other guests. Encourage your customers and employees to wear face masks during their visit. Stagger employees break times during the work day to ensure social distancing during breaks. Encourage your employees to practice social distancing and avoid large gathering outside of the work schedule.

Hand Hygiene

Farms should ensure adequate availability of hand washing stations on the farm and at individual market stalls to ensure hand hygiene is followed. Schedule time for hand washing to encourage employees to keep their hands clean. Re-train your employees on how and when to wash their hands. Schedule times to check the supplies at each hand washing station and to clean and sanitize throughout the day to ensure each hand washing station serves its purpose. Wash hands for 20 seconds using five basic steps: 1) rinse with potable water; 2) apply soap; 3) scrub; 4) rinse with potable water; and 5) air dry, single use towel, or automatic drier. Hand sanitizer can be used if hand washing is not feasible. Hand washing should always be used following eating, drinking, smoking, using the restroom, or touching animals. Remember that the hand sanitizer liquid should be wet on hands for a minimum of 20 seconds.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Review, improve, and reinforce your standard operating procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and drying any food contact surfaces, food handling equipment, bins, tools, and high contact surfaces. A schedule should be established for when surfaces will be cleaned, disinfected and sanitized. The first step to clean and sanitize surfaces is to understand the difference between cleaning and sanitizing. Cleaning means to remove soil, dust, grease or other debris from the surface. Sanitizing means to reduce the microorganism on the surface. The cleaning process typically includes using soap or detergent to scrub the debris from a surface. Dishwashing soap is an example of a soap or detergent product that can be used. Pre-rinsing to remove larger pieces of debris before scrubbing will make the process more effective. Follow this general procedure for cleaning surfaces: 1) Wet the surface; 2) Scrub the surface with detergent; 3) Rinse the surface; and 4) Allow the surface to air dry. The sanitizing process typically includes using a chemical disinfectant to reduce microorganisms on the surface. Surfaces and objectives must be cleaned before sanitizing is effective at reducing the risk of spreading infection. Viruses, in general, can be relatively long-lasting in the environment. *These cleaning and sanitizing procedure recommendations have not changed.* Use an EPA-approved product that has an emerging viral pathogen claim [EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the Cause of COVID-19](#). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and sanitizing products. Not all products are appropriate for food contact surface sanitizing.

Cleaning and Sanitizing, continue

Please note that there is a specific chemical contact time for these sanitizers (such as 30 seconds or 2 minutes) and proper personal protective equipment (such as gloves or goggles) may be required to use. High contact surfaces include cellphones, door knobs, restroom faucets, counters, soap dispensers, toilet seats, desks, chairs, and computer keyboards. It may also include steering wheels, shifters, and keys on frequently used farm vehicles. Refer to the Center for Disease Control [website](#) for more details.

Minimize the Number of Touches

Determine how many employees are needed for your market/farm to operate. Consider minimizing the number of people handling the product and the number of times the product is touched by different people. An example is the pack crew is also the crew that operates the farmers market. These considerations should include farm workers, distributors and customers. Pre-bagging of product can minimize the number of touches.

Communication to Public

Ensure that your customers know your new procedures. Communicate these requirements to your customers through your marketing outlets such as Facebook, website, and signage on your farm to ensure expectations are set. Communication should include information about: 1) what your business is doing to ensure your employees are healthy and your product is safe; 2) emphasize staying home if sick; 3) any new procedures to pick up product (such as curbside, delivery, specific times to pick up items, mask suggestions); and 4) payment options (such as cash free options, paying online).

Best Practices for Farmers Market and U-Picks

✓ General

- Be prepared if an employee is sick and cannot make the shift
- Be prepared if an employee becomes sick within the shift.
- Consider a cash free/ hands free option
- Control/restrict flow through the farm/market
- Adequately space vendors to ensure social distance requirements can be met.
- If food trucks and prepared food vendors are operating, have them operate as a take-out only style
- Set up a schedule for sanitizing all surfaces that people touch and with all surfaces of the restroom

✓ Display

- Consider a table covering that can be cleaned and sanitized, such as vinyl and plastic and avoid cloth or wood
- Have supplies available to clean and sanitize your booth or contact surfaces
- No sampling of food items
- Place a table between you and your customer to enforce a 6 foot distance
- Limit the number of products on display
- If a customer has their own bag, set the items on table and allow them to bag their product (do not touch their bag)

Best Practices for Farmers Market and U-Picks, continue

- ✓ Hand Hygiene
 - Hand washing stations and hand sanitizing units should be at entrance and throughout the market/farm
 - Hand washing single units or hand sanitizer should be at each booth (specifically for cash and card handling)
 - Hand washing stations and hand sanitizing units should be checked for supplies on a regular schedule
- ✓ Alternate Delivery
 - Consider online ordering of items with a pick up or delivery option
 - Pre-bag products to minimize number of touches
- ✓ Communication
 - Signage should communicate expectations at the market/farm
 - Communicate with the local health department about current concerns in your county
- ✓ Staff
 - If possible at farmers market, minimum of two people at the booth (1 for payment and 1 for product)
 - On farm, more than one person should be at check out to ensure a line does not form and reduce the ability of social distancing
 - Schedule hand washing breaks throughout the day
 - Schedule cleaning and sanitizing throughout the day
 - Schedule eating and drinking breaks at the onset and during the shifts to discourage eating in the booth
- ✓ Breaks
 - A large open space should be available for eating and drinking so social distancing can be maintained
 - Hand washing stations should be at the entrance and exit of the break area

My Next Business Move: How can I sell and distribute my product?

Determining how to safely produce and sell your food products that were previously sold at farmers markets, auctions, and on farm can be a challenge. *These state and federal regulations have not changed and is just a reminder of the rules to operate appropriately.*

Below is a list of examples of vendors or operators and how they can distribute their products:

- ✓ Example 1: A vendor or farmer selling whole uncut produce at farmers market
 - Except for sprouts, whole uncut produce that was grown by the vendor
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute to customer either at a farmers market or from your residence
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver your produce to a customer within the state of Iowa and outside the state of Iowa
 - If you are the middle person involved with buying and selling of produce for re-distribution at the farmers market
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute to customer either at a farmers market or from your residence
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver your produce to a customer within the state of Iowa and outside the state of Iowa
 - If you are the middle person involved with buying and selling of produce for re-distribution on the commercial market
 - You are subject to Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation and must be licensed as a warehouse
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver your products to a customer within the state of Iowa.
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver your products to a customer outside the state of Iowa.
 - Note: Shipping or delivery of CSA foods cannot include foods which are traditionally allowed to be sold at farmers market without licensing. Examples include unprocessed shell eggs, jam, homemade baked goods, and freeze dried berries.
- ✓ Example 2: A vendor selling non Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TTCS) foods (i.e., exempt home food operators; such as standardized jams and jellies, spices) at a farmers market
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation. No license required
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute to customer either at a farmers market or from your residence.
 - No: shipping or delivery is not allowed without appropriate license from Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals
- ✓ Example 3: A farmer selling Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TTCS) produce (such as shredded lettuce or cut melons) at farmers market
 - You are subject to Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation
 - You need an appropriate license to sell and distribute, regardless of method.
 - If you have a Food Manufacture license from the Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals, then you can sell, ship or deliver with no restrictions within the United States

✓

My Next Business Move: How can I sell and distribute my product?, continue

- ✓ Example 4: A farmer selling non Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TTCS) foods (such as diced carrots, dehydrated apple slices or freeze-dried berries) at a farmers market
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation. No license required.
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute to customer either at a farmers market or from your residence.
 - No: shipping or delivery is not allowed without appropriate license from Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals
- ✓ Example 5: A red meat or poultry product vendor who sells at the farmers market
 - Your product must have been processed in a state or federal officially inspected plant and bear an Iowa or USDA/FSIS mark of inspection
 - You must have an Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals Warehouse License and Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TTCS) Farmers Market license
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute and ship your products to a customer within the state of Iowa
 - You cannot ship or deliver state inspected product outside the state of Iowa. Only products bearing a federal (USDA/FSIS) mark of inspection can be shipped or delivered to a customer outside the state of Iowa.

Note: Your product must be sold by weight, not by piece. If your CSA includes meat or poultry products, they must bear a mark of inspection (either bear an Iowa or USDA/FSIS mark of inspection). If your CSA is connected to Supported Agriculture (SA) subscriber/member with a livestock producer, you can buy a quarter, half or whole beef, half of whole hog or a whole lamb or goat, or a number of chickens – and have it properly processed under custom exemption (NOT FOR SALE).
- ✓ Example 6: A vendor who buys whole uncut produce from other growers and sells at the farmers market
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation. No license required.
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can ship your products to a customer within the state of Iowa and outside of the state of Iowa
- ✓ Example 7: A vendor preparing and selling sandwiches at the farmers market under a Farmers Market License
 - You are subject to Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation, can prepare and sell sandwiches at the farmers market
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - No: you cannot do production and distribution to the customer outside of the licensed stand at the farmers market location
 - NOTE: If you use meat and poultry products within the sandwich, it must be from an approved source (i.e. products bear the mark of inspection or a retail label)
- ✓ Example 8: A licensed home baker selling baked products at the farmers market
 - If you have Time/Temperature Control for Safety foods, you are subject to Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation AND you will need a Farmers Market License for Time/Temperature Control for Safety foods
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver your products to a customer within and outside of Iowa

My Next Business Move: How can I sell and distribute my product?, continue

- ✓ Example 9: An exempt home food operator selling baked goods at the farmers market
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation. No license required.
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute to customers either at a farmers market or from your residence
 - No: shipping or delivery is not allowed without appropriate license from Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals
- ✓ Example 10: Vendor of pure honey at farmers market
 - You are not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver to customers either at a farmers market or from your residence
 - Yes: you can ship or deliver your products to a customer within of Iowa.
 - Reminder, Licensing of flavored honey is required outside farmers' market distribution. License type (processing vs retail) depends on predominance of sales
- ✓ Example 11: An unlicensed standardized jam maker at farmers market
 - Not subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation. No license required
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute to customers either at a farmers market or from your residence
 - No: shipping or delivery is not allowed without appropriate license from Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals
- ✓ Example 12: A licensed jam maker preparing their jam in their licensed facility, selling at farmers' market
 - You are subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation and appropriate licensing
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute and ship your products to a customer within and outside of Iowa
- ✓ Example 13 A business who engages in buying and selling produce for wholesale distribution (not farmers market)
 - You are subject to Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals regulation and register as a Food Processor. Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals has historically exempted Raw Agricultural Commodities (defined as a food crop in its raw or natural state) produced on the producer's primary production farm, but if an operator takes produce from other sources and co-mingles it for re-distribution on the wholesale market (such as to restaurants or grocery stores), they must be licensed with the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals as a processing plant. This guidance is linked to FDA requirements for food facility registration under CFR Part 1, specifically [1.225 and 1.226](#)
 - Yes: customers can order and pay online
 - Yes: you can distribute and ship your products to a customer within and outside of Iowa

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