**COVID 19: Overview and connection to our food supply and value chain**

*By Courtney Long, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm, Food and Enterprise Development Program,* [*court7@iastate.edu*](mailto:court7@iastate.edu)

This document shares several resources to utilize regarding COVID-19 response within our food supply and value chain. Sections include general response and recovery process, and examples of best practices within farming, processing, farmers markets, and grocery, as well as potential distribution and virtual sales opportunities to consider. While this shares National best practices, highlights of examples and stories in Iowa are also included.

COVID 19- Impact

For the latest information and information on health and economic indicators- see [Impact Planning for COVID](https://business.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/dc74772707d94db9a7d24d30ffdcf36c) and [Global Impact](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6)

The [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1) also has many resources and updates about the evolving global pandemic.

While our communities continue to go react and respond to the on-going pandemic and disaster we are facing, many different innovative options have come up through policies, technologies, and general collective action. This is not a comprehensive overview of all aspects, but covers some best practices and options that individuals, businesses and communities may consider as it relates to food systems- farming, food business, and general distribution and connections.

**Federal Policy**

CARES Act:

In response to the on-going pandemic, the federal government put into law the [CARES Act](https://www.majorityleader.gov/sites/democraticwhip.house.gov/files/Senate%20Amendment%20to%20H.R.%20748_0.pdf)- Coronavirus Aid-Relief and Economic Security Act on March 27, 2020. Many different press releases and publications have come out regarding the exact impact of the CARES Act. There is a lot yet to understand on how this will both impact and be available for individuals and businesses to utilize. Many of the organizations and department receiving programming funds are still developing response protocols. It is important to reach out to local contacts (lenders, small business administration, local USDA offices, etc. to understand direct access and options). (Penn State Extension, 2020; Newton, 2020)

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has detailed their response within the blog [A Closer Look at Farmer Relief in Senate Pandemic Aid Package.](https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/closer-look-farmer-relief-senate-pandemic-package/?emci=f56c01e1-2870-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&emdi=8002ad1e-4570-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&ceid=2000572)

The CARES Act supports many different aspects, but those most closely associated with our food system and supply include:

**Nutrition programs:** Funds for Child Nutrition programs ($8.8 billion), SNAP ($15.8 billion), Food Distribution on Indian Reservations ($100 million), and the Commodity Assistance program ($450 million). (Clayton, 2020)

**Small Business support** (under 500 employees): $349 billion were outlined in the "Paycheck Protection Program" within the SBA for loans and potentially forgivable loans. There are also local programs for immediate $10,000 grants through SBA. and grants. (Penn State Extension, 2020) (Country Life, 2020)

Small business loans and support are available in different forms. [The Small Business Owner’s Guide to the CARES Act](https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/world-policy/article/2020/03/27/cares-act-allow-usda-provide-direct-2) reviews options.

There is also an option for [Paycheck Protection Program](https://www.calt.iastate.edu/blogpost/paycheck-protection-program-offers-forgivable-loans-eligible-small-businesses)

Who is eligible?

• A small business with fewer than 500 employees

• A small business that otherwise meets the SBA’s size standard

• A 501(c)(3) with fewer than 500 employees

• An individual who operates as a sole proprietor

• An individual who operates as an independent contractor

• An individual who is self-employed who regularly carries on any trade or business

• A Tribal business concern that meets the SBA size standard

• A 501(c)(19) Veterans Organization that meets the SBA size standard

**Agriculture:**

Offers $23.5 billion in aid directly allocated for America’s farmers. Of that, $9.5 billion is allocated specifically for specialty crops, producers who supply local food systems and farmers markets, restaurants and schools, livestock producers, and dairy farmers.

An additional $14 billion is also dedicated to USDA to create an aid package for farmers who have experienced a crash in commodity prices to COVID-19. This supports the Commodity Credit Corporation covering Price Loss Coverage and Dairy Margin Coverage in addition to natural resource conversation program, disaster assistance programs and Market Facilitation Programs. (Country Life, 2020; Penn State Extension, 2020; Newton, 2020)

**Production and Value-Added Agriculture Impact**

Farmers experience impacts to COVID-19 in exceptional ways, from being still “front line” and necessary workers, as well as business owners with employees. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture stated it well, “Agriculture’s role is unquestionable: access to food is a right, we need local agriculture now more than ever.” (Smith-Brubaker, 2020)

While there are many different levels of agricultural producers across the state that will feel the impacts of COVID-19 in different ways, below are a few examples of responses.

Food products and food safety: there is no evidence that COVID-19 is transmitted or associated with either food produced local and in the United States or associated with imported goods. It is also not suggested that food packing. However, it is important to keep all surfaces and objects clean throughout the production and processing cycle. (FDA, 2020; Shaw, Coleman, & Naig, 2020; Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, 2020)

An economic impact assessment was completed in March 18, 2020 to consider the impacts of COVID-19 on farms that sell into local markets. This study included the Farmers Markets, Farm to School, and Food Hubs serving other Institutions and restaurants. This predicts a $689 million decline in sales from March to May 2020, leading to a payroll decline of up to $103 million and a total loss to the economy of up to $1.3 billion (Thilmany, Jablonski, Tropp, Angelo, & Low, 2020). According to the study, in context of farmers selling direct at farmers markets, only 8% of local food farms had an online marketplace in 2015. This may be a viable platform to expand to support in the COVID19 response, and many organizations and businesses are looking into options. Below are a few examples to consider for your market or farm business:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * [Barn2Door](https://www.barn2door.com/) | * [FarmDrop](https://www.farmdrop.us/) | * [HarvestHand](http://www.harvesthand.com) | * [Local Orbit](https://localorbit.com/) |
| * [Cropolis](https://cropolis.co/) | * [Farmigo](https://www.farmigo.com/) | * [Harvie](https://www.harvie.farm/) | * [Meat Suite](https://www.meatsuite.com/) |
| * [CSAware](https://www.csaware.com/) | * [GrazeCart](https://grazecart.com/) | * [Local Line](https://site.localline.ca/) | * [Open Food Network](https://www.openfoodnetwork.org/) |
| * [Farmers Web](https://www.farmersweb.com/) | * [GrownBy](https://www.farmgenerations.coop/) | * [Local Food Marketplace](https://home.localfoodmarketplace.com/) | * [Shopify](https://www.shopify.com/) |
|  |  |  | * [WhatsGood](https://sourcewhatsgood.com/) |

Many programs are also offering online webinars. Oregon Tilth presented a [webinar about online sales](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001kKINOwN6PkOX3wGl-9FyFdSENkJW6BvgyrbhKdFtSxfXviQ59SzQMWA6uLvrzeBlC8KXiYvj3Puesa18sFslYb2f-C0Ntkk7md9i7FBYLZOf7x2LlG10GBxnBTPyzeUMA6w7T20Ibb_iLoHztJBuqv5wxQwvZdXOPo34EleDniiGOHxgOXIM4JsjCAXUnaRzqgVs1EfgGGWvaaThlWH_kMl_Axq3_Olm&c=WcM3M_DO8CqNoNGHhvSYGkekPW2aCMxqbYF1Y9l5edZxp3_OTJLZQw==&ch=QCDUbHvOOwxkuUip3C6Jt0l3IVO4OHCBkJ12FrUWkJFdZTvyeVp9zw==) platforms for direct-to-consumer sales.

In addition to technology options and apps as shared above, there are additional innovative ways to reach customers and connect with other farmers. [Pennsylvania](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1060605320993257/) developed a facebook group for farmers to share questions, considerations and general discussion for creating a resilient and equitable food system.

There may be options to offer a [drop-off location](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/foodforthought/Pages/Article.aspx?post=69) for pre-order and pick-up (on-farm or local area). Best practices for a new drop off and ordering system include:

* Include cut-off times for purchases and specific instructions for pick-up
* Develop signage to market and create identity for space
* List contact information
* Log visitors information and travel

**Distribution and Markets:**

Within the economic impact assessment conducted by Thilmany et. al., there is suggested to be a $689 million decline in sales over three months based on projections of losses from farm-to-school sales, food hubs that aggregate food from small farms to sell to restaurants and other institutions, and shuttered farmers’ markets. A larger $1.32 billion loss is estimated based on the systemic losses that would impact the broader community (Thilmany, Jablonski, Tropp, Angelo, & Low, 2020).

Farmers markets may have an opportunity to be considered an essential service, similar to grocery stores. Currently, grocers are included in essential services to stay open and many states continue to allow farmers markets, processors, grocers, retailers, food banks and pantries, as well as gas stations and convenience stores to remain open.

Examples of best practices by state can be found in the following links: [California](https://sfmayor.org/article/san-francisco-issues-new-public-health-order-requiring-residents-stay-home-except-essential), [Texas,](https://sfmayor.org/article/san-francisco-issues-new-public-health-order-requiring-residents-stay-home-except-essential) [New York](https://agriculture.ny.gov/coronavirus), [Pennsylvania](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/foodforthought/Pages/Article.aspx?post=70).

As we prepare in Iowa for Farmers Market season, the following are suggestions for markets based on best practices around the nation:

**Farmers Markets:**

* Events at markets should be cancelled (music/ prepared foods/ and consumption on site)
* Consider options for pre-paying and pickup from vendors
* Don't have an technology available? Consider working with your farmers to create a list of contact information, "menu" of items for the week, etc. and allow customers to pre-order via phone or email
* Example: [Texas Farmers Market](http://texasfarmersmarket.org/tfm-at-mueller-vendors-taking-pre-orders/)
* Provide hand washing stations throughout the market
* Do not allow for pets, unless service animals, to attend markets
* Create at least 5’ of distance between each vendor booth

**Customers:**

* Include designated entrance and exit for customers
* Pre-order products if allowed from farms and other businesses
* Use indicators to show 6' separation
* Wash hands frequently, between shopping at different stands
* Practice general sanitation and health guidelines from CDC
* Do not bring pets, unless service animal

**Vendors:**

* Consider technology options for pre-ordering
* Do not offer samples or self-service for customers
* Offer hand sanitizer at booth
* Do not have tablecloths; have hard surface that can be cleaned easily
* Practice general sanitation and health guidelines from CDC

**Restaurants and Food Businesses:**

The National Restaurant Association [predicts](https://restaurant.org/coronavirus-recovery-release) restaurant sales will decline by $225 billion over the next three months, leading to a loss of 5 to 7 million jobs. The [results](https://www.jamesbeard.org/blog/the-coronavirus-impact-on-restaurants) suggest that 75 percent of restaurants that had been forced to close would not be able to reopen if the shutdown lasted two months.

Additional business considerations for online ordering are suggested through the “D -- [example online purchasing suggestions](https://go.localline.ca/hubfs/Gated%20Content/PDFs/Local%20Line_The%20Direct%20Market%20Farmers%20Guide%20to%20COVID-19.pdf?utm_campaign=COVID-19&utm_source=hs_automation&utm_medium=email&utm_content=84714048&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8pbgULFQw4s58q-3r4fa7-zCExwOn9924fw2PB_99oVSxOrXvPhSCxYwUAqh-UQ4mpR4mZzfg6lV-EAay8BlBFyF5omBd0FPAnCR7lu4uRXGbK4_8&_hsmi=84714048)

1. Consider your business appeal and highlight what's going on
2. Consider options for delivery and online presence
3. Consider collaborating with distributors that are already in service
   1. CSA deliveries/ grocery deliveries/ food hubs/ etc.
   2. Do you have capacity/ correct food safety needs/ etc. for shipping product and keeping it food safe
4. Consider pick-up locations/ farm stands/ etc.

**Consumers:**

As a consumer we all eat; fresh food products are not a danger in regards to spread of COVID-19. For additional information on food storage/ prep/ etc. with COVID-19, review the following resources

* [Institute of Food Safety at Cornell](https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/food-safety-recommendation-consumer/)
* [FDA Emergency Preparedness- Food](https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions#food)
* [ISU Extension- Food Safety](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/no-evidence-covid-19-transmitted-through-food-and-food-packaging)

Additionally, remember that you can continue to support your local food businesses and farmers. [Market Maker](https://foodmarketmaker.com/) is a resource that may be available in your location. While purchases are not available through the platform- this can be a way to identify connections and direct relationships.

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As we all continue into the uncertain future with COVID-19 response and recovery, consider ways to continue to support and be involved with your community through social distancing practices.

Iowa State connections and support:

If there is interest in discussion on action steps, please feel free to reach out to our team at Farm, Food and Enterprise Development---

Small Farms: Christa Hartsook: [hartc@iastate.edu](mailto:hartc@iastate.edu)

Enterprise Development: Brian Tapp: [btapp@iastate.edu](mailto:btapp@iastate.edu)

Food Systems: Courtney Long: [court7@iastate.edu](mailto:court7@iastate.edu)

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Thilmany, D., Jablonski, B., Tropp, D., Angelo, B., & Low, S. (2020). *Mitigating Immediate Harmful Impacts of COVID-19 on Farms and Ranches Selling through Local and Regional Food Markets.* National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. Retrieved from https://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020\_03\_18-EconomicImpactLocalFood.pdf

Resources:

Economic Impact:

[COVID-19 Economic Impact on Local Food Markets](https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/covid-economic-impact-local-food/?emci=f56c01e1-2870-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&emdi=8002ad1e-4570-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&ceid=2000572)

[Economic impact assessment: Mitigating Immediate Harmful Iimpacts of COVID-19 on Farms and Ranches Selling through Local and Regional Food Markets](https://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020_03_18-EconomicImpactLocalFood.pdf)

[USDA Local Food Impact](https://calculator.localfoodeconomics.com/)

Agriculture:

[Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Response](https://iowaagriculture.gov/covid-19)

[Food Industry and Resources- Cornell](https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/food-industry-resources/)

Produce:

[Cornell Farmworker Program](https://www.trabajadores.cornell.edu/)- Spanish and short videos

[PASA Sustainable Agriculture, COVID-19 Guidelines for Farmers.](https://pasafarming.org/covid-19-guidelines-for-farmers/)

[Western Growers, COVID-19: Employer Guidance and Resources,](https://www.wga.com/blog/covid-19-employer-guidance-and-resources#.XnJ5ZO8lFd0.twitter)

[California Leafy Green Marketing Agreement, COVID-19 Coronavirus Prevention: A Dozen Things to Know About Leafy Greens,](https://lgma.ca.gov/news/coronavirus-leafy-greens)

[United Fresh Produce Association, Coronavirus: Fresh Produce Industry Resources,](https://www.unitedfresh.org/coronavirus-fresh-produce-industry-resources/)

Dairy:

[Dairy Fact Sheet](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Documents/COVID-19%20Dairy%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)

[Pennsylvania Direct to Consumer Sales response](https://aese.psu.edu/nercrd/publications/covid-19-issues-briefs/covid-19-and-farms-with-direct-to-consumer-sales)

[Wisconsin Dairy](https://wisconsindairy.org/Dairy-Companies/covid-19)

[Cornell Dairy](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1115241162636&ca=7a16e610-f656-498f-bc8f-afb16ab846ea)

[National Milk Producers Federation, Coronavirus Update,](https://www.nmpf.org/coronavirus-update/)

Livestock:

[USDA, Coronavirus (COVID-19),](https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus)

[Niche Meat Processing – webinars and resources](https://www.nichemeatprocessing.org/nmpan-webinars/)

Direct Markets and Farmers Markets:

[Farmers Market Coalition – COVID-19 response](https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/farmers-markets-covid19/)

[Direct Market Farmer’s Guide](https://go.localline.ca/hubfs/Gated%20Content/PDFs/Local%20Line_The%20Direct%20Market%20Farmers%20Guide%20to%20COVID-19.pdf?utm_campaign=COVID-19&utm_source=hs_automation&utm_medium=email&utm_content=84714048&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8pbgULFQw4s58q-3r4fa7-zCExwOn9924fw2PB_99oVSxOrXvPhSCxYwUAqh-UQ4mpR4mZzfg6lV-EAay8BlBFyF5omBd0FPAnCR7lu4uRXGbK4_8&_hsmi=84714048)

Restaurants:

[National Restaurant Association](https://restaurant.org/Home)

[Relief Support](https://restaurant.org/coronavirus-recovery-release)

Technology:

[University of Minnesota Extension’s Local Foods College](https://extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/local-foods-college)- offering webinars on online ordering

[Young Farmers – Direct Sales Software](https://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Farm-direct-sales-software-1.pdf)

[Iowa State Extension – Online Sales Platforms](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/online-sales-platforms-direct-market-farmers-covid-19/)