

Guidance for Farmers' Markets Regarding COVID-19

The statewide “stay home” Executive Order No. 20-16 issued by Governor Laura Kelly on March 28 established that only those individuals or entities which are performing essential activities are exempt from the order. Farmers’ markets are supplying food products and services which are essential functions and exempt from the statewide stay home order.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture recognizes the critical role that farmers’ markets, along with community supported agriculture (CSAs) and farm stands, play in our communities, offering consumers a way to buy local, seasonal food directly from a producer. **However, organizers must — to the extent possible without significant disruption to essential functions — make operational changes to protect customers, farmers and staff.** At this time, the decision whether to stay open or to close — and details about how to limit the services you are providing — is up to each individual market. Markets that do remain open must follow protective measures.

Can I still have my farmers’ market or similar activity (outside or inside)? Does it matter how many attendees we normally have?

Yes, sales of food and food products are considered essential functions. Market managers should carefully scrutinize their vendors and activities and limit them to those which are essential to the food supply chain.

Can people get sick from food and packaging at the farmers’ market?

According to the CDC, transmission appears to be by “close-contact” and not by food. However, you must observe best practices during the coronavirus outbreak which includes:

1. Preserving social distancing of 6 feet (lines for entry/payment, for example)
2. Ceasing self-service of unpackaged food.

Can I still sample products?

Yes, but you must not offer self-service of any unpackaged food.

Do the vendor tables need to be a certain distance apart from each other?

Yes, you must provide enough distance between tables to maintain social distancing.

Do we have to provide hand sanitizer or wipes?

No, you are not required to provide hand sanitizer or sanitizing wipes. However, handwashing is very important to protecting your health. If handwashing is not available, hand sanitizing should be used.

Do I need to clean anything differently?

We recommend following the CDC and KDHE guidance to routinely clean frequently touched surfaces according to the product's use directions. Some examples of surfaces that should be cleaned frequently are:

- Touch surfaces of kiosks or ordering screens
- Doorknobs/door handles
- Tables
- Handrails

Can COVID-19 be spread through food?

- At this time, food or food packaging have not been identified as likely sources of COVID-19 infection. However, food establishments play an important role in keeping employees and customers safe from infection by following personal and environmental hygiene practices.

Keeping food employees and customers safe:

We recommend following the CDC and KDHE guidance to:

- Ensure employees stay home if they are feeling sick (fever, coughing/shortness of breath), if they have a sick family member in their home, or if they have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Maintain social distancing of six (6) feet
- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is available for customers and employees to use if soap and water are not readily available.
- Provide customers with additional napkins or tissues to use when they cough or sneeze.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day, such as ordering screens, door handles, tables, or handrails.

Have restaurants, grocery stores and other food establishments been ordered to close?

Not at this time. Restaurants are limited to take-home or delivery service. Other food establishments may remain open **as long as** the business:

- Preserves social distancing of 6 feet between tables, booths, bar stools, and ordering counters; and
- Ceases self-service of unpackaged food, such as in salad bars or buffets;

Have food processors or food warehouses been ordered to close?

No, food processors and food warehouses are exempt from the mass gathering restriction.

For current information about COVID-19, and to sign up for updates, go to the KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center at www.kdhe.ks.gov/coronavirus.