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## Farmers markets

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**UPDATED.** Will appear before items that have been updated.

**Farmers' markets are considered an essential service under the BC state of emergency and are expected to comply with hygienic practices and physical distancing to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.**

The advice below is based on current recommendations and may change. Please reference materials and recent updates from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control:

- [Vending Merchandise at Markets \(PHO Order May 28, 2020\)](#)
- [List of essential services](#) and [PHO orders](#)

Further information, details and answers to common questions with respect to guidance can be found in the [PDF](#) of information on this page. This PDF will highlight changes in guidance practice as the COVID outbreak evolves.

**UPDATED.** **Farmers' markets are essential food and agriculture service providers.** Farmers' markets operate similarly to retail grocery markets. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, indoor and outdoor farmers' markets are expected to comply with recommendations and orders from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO). Customer numbers are restricted by the size and space within the premises and this number is controlled and monitored according to the COVID-19 safety plan. Recommendations include limiting the number of people present in an area, practicing safe physical distancing, providing hand-washing facilities, and increasing cleaning and disinfection – see details below. Municipalities are involved in interpreting provincial orders, as they issue business licences to farmers' markets; in some cases they are owners of the property where the farmers' markets operate.

note: vending markets that are not primarily concerned with selling of foods, e.g., Christmas craft markets, are different from farmers' markets and subject to the [Gathering and Events](#) order (Sep 18, 2020).

## Physical Distancing

1. **UPDATED.** Limit entry to allow for physical distancing separation of 2 metres between individuals and family groups within indoor and outdoor market areas equivalent to 5m<sup>2</sup> per customer. In large market spaces that may include several streets or blocks, cordon off areas to limit access. [Poster](#)
2. Minimize entry and exit points to control the number of customers. A single entry and exit location is the best way to manage the number of customers.
3. Manage line-ups into the market to meet physical distancing requirements of 2 metres between individuals and family groups.
4. Direct traffic through the market through the use of chalk or tape markings on the ground, ropes, barriers or other markers as required.
5. Vendors set-up with adequate distance between booths.
6. Manage physical distancing for food vendors providing take away service (for e.g., when ordering and picking up food).

7. **UPDATED.** Create an environment in the market where customers can practice safe physical distancing of 2 metres and avoid congregation points. Similar to retail grocery stores' indoor spaces allow five square metres (5m<sup>2</sup>) per customer.
8. Provide hand-washing facilities and access to hand sanitizers for vendors and customers.
9. Provide seating that allows physical distancing of 2 metres between groups with no more than 6 people in one group at a table.
10. Post signs reminding customers about physical distancing requirements:
  - through-out the market, in line-ups and washroom areas reminding people to maintain a 2 metre physical distance from others
  - in seating areas to remind customers there must be no more than 6 people at a table from one group
  - in seating areas to remind groups to seat themselves two meters apart from other groups

### Restricted Activities, Enhanced Hygiene, and Additional Measures

Markets may sell food and non-food items including personal services that meet COVID requirements.

Food items include fresh, frozen and prepared foods, take-away from food carts and food trucks, and pre-packaged liquor. This includes lower risk foods prepared at home and higher risk foods as described in the [Temporary Food Market Guidelines](#).(TFM guidelines)

Vendors are allowed to sell:

- non-food items such as soaps, candles, clothing etc.
- provide personal services such as massage
- fresh fruits, vegetables and eggs
- frozen pre-packaged meats and frozen ready-to-eat pre-packaged foods (e.g., pies, samosas, meals)
- home-prepared low risk foods as identified in Appendix I of the TFM guidelines
- higher risk foods prepared in an approved facility
- pre-packaged non-alcoholic beverages
- liquor only in sealed retail containers (e.g., bottles, cans)
- take-away meals from food carts and food trucks
- edible plants and seedlings

Handling of products, including food and non-food items:

- Vendors are encouraged to pre-package prepared foods to minimize direct contact by customers
- Prepared foods (i.e. bakery items for e.g., breads, muffins) that are not pre-packaged foods at the time of sale must be protected by a barrier (i.e. sneeze guard) or stored away from customer access. Vendors must package the product at time of sale.
- Customers of farmers' markets must not use their own containers; vendors must dispense all unpackaged prepared foods and takeaway foods.
- Where customers self-dispense foods (unpackaged fresh and pre-packaged prepared foods) and non-food products vendors must
  - provide hand washing or hand sanitizing nearby
  - post signs about hand hygiene and physical distancing measures

- implement a frequent cleaning and sanitizing of booths and utensils used at the booth

**Additional requirements and restrictions:**

1. Markets must discontinue all food sampling activities, including by the glass sales of wine or other alcohols.
2. **NEW!** Regional health authorities may process temporary food permits for the purpose of selling food but not sampling food.
3. Markets must cancel activities that promote gatherings, such as demonstrations.
4. **UPDATED.** Markets with live musicians playing background music must not allow customers to congregate at that location; and should not be promoting or advertising music at the market. Background music should not be louder than normal conversation.
5. Market vendors selling ready-to-eat foods must package foods into closed take-away containers or brown bags and post signs advising customers to comply with physical distancing requirements.
6. Markets must implement enhanced frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces within the market.
7. Markets must restrict entry to anyone who is ill; vendors, if they are ill, should not attend and customers who are ill should also be advised to not enter the farmers' market.
8. Farmers' market guidelines can be found on the BCCDC web-site. As with any foods prepared at home for sale at the market, if you are ill, or someone in your household is ill, do not prepare or package foods, including low risk foods.
9. Establish pick-up points in farmers' markets (for e.g., drive-thru pick-up where feasible) for on-line orders.
10. Where feasible create cashless payment systems through on-line orders and point of sale devices in vendor booths.
11. As they open, information about BC Farmers' Markets Online will be added to <https://bcfarmersmarkettrail.com/> On-line sales are not restricted provided that they don't include high risk foods made in an unapproved facility. Crafts and other items may be sold on-line.

**Other resources**

- [Food businesses](#)
- [Food banks](#) and food distribution
- [Food safety for the public](#)

**List of updates:**

September 25: clarify indoor and outdoor farmers markets, other markets under G&E order; spacing of 5m<sup>2</sup>, temporary food permits do not allow sampling; conversation level for background music.

June 29: personal services, live music & musicians, handling of food/non-food items

June 12: introduction and take-away containers (to be closed)

May 28: vending PHO order; non-food item sales; seating; signage requirements

Apr 7: physical distancing; hand-washing; restricted activities

Mar 27: first issue