

Phase I guidelines for farmers markets and on-farm markets

The RI Department of Environmental Management in conjunction with the RI Department of Health issues this guidance to all Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets in order that these operations may open once in compliance with the protocols in this guidance.

I. Protocols and guidance

The following protocols and guidance apply to all Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets beginning on the date of issuance until further notice. These policies must be in place in order to operate. The DEM Division of Agriculture staff will work closely with all Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets to inform, educate and enforce these protocols. DEM will collaborate with the RI Department of Health and local law enforcement to make random inspections and adjust or shut down operations at any operation that does not comply. It is essential in order for the following protocols to be effective that all relevant businesses in Rhode Island adhere to the same standards regardless of membership affiliation, business structure or size.

The specific, required protocols include:

Market Activity Plans

Farmer's Markets are now required to have an activity plan that identifies market rules developed to support State COVID-19 guidance in-force, as well as rules that are established by the market. The plan must be in place prior to the start of any activity beginning. Plans must be kept on-site and made available in the case of a complaint, or site visit by local or state officials. The plan must include the following information:

- Location of parking areas and number of spaces available.
- Number of vendors.
- Number of customers and staff allowed in the market at any one time.
- Number and location(s) of hand washing/hand sanitizing stations.
- Cleaning and Sanitation procedures.

Prepare market and individual stands

Market managers and staff must reinforce both State and proprietary guidance and rules verbally when necessary. As a reminder farm staff and customers must:

- Maintain social distancing space of at least six feet from one another.
- Anyone who is sick, whether customer or employee are prohibited from any farm activity.
- Farm employees that are customer facing must wear a cloth face covering.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

REOPENING RI

Market managers and staff must take measures to limit crowds:

- Separate stands at least six feet apart
- Limit the number of customers within the market at one time
- Consider having one entry point to monitor customers entering and exiting the market
- Consider delivery or pick-up options to limit person-to-person contact.
- Consider pre-packaging bags of fruits, vegetables, other items to limit shoppers' handling of food and to keep customers moving along.
- Consider alternate locations that could allow drive through or pickup.
- Handwashing stations & sanitizer must be made available - It is vital to the health and safety of everyone at the market that handwashing stations and hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol be readily available. This includes having a sufficient quantity of both to facilitate and encourage regular sanitation of all vendors and customers alike.
- Market staff and customers must utilize cloth face coverings while in the market, in accordance with RI Executive Orders, as well as any other state and local guidance and requirements. Customers should be allowed to utilize masks and face coverings that they bring with them to the market. Customers who do not have masks or cloth face coverings cannot be allowed in the farmer's market.
- Consider putting up signs and information on websites and social media to explain any changes, delivery options, or extra precautions taken to limit exposure to COVID-19. Ex: Instruct customers not to handle food. Package cheese and eggs for customers, even if the cheese and eggs are individually packaged. Open egg cartons for customers to see the eggs they are getting instead of having them handle multiple cartons.

Prepare Workforce

- Provide guidance for handwashing (like time intervals) and handling materials.
- Stagger lunch times or provide additional space to increase distancing of employees.
- All sick employees need to stay at home.
- Inform employees where they can find sanitizing materials throughout market contact points.
- Encourage employees to practice social distancing and avoid large gatherings to avoid risks for potential exposure during off hours.
- Encourage employees not to handle customers' reusable bags and let customers pack their own bags.

Sanitize contact surfaces

- Frequently disinfect all door handles and knobs, credit card machines, shopping baskets, etc. at regular, pre-established time intervals.
- Frequently sanitize common gathering places – restrooms, etc.
- Money handling - Procedures at the market should change to facilitate minimal exchange of currency. Methods being utilized for this purpose include allowing pre-order and pre-payment of products, starting a tab for customers, or rounding up product prices to the nearest dollar. Additionally, prior to and after handling currency, gloves should be changed out and hands should be properly washed.

REOPENING RI

II. Contact

Please contact Ananda Fraser, Produce Safety Program Coordinator, at (401) 222-2781 or via email at Ananda.Fraser@dem.ri.gov with any questions.

You may also sign up for the Produce Safety Program [newsletter](#) to receive regular updates on COVID-19 and other important events, resources, and other updates from the RI Division of Agriculture.

