



3/24/20

Dear Local Food Family,

Thank you for your continued work to supply New Mexico with crucial farm products. We know that this is a very uncertain time, and that many of you are dealing with your own families and circumstances while continuing the incredibly challenging work that you do. At this time I wanted to take time to update you on the work that the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA) and our partners are doing in support of you, local food, and farming.

The NMFMA continues to be in regular contact with the Governor's office and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture to ensure that our markets remain open and operate safely. We recognize that situations will change often; our at-market requirements will adapt accordingly. We will keep you updated through emails and website announcements at NewMexicoFMA.org.

The NMFMA has worked on a set of guidelines that we believe would be in the best interest of our markets, their farmers, and their consumers. These are based on the potential risks associated with COVID-19 and its impact on health and the economic wellbeing of our farmers.

MARKET MANAGEMENT AND VENDORS

1. Sell only food products and food start plants. No arts, crafts, flowers, other nursery items, etc.
2. Farmers, vendors, and market staff should wear food grade gloves, with frequent changes as they become soiled or contaminated.
3. Increase the numbers of hand-washing stations available within the market, along with signage to encourage customers to frequently wash their hands.
4. Encourage farmers to bring hand-washing supplies and hand sanitizers, for frequent use within their own booth space.
5. Customers must not touch any produce or products until after they have purchased. Stands must be reconfigured so that customers will request products and staff will bag produce. It is recommended that a staffer, other than those packing product, handle payment.
6. No handshaking, no hugs.
7. Segregate duties behind market tables. Designate one individual to handle money, tokens, and coupons, while others handle the products being sold. Again, wear food grade gloves with frequent changes.
8. All foods should be pre-packaged to eliminate potential contamination at the market. Examples would be prepackaging breads and baked goods. Prepackage salad mixes or have the farmer use tongs and bag the product.
9. Vendors who are ill, or showing signs of illness, must stay home. Send a replacement to sell if they are sick. If anyone within the farm business is confirmed infected with COVID-19, notify the manager and remain home.

10. Farmers should be watchful of signs of illness in customers, removing all products they may have touched from their sales tables. To avoid infection, do not remove with bare hands.
11. Suspend cooking demonstrations and sampling.
12. Suspend social programs that promote customers to congregate and/or linger in the market. That includes removing tables, benches, and chairs.
13. Encourage customers to choose with their eyes, not hands, and not touching product to eliminate potential contamination.
14. Keep vendor tables at least 6 feet apart.
15. If your market is crowded and/or takes place indoors, it may become necessary to create ways to keep customers 6 feet apart from each other.

While it is important to establish guidelines that strive to keep markets a safe place for our farmers and customers, it is equally important to ease customer concerns and help them to feel comfortable coming to a farmers' market amid the coronavirus outbreak. We need to continue to promote our markets, using key points that will encourage customer participation at farmers' markets.

1. Know your farmer – you will see the person(s) who grew or produced your food. You can see they are healthy and feel more comfortable with the foods you are feeding your family.
2. Food at farmers' markets is not part of the supply chain that serves other food venues. The limited chain means fewer people handled the food and reduces the risk of contamination.
3. Farmers' markets are outdoor events – fresh air is healthy and so is the food at farmers' markets.
4. Maintain a healthy diet of fresh, locally grown foods. A healthy body is better able to resist and fight disease.
5. Promote the efforts that your market is taking to minimize the risk to their customers.

We hope farmers' markets continue to be regular sources for local food purchasing, but it may become necessary to consider alternative market strategies should the customer base become too limited to sustain farmer income or the markets be forced to close temporarily. Groups and individuals around the state are working hard to develop new strategies. Please check NewMexicoFMA.org for updates as they become available.

Additionally, if you are a farmer with food to move now or in the near future, please select this link (or cut-and-paste it into your browser) <https://forms.gle/8oEytSYghSaS9iEZ8> to fill out a very short form that will go to Michael Venticinque, the NMFMA's value chain coordinator who regularly works with wholesale buyers across the state.

You will continue to receive regular updates from us, and we appreciate your cooperation and patience. Stay well everyone, and thank you for all you do to make sure that **Local Food Connects NM!**

Sincerely,
Denise Miller
Executive Director