

On Monday, March 23rd, Governor Northam issued Emergency Order 53. The Emergency Order specifically states the following:

Dining and On-Site Alcohol Establishments

All dining and congregation areas in the following establishments must close to the public beginning at 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. These establishments may continue to offer delivery and/or takeout services. Establishments include:

- Restaurants;
- Dining establishments;
- Food courts;
- Farmers markets;
- Breweries;
- Microbreweries;
- Distilleries;
- Wineries; and
- Tasting rooms.

(full press release here - <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2020/march/headline-855292-en.html>)

The Governor's Office and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) are NOT requiring farmers' markets and other direct sales markets such as breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries and tasting rooms to close for business. The guidance provided means that these markets **may operate in a capacity that allows delivery and/or takeout services**. On-site browsing or shopping is not an option under the intent of this order.

VDACS is actively working with partners to identify best practices and recommendations to assist farmers' markets and other direct sales markets to adhere to the Governor's guidance. VDACS will provide more information and support in the coming days. If you are a vendor seeking assistance with other marketing opportunities because your operations have been impacted or if you have suggested best practices that could be shared with others, please contact vdacs.commissioner@vdacs.virginia.gov.

We understand that some farmers' markets have been asked to close. Those closures are not a directive of VDACS. There are farmers' markets and others markets that are utilizing successful alternate models for selling nutritious foods to customers. VDACS and the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry will do all that we can to support these businesses and keep fresh and healthy foods available to communities throughout the Commonwealth.

As COVID-19 continues to affect our lives, let's work together to keep everyone safe, while we think outside of the box to support our local and state agricultural economy.