

Farmers' Markets FAQs

Are farmers' markets allowed to operate during the COVID-19 emergency?

Yes. Farmers' markets may continue to operate but do so using [guidance](#) VDACS has put together to establish proper social distancing, promote hygiene and sanitation and eliminate congregation points.

Is pre-ordering from market vendors required?

No. While the guidance to farmers' markets suggests using a pre-ordering system, when possible, this is not required. For markets where customers are unable to pre-order, consider establishing an onsite process for taking orders that does not involve customers browsing from vendor to vendor. Some markets are providing curbside pick-up, where possible, to allow customers to remain in their vehicles. Others are limiting the number or types of vendors and taking strict steps to comply with social distancing guidelines. There are also markets that are promoting no touch or low touch purchasing opportunities by pre-boxing or pre-bagging food items, so that customers can just grab and go. Some markets have established one-way only foot-traffic or car-traffic to eliminate browsing or congregating.

Are farmers' markets limited to only ten patrons at a time?

The guidance provided by VDACS does not limit the total number of patrons at a farmers' market to ten (10) at a time. In some instances, such a limit could create bottlenecks and congregation points outside of a market as patrons queue to get in. The physical set-up and layout of each market is different. Each market should be set-up in a manner that allows all individuals to adhere to the social distancing guidelines promoted by the [Virginia Department of Health](#) (VDH) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC). Markets should arrange vendors in a manner that promotes adequate social distancing and eliminates customer browsing and congregation points.

Is there a calculation for the number of patrons that can be within a market during a given time?

Currently, there is not a formula to calculate how many patrons should be allowed within a market. However, any market configuration needs to take into account the most recent social distancing guidelines issued by [VDH](#) and the [CDC](#). In order to ensure proper social distancing, market managers should account for the total physical area available, the shape or layout of a market, the number of vendors present, the type of stands used by vendors, customer flow patterns and other factors.

As stated previously, markets should arrange vendors in a manner that promotes adequate social distancing and eliminates customer browsing and congregation points. Many markets are

requiring 8-10 feet of spacing between vendor stands. Market managers should continually monitor patrons to ensure they are maintaining proper social distancing between one another.

Are there other steps markets / market managers can take to minimize the risk for vendors and customers?

Yes. The following are some additional steps markets can take to slow the spread of COVID-19:

- Post conspicuous signage reminding all patrons and vendors to practice social distancing, cover coughs and sneezes, and wash hands or use hand sanitizer often.
- Update your website and social media with detailed instructions so patrons understand the expectations while at your market.
- Provide hand sanitizer stations or hand washing stations for patrons.
- Configure operations to avoid congestion or congregation points.
- Mandate vendors use enhanced sanitation practices to regularly clean and sanitize their booth.
- Vendors should not give product samples to customers and prohibit on-site food consumption.
- Limit vendors to those selling food and horticultural products.
- Anyone handling money should sanitize his or her hands between each transaction.
- Employ transaction methods that avoid physical contact with cards, checks or currency such as Venmo, Paypal or other similar platforms.
- Remind customers to wash all produce before consumption.