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ORDER OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC] HEALTHFOR FARMERS MARKETS, FARM STANDS AND CSAs

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charles D. Baker declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth to respond to the spread of COVID-19. On March 11, 2020, in view of the grave threat that the spread of COVID-19 presents to the public health, the Public Health Council authorized and directed me to act pursuant to G. L. c. 17, § 2A and to take all appropriate actions, incur such liabilities, and establish such rules, requirements, and procedures necessary to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in order to protect the health and welfare of the people of the Commonwealth.

On March 23, 2020, the Governor issued an Order Assuring Continued Operation of Essential Services in the Commonwealth. As designated in the list of "COVID-19 Essential Services," farmers markets, farm stands and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) are essential and will remain open.
Additionally, farmers' market employees, farm stand employees and CSA employees are deemed essential workers.

Therefore, in order to ensure access to a strong local food supply and enable farms to continue to grow, harvest and market safe, healthy and local fruits and vegetables, while additionally reducing exposure of shoppers and employees to COVID-19, and pursuant to the authority granted by G. L. c. 17, § 2A and with the approval of the Governor and the Public Health Council, I hereby issue the following Orders:

1) As indicated in the list of "COVID-19 Essential Services", farmers markets, farm stands and CSAs may remain open.

2) Managers of Farmers' Markets must limit the number of customers who can enter the market space at one time. Market Managers and individual vendors operating within a Farmers' Market must remind customers of "social distancing," maintaining a space of at least six (6) feet from one another while shopping at indoor or outdoor Farmers' Markets, through signage at prominent locations and vendor tables, at access points and through verbal reinforcement.

3) Market managers and staff should cordon off farmers' market perimeters to allow for clear entry and egress points.

4) Market managers and staff must monitor and control the number of customers allowed within farmers' market areas and must allow no more than 25 customers per 1,000 square feet at any one time.

5) Lines that form outside of market entry points must be monitored and floor/ground marking must be set-up in a way that customers maintain distance between each other while waiting.

6) Market managers must deploy signage, floor/ground marks and cones to direct customers to maintain spacing requirements.

7) Local law enforcement should be notified and consulted if any issues arise concerning distancing or other physical security concerns at the market.

8) Signs must be posted to remind staff and customers that they should not visit the market when they are sick.

9) Market managers, staff and vendors must clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

10) Farmers' markets, farm stands and CSAs are encouraged to promote transactions that employ pre-bagging of produce, online-orders and other methods that limit public interaction and minimize the time customers spend at vendor tables to enable customer flow and the maintenance of distancing guidelines.

11) Farmers' markets may not offer product samples for on-site use or tasting in order to reduce opportunities for contamination and transmission of the virus.

12) Market managers and vendors should minimize the handling of produce and products by staff, customers.

13) Farmers' market managers, market staff, as well as vendors and their employees may use reusable bags in order to provide continuation of services while reducing exposure of shoppers and farmers' market staff to COVID-19.

14) Vendors should not use tablecloths in order to make it easier to clean and sanitize table surfaces. Vendors must clean and sanitize their displays, including their tables and items used to display produce at the end of every market during market operation. Markets are recommended to discontinue the use of display items that cannot be cleaned and sanitized.

15) Markets are encouraged to provide access to handwashing facilities, including those available in public restrooms, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers for event staff and participants.

16) Require face coverings for all market managers, staff and vendors and customers, except where an individual is unable to wear a face covering due to medical condition or disability.

17) If more than one person is working the table, vendors should designate one person to handle money and another to handle produce/product.

This Order shall be effective immediately and shall rescind and replace the Order issued by the Commissioner of Public Health on April 27, 2020. This Order shall remain in effect until the State of Emergency is terminated by the Governor, or until rescinded by me, whichever shall happen first.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Lindsey Tucker
Associate Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
September 8, 2020