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## **Secretary of Agriculture: Farmers Market Season is Here, Markets Prepared to Safely Serve Pennsylvanians Amid COVID-19**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding today reminded Pennsylvanians that with spring and warm weather comes farmers market season in the commonwealth. Farmers markets, like grocery stores, offer life-sustaining food and essentials and have been provided guidance from the department for how to continue operations safely and with minimal risk amid the COVID-19 public health crisis.

“While farmers work hard year-round to push food to grocery stores, many are also working hard to stock their own market shelves and feed their local community,” said Secretary Redding. “Farmers markets are a fundamental piece of Pennsylvania’s supply chain; something many Pennsylvanians have become acutely aware of in recent weeks.”

When Governor Tom Wolf first designated agriculture and the supply chain as life sustaining, the Department of Agriculture issued guidance for [Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets](#) with recommendations on how to continue operations safely and minimize contact for shoppers and employees. The guidance includes:

- Offer delivery or pick up options and online or phone ordering if possible.
- Pre-package bags of fruit, vegetables, and other items to limit shoppers’ handling food and keep customers moving quickly.
- Offer designated times for high-risk and elderly persons to shop at least once a week.
- Communicate with consumers via website or social media to explain changes, delivery options, or other extra precautions to mitigate against COVID-19.
- Separate stands to limit crowds and consider limiting the number of customers in the market at one time.
- If possible, have a different person handle products and handle money, or wash hands and sanitize between tasks.
- Remove tablecloths and eliminate samples and eating areas.

The guidance also offers farms the opportunity to open an on-farm stand to sell raw produce, eggs, or shelf stable packaged foods such as jams, jellies, or baked goods without additional food safety licenses.

In addition to the above recommendations, markets are advised to adhere to Department of Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine’s [worker safety order](#) and the Department of Agriculture’s guidance for [Sanitization and Diagnosed Employees](#). Market operators are also encouraged to take advantage of free [resources and webinars](#) provided by Penn State Extension for farmers market managers to maintain safe operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Because the Department of Agriculture worked so quickly to create guidelines for farmers markets and on-farm markets, Penn State Extension and our partners were able to develop factsheets, articles, webinars and open forums around these guidelines to help the more than 1,000 essential farmers markets in the commonwealth to operate in a safe manner and continue to feed their communities,” said PA Farm Markets Director and Penn State Extension Education Program Associate Brian Moyer.

Pennsylvanians interested in supporting local can find a market by visiting [pafarm.com](http://pafarm.com) or by looking for the [PA Preferred](#)® logo when shopping in a grocery store for a guarantee that you’re supporting a Pennsylvania farmer.

“This pandemic does not limit our need for food. In fact, it’s quite the opposite,” added Redding. “So let’s remember where that food comes from, and make intentional choices to directly support local farmers. Pennsylvania’s farmers markets and farm stands offer the essentials you need and they’re working harder than ever to provide a safe, reliable service.”

For a complete list of guidance documents and information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit [agriculture.pa.gov/COVID](http://agriculture.pa.gov/COVID). For the most accurate, timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit [on.pa.gov/coronavirus](http://on.pa.gov/coronavirus).