



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

Karen Ross, Secretary

# Guidance for Farm Direct Sales and Pick-Your-Own operations during COVID-19

May 8, 2020

*This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Local environmental health and public health agencies may have additional guidance and/or requirements regarding these operations in their jurisdiction.*

**Additional Guidelines can be found at the [California Coronavirus\(COVID-19\) Response - Resilience Roadmap - Directions – Agriculture and Livestock.](#)**

## BACKGROUND

The following is intended to help guide agriculture entities that engage in Farm Direct Sales (farm store or farm stand) and support farm visit activities, such as Pick-Your-Own (PYO). Farm Direct Sales and PYO are important revenue streams for many California farms and are important sources of fresh food in many communities. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is working to ensure communities can maintain access to healthy food during this COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (“the novel coronavirus”). Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath and may appear 2-14 days after exposure. While the majority of COVID-19 illnesses are mild, it can result in severe and fatal illness, particularly in the elderly and among those with severe underlying health conditions.

Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Scientists continue to learn more about how this virus spreads and currently there is no evidence of food and food packaging being associated with COVID-19 transmission. The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person. This includes between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) How COVID-19 Spreads](#) and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) for further information.





## FOOD SUPPLY

As defined by the federal government, the food supply chain comprises [critical infrastructure](#) from farm to table and includes assets, systems, networks and functions that provide vital services to the nation. It is essential that federal government-defined critical infrastructure and supply chains are protected, and that all elements pertaining to the food supply remain operational, including a workforce that is vital to its production of the food supply. The [National Infrastructure Protection Plan](#) further clarifies these critical infrastructure systems in the food and agriculture sector.

## GUIDELINES

Farm Direct Sales and PYO operations will need to work with local environmental health agencies to ensure that all local laws, regulations and ordinances are being met. In an effort to help ensure the safety of consumers and employees, the following recommended guidelines have been compiled for operations conducting Farm Direct Sales and PYO during this COVID-19 outbreak.

Note: All roadside produce stands that are buying and reselling produce must comply with Market Enforcement Statutes. For more specific information please visit <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/mkt/meb/>

### General Layout, Physical/Social Distancing and Signage

- Farm/PYO operations should notify customers of physical/social distancing guidelines, maintaining a space of at least six feet (6 feet) from one another while on farm.
- Farms should limit the number of customers in PYO areas, farm stores and at farm stands in order to maintain physical/social distancing. Limits should be based on visitation rates and venues designated at the farm to accommodate visitation. This includes limiting the number of PYO customers that can enter fields and orchards (limiting numbers in each row), farm stores or congregate at farm stands at one time.
- Establish entry and exit points that serve as crowd control.
- Provide signage and mark six foot delineations at prominent locations, including registration counters where payment is received; stations where harvest boxes, bags or other containers are made available to the public; and in designated harvest rows.
- Farms should clearly indicate the procedures and rules established by the farm for the conduct of PYO activities. Farm and PYO managers and staff should reinforce guidance and rules verbally when necessary.





- Family members can participate together (pick products and stand in line together, etc.) and families should be reminded to keep children and their family group together in their designated picking area at all times.
- Encourage expedited purchasing to avoid lingering to help minimize crowds.

### Enhanced Sanitation and Hygiene

- Post signs with COVID-19 safety and hygiene [guidelines](#).
- Farms should supply hand washing stations to promote personal hygiene and ensure sanitary facilities, restrooms and hand washing stations are equipped with soap, water and paper towels at all sites. Hand sanitizer stations can be a useful addition at points of entrance and registration/payment.
- **Remind customers: you touch it, you take it.** Farm/PYO managers and staff are encouraged to facilitate a one-touch handling policy of produce on the plant by customers in the field; customers should keep what they touch. This should be accomplished through in-field monitoring, verbal reinforcement, and signage of the PYO rules of the farm.
- Customers should adhere to state and local guidance and requirements and wear face coverings/masks if requested by the farm. Customers should be allowed to utilize masks and face coverings that they bring with them to the farm.
- Install check stand protective shields when possible and/or adhere to [state](#) and [federal](#) guidance on the use of face coverings.
- Separate employees should be accepting payment and handling produce/product at tables. If this cannot be accomplished, then handwashing or use of a sanitizer should happen between each transaction.
- Increase frequency of cleaning and sanitizing of tables, payment devices and other high contact touchable surfaces, including but not limited to working surfaces, handles, latches and restrooms. Shared equipment like tools and wagons **must** be disinfected **prior to and at the conclusion of use** to mitigate transmission.
- Farms should supply to PYO customers with new, single-use harvest bags/containers and boxes during COVID-19. Reusable harvest bags/containers and/or boxes should not be utilized until further notice.
- Harvest bags/containers and/or boxes used for PYO operations should be stored away from customer flow areas and should be covered by a plastic covering. Customers should not be allowed to select or handle harvest containers utilized for PYO activities. Farms are encouraged to hand out harvest containers upon registration or at primary access points in PYO areas.
- When choosing cleaning and disinfectant chemicals, farms should use products approved for use against COVID-19 included on the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved](#) list and follow product instructions.





- PYO Farms are encouraged to limit the use of tablecloths in order to make it easier to clean, sanitize and disinfect tables and contact surfaces or utilize a sheet of clear plastic over the top of the tablecloth to facilitate maintenance. PYO farms should clean and sanitize displays and contact surfaces at increased intervals during PYO operations. Farms are recommended to discontinue the use of PYO display items and contact surfaces that cannot be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected.

### **Suspend Non-Essential Activities**

- Eliminate non-essential/non-related services, such as hayrides, bands, crafts, seating/dining areas or other entertainment.
- Suspend any food sampling activities.

### **Enhanced Services**

- Create opportunities (curb-side pickup and pre-order or alternate hours) in order to accommodate individuals that the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has identified as [higher risk of serious illness for COVID-19](#).
- Continue to utilize local food recovery systems to contribute/donate extra products to populations in need.
- If applicable, continue accepting government nutrition funds and EBT payment.
- Communicate to customers what steps you are taking to keep them safe at the the farm (via website, newsletter, phone number, local associations). Ensure that they know the rules associated with PYO activities and who they should contact if a problem or questions arise.
- If feasible, create options for pre-registration or RSVP/scheduled picking times to help manage the number of customers at any given time.

Additional resources and information can be found at the following links:

[CalOSHA Guidance: COVID-19 Infection Prevention – English](#)

[CalOSHA Guidance: COVID-19 Infection Prevention – Spanish](#)

[CDPH Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues, March 16, 2020](#)

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) Best Practices on Safe Food Handling and Employee Health in Retail Food Settings During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[FDA Use of Respirators, Facemasks and Cloth Face Coverings in the Food and Agriculture Sector During Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)





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[CDFA Guidance for Operating Certified Farmers' Markets During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Growers and employees are encouraged to review and follow the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

