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Commissioner



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Kentucky Department of Agriculture

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Good Afternoon,

As Kentucky's Agriculture Commissioner, I wanted to let you know that your Department of Agriculture is working hard to address the concerns of producers, vendors, and farmers' market managers during the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand that Kentucky Farmers Markets managers and vendors have a lot of questions at this time. I want you to know that I hear your concerns. **I want you to know that we are going to get through this like Kentuckians always overcome adversity – together.**

During this outbreak, Kentucky Farmers Markets can provide an important place for producers to sell their healthy, nutritious, and farm-fresh products to Kentucky consumers. It's also true that our farmers markets provide important food access through SNAP, Senior Nutrition Program, Double Dollars, WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and other nutrition programs. **Now, more than ever, we need to empower Kentucky's consumers to choose food produced by Kentucky's farm families.**

As you may have heard already, Kentucky is currently in a state of emergency. Yesterday Governor Beshear issued an Order requiring the closure of many public-facing businesses by 5:00 p.m. on March 18. The Governor's Order makes clear, however, that businesses involving food, agriculture, retail, grocery, and consumer goods are exempt from the executive order. **Because farmers' markets are retail enterprises that provide agriculturally-produced food products that consumers need, the Governor's Order does not require you to shut down your farmers market.**

Of course, you should continue to take appropriate measures to ensure social distancing and hygiene in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and your local health department, including the following practices:

- Setting up your market with a lay-out to maintain the recommended six-foot social-distancing;
- Following appropriate hygiene measures, including regular, thorough handwashing;
- Ensuring that your employees who are sick remain home, and telling sick customers to go home; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

To help you work through these new challenges, today I am pleased to announce the release of a new guidance document titled ***Suggestions for a Successful and Safe Start for Your Farmers Market Season in 2020*** for you to use as a resource in the months ahead. In addition, I wanted to share with you some best-practices guidance from the Farmers' Market Coalition.

- **Establish relationships with key community partners** and stakeholders such as your local health department and collaborate with them on broader planning efforts.
- **Promote the daily practice of everyday preventive actions.** Use health messages and materials developed by credible public health sources such as your local public health department or CDC to encourage your event staff and participants to practice good personal health habits.
- **Discourage people who are sick from attending events.**
- **Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel.**

I urge everyone to remain calm in the face of this pandemic. We are going to get through this. The KDA stands with you, and with our farmers, during this time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ryan Quarles, Commissioner of Agriculture