



## AFMA FACT SHEET

### COVID-19 / CORONA VIRUS PRECAUTIONS FOR MARKET MANAGERS

With growing international concern about Covid-19 (Coronavirus) and the Australian Government announcing the enhanced risks of a pandemic AFMA would like to draw your attention to some key best practice principles for ensuring health and safety at your farmers market.

Farmers markets are essential sources of fresh healthy food. Under the current Federal Government advice farmers markets are classified as **essential non-static events** and may continue to trade mindful of all other public health recommendations.

The government public health authorities have amended permissible site numbers for non-essential static gatherings to: Max 100 persons indoors, 500 Max outdoors. Further amendments advised today require 4sqm per person in an indoor space. ie 25 pax in an 100sqm hall.

AFMA suggests adherence to these numbers for all larger farmers markets, mostly city-based. Many regional markets do not usually attract in excess of 500 people on site at any one time. City markets may attract larger shopper and stallholder numbers, but the shopper flow should be managed to meet the required safe health procedures at markets. The duration of the shopping period, typically less than an hour outdoors also serves to reduce risk.

It is important to be aware of all the possible preventative actions that can help minimize the spread of disease in farmers markets. The measures suggested are basic and sensible. Remember shopping in the fresh air for farm-grown food is one sure way of staying healthy!

AFMA wishes to convey to market managers, stallholders and shoppers the need to consider the health of your fellow market-goers.

Transmission via hands, sneezing and human contact is the most common route of infection, just as for colds and flu. Anti-bacterial handwash, and hand washing with soap (for 20 seconds or more) is effective and needs to be practised more regularly than usual, whether you are a stallholder or shopper.

The following recommended actions have been updated in accordance with any revised government public health advisories.

#### RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONARY ACTIONS

- Markets are routinely required to provide handwashing facilities. In addition, it is recommended that anti-bacterial handwash be supplied at focal locations in the market – the entry points, information desk etc. Market managers should request stallholders to provide hand sanitizer (or hand wash stations) on their stall.
- Protective masks should be on hand at the first aid station if any market participant is observed to have viral symptoms (coughing etc) These are to be provided as a courtesy to customers/ stallholders that may be exhibiting symptoms.
- Stallholders exhibiting symptoms prior any market day should not attend the market until the symptoms dissipate and the affected person follows self-isolation or medical advice.
- Covid-19 symptoms include (but are not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath. Covid-19 most often begins with a temperature of 37.3 degrees centigrade (99 F) or more and is contagious from the first sign of illness.
- If you are concerned about your health or that of other stallholders or shoppers please contact the market manager, your GP or the Government's 24-hour *healthdirect* advice line 1800 022 222.
- If you have any reason to believe that a stallholder or a visitor to the site may be exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms, or may have returned from high risk overseas countries, please immediately ask that person to withdraw to a location away from interaction with others, and immediately inform the market manager who may request that person leave the market site.
- For updates please refer to [www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert](http://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert) or contact your respective state health authorities.

#### ESSENTIAL SERVICES

The government has announced and confirmed that food markets ie farmers markets **are considered essential services**, as per public transport, supermarkets, medical facilities etc and are permitted to trade mindful of ancillary public safety provisions.

## MARKET NUMBERS

The government has amended non-essential gathering numbers. It is to be noted they have **not applied these numbers to essential services**. Non-essential gatherings in indoor spaces are restricted to maximum 100 persons with an additional requirement of 4sqm space per person (25 pax in a 100sqm hall); 500 persons remains the outdoor limit for static gatherings.

Note: **Farmers' markets are essential** and are not static gatherings, therefore are currently exempt from these provisions, however AFMA recommends adherence to these limits as an added precaution. Some markets may need or choose to move stallholders from indoor locations outside and this is recommended where sites offer flexibility.

Many farmers markets in regional areas will fall under these visitation levels. Markets that regularly attract more than 500 shoppers should be mindful of social distancing at all times. Queue management may be required.

It is suggested that market managers of large busy markets arrange a clicker count at the market entry/ies to monitor numbers of people on site (including stallholders).

If managers need to introduce site access checks to manage total shopper, stallholder and staff within the market perimeter, there are a couple of suggested methods.

- Clicker Count

Count numbers onto/ off site and monitor access to control total number within recommended limits. Ensure any queued shoppers maintain the safe 1.5m distance.

- Timed Shopping

Distribute colour-coded timed wristbands, allowing maximum 60 minutes site access for shopping. This can assist spread any shopper peaks. These will need to be distributed from monitored entry/ exit points.

- Online Bookings

In a more extreme situation online booking systems like Eventbrite may be considered.

## SITE PLAN

Market managers are requested to review their site plan, and if necessary allow more space between stalls to facilitate social distancing. Install social distancing markers at stalls.

## FOOD SAMPLING

All stallholders are requested to cease open food sampling.

## PRODUCE SELECTION

Shoppers are to be discouraged from touching produce or self-selecting. Remove all baskets, bowls for self-select unwrapped produce shopping. Install signage to explain new shopping procedures. Pre-bagged produce is recommended, ideally in paper bags or cartons. This will help speed the customer shopping interval.

#### SNEEZE GUARDS

Market managers are requested to oversee the compliant installation of sneeze guards at all stalls requiring this protection.

#### COFFEE CUPS

Market managers are to request that all beverage vendors provide disposable paper (recyclable) cups to mitigate risks. Market coffee stalls supplying 'market day mugs' and onsite wash facilities should cease this practice for the time being.

#### ATM & CASH PAYMENTS

Please encourage use of tap-and-go payments wherever possible. If mobile ATMs are on site, please ensure sanitary cleaning undertaken/ wipes available. Cash transactions can be refined so that customers deposit cash into a cash box with change offered by the stallholder from a separate till. One stallholder only to manage cash.

#### STALL TRESTLES

Encourage stallholders to replace fabric trestle cloths (hessian etc) with plastic cloths that can be sanitised.

#### COMMUNITY SEATING

Market managers are recommended to remove all community-use tables and chairs for the time being. This is to assist recommended social distancing.

#### SAFE DISTANCE

Shoppers are requested to keep a safe distance (1.5m) if queuing to purchase food. Stalls should be set up according to the same distancing provisions.

#### WASTE

Waste management routinely requires the responsible disposal of all food and packaging waste. Market managers should ensure these practices are followed and that waste is not left un-binned on the market site.

#### CLEANING

Please request that host venues or market staff undertake rigorous cleaning of on-site toilet and any other shared facilities (storage areas etc).

#### VOLUNTEERS

Many markets have teams of loyal volunteers for site management. Please ensure they are briefed on all new measures at your market. Please supply them with disposable gloves and ask them to wear aprons, to be washed regularly.

#### NON-FOOD STALLS

The government provisions to allow the continued trading of farmers markets is based solely on the **essential status of food provision**. If your market has stalls selling non-food items these stallholders are to be asked to temporarily stop trading at the market to ensure its essential status is maintained.

Stalls selling food plants, food seeds and food propagation materials, or small livestock (eg hens) are currently permitted.

### **ALTERNATIVE FOOD DISTRIBUTION SERVICES**

Some farmers markets are developing local produce box schemes/ home delivery or shop online/ collect schemes, collaborating with local farmers to provide fresh food especially to needy members of their community. More information will be provided on these initiatives when available.

### **UPDATES**

The circumstances and public health guidance surrounding safe health practice in relation to Covid-19 are changing frequently. AFMA is monitoring available public information and will post significant developments of the AFMA Facebook page in the first instance. Please like and check posts regularly.

We ask all market managers, stallholders and shoppers to act responsibly to offer maximum common sense reduction of risk at this challenging time. Farmers markets are a fundamental link in our healthy food chain and no more than now should we be eating fresh healthy food. What's more, we need to support our farmers and artisan food producers many of whose livelihoods depend on their weekly trading at farmers markets.

Sell and shop local, sell and shop seasonal and healthy food, sell and shop in the fresh air and – shop with you own trolley!

**[www.facebook.com/farmersmarketsaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/farmersmarketsaustralia)**

### **AUSTRALIAN FARMERS' MARKETS ASSOCIATION**

26 March 2020

**[www.farmersmarkets.org.au](http://www.farmersmarkets.org.au)**