



A Guide for Direct Sales to Consumers during COVID-19 and Beyond

During these unprecedented times, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) recognizes that it is not 'business as usual'. We hope to provide some support and guidance to help you continue to sell and market your agricultural products.

Alternative Market Channels for Selling Your Products

Regardless of whether your business is considered an essential workplace, **all businesses** can continue to sell goods and services, so long as they do so through teleworking, online, telephone, contactless-pickup and delivery. Some potential options are:

1. Direct farm gate sales, using the above preventative measures.
2. Online sales for contactless farm-gate pick-up or delivery.
3. Partner with other local businesses to offer a local box delivery.
4. Partner with local restaurants who still offer food delivery services and takeout.
5. If you have surplus food, consider donating to a local food bank or community food program and you may be able to claim an [income tax credit](#).

General Health and Safety Protocols for Selling Direct

Be sure to read the [Ontario government's guidance: Agriculture health and safety during COVID-19](#). Continue to monitor the [Public Health website](#) for updates regarding current health and safety protocols and promote the use of the online [Self-Assessment Tool](#).

Remember, COVID-19 can be spread by people who are asymptomatic. Someone who is infected may not yet, **or ever**, show symptoms or signs. Screening will only identify the symptomatic population, so it can easily spread undetected.

Coronaviruses are spread through close contact with others. Here are some helpful tips to help prevent the spread of germs at home or in the workplace:

- [Wash your hands often with soap and water](#) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash or sanitize hands after making or receiving deliveries.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick and stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Where possible, wear gloves when interacting with high-touch areas. Do not touch your face with gloved hands. Take care when removing gloves. Ensure you wash your hands after removing them.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you are ill: notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions.

In addition to the above, if physical distancing between people (2 metres) is not possible, you may need to consider Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE is only effective if people wear it correctly. Ensure PPE training includes the fit, use, care, putting on and taking off, maintenance, cleaning and limitations of the PPE. Visit the [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#) to review a list of companies that sell PPE.

Some examples of PPE considerations for agriculture workers include:

- Single-use gloves can help limit contact with certain surfaces, products, etc. Set up practices for suitable disposal or change when soiled. Be sure you consider other hazards that may be present in the workplace before introducing gloves – in some cases, gloves can be an ‘entanglement’ hazard and should not be worn.
- Goggles or face shields can help with barriers and separation too. They should be assigned to people and not shared but can be used regularly if kept clean. Be sure to determine how they will be assigned and cleaned if you determine you will use them.

Setting Up Your Space

- Set up your operation so that people can maneuver the space using physical distancing.
- Offer your products pre-packaged and consider setting out sample products of the items for sale for easy viewing and to reduce customer handling.
- Consider offering a space for handwashing or hand sanitization.
- Provide self-serve freezers or other methods to reduce your need to be present and sanitize all areas between customers.
- Do not allow customers to sample food or use reusable containers.

- Do not provide communal areas or seating to stay on site.
- Offer contactless payment through tap/touchless payment methods, e-transfer, or pre-purchasing online. If you do accept cash, ensure it is properly sanitized.

Marketing Your Operation

- When promoting your farm gate, encourage people to stay home if they are not feeling well.
- Encourage customers to pre-order so that their visit is as brief as possible.
- Post a list of the health and safety measures you have in place, so that customers are more at ease visiting your farm.
- Tell your story! Many consumers want to support farmers during these difficult times.
- Promote the health benefits of your products. You are providing fresh, local food or agricultural products that are good for your customers health and well-being.
- Pivot your business model. Your product may also double as a physical or mental health product, or there may be a related value-added product that could be useful during this time. For example, care packages or mood boosters.
- Consider bundling products with other like-minded businesses to allow one source shopping. This can generate goodwill and even encourage local fundraising.
- Get creative! Use social media for giveaways, encourage your followers to 'take the [insert product here] challenge', promote a fun activity related to your product, or consider a charitable/social good promotional initiative. Many people are on social media and are looking for ways to help and support others and lift their spirits!

Making Risk Management Plans

- Ensure risk management and operational plans include pandemic plans. These plans should include identification of decision makers, roles and responsibilities, access to medical care, plans for quarantine and/or transportation to medical facilities. The plans should also include communications planning, such as: who is the point of contact, medical contacts, internal and external communication plans, staff contact information, suppliers, and community services.
- The risk management plan should also identify what to do if staff are not available to conduct time-sensitive work (e.g. milking, strawberry picking) when not enough employees are available to do the work because of illness. This may include having agreements with surrounding farmers for back-up support.
- Review Public Health of Canada's [Risk mitigation tool for workplaces/businesses operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Workplaces with Employees

- If you are looking for HR support, download the Canadian Agricultural Human

Resource Council (CAHRC) [AgriHR Toolkit](#). To receive a free access, use the code: OFA-Toolkit.

- CAHRC also has a regularly updated [COVID-19 web page](#) with information about managing your farm when employees are sick, calling in sick to work, or not showing up for work.
- If your business uses international agricultural workers, review the [COVID-19 Resource Library for International Agricultural Workers and Employers](#).

Resources

Many other organizations and government websites have additional resources and support available to help farmers to maintain the health and safety of your family, your workplace, and your customers. Here are some additional resources to help:

- [Ontario's Agriculture health and safety during COVID-19](#)
- [Ontario's Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- [WSPS COVID-19 Sector-Specific Health and Safety Guidance Documents](#)
- [OFA's Guide to Operating Your Essential Farm Business During COVID-19](#)
- [Farmers' Markets Ontario COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [Ontario Federation of Agriculture COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association's COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Local Line Direct Market Farmers' Guide to COVID-19](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#)
- Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance: [Online Marketing and the Basics of Direct-to-Consumer Sales](#)

The health and well-being of you and your farm team should be top priority during these difficult times.