



Food Safety at the Farmers' Market

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Maryland Department of Agriculture
Farmer's Market Meeting
March 3, 2021

Why is Food Safety at the Market Important?

- There have been serious foodborne illness outbreaks traced to farmers' markets throughout the U.S.
- Consumers visit markets for local food they assume is safe.
- Foodborne pathogens do not discriminate by farm size.
- To reduce risk, market managers and vendors need to focus on **risk reduction**.



Photo Credit: Edwin Remsberg

Food Safety at the Market

- Maryland Depts. of Ag (MDA) and Health (MDH), FDA, USDA and County health departments all regulate food safety.
 - Consider asking your county health department, prior to the market season, about current requirements.
 - [Local Food Program contacts](#)
- Market managers are generally responsible for enforcing best practices.
- Food safety risk reduction at the Market:
 - Facilities
 - Transportation
 - Activities
 - COVID-19
 - Education & Regulatory Compliance
 - Farmer Production Practices

Putting Best Practices to Action

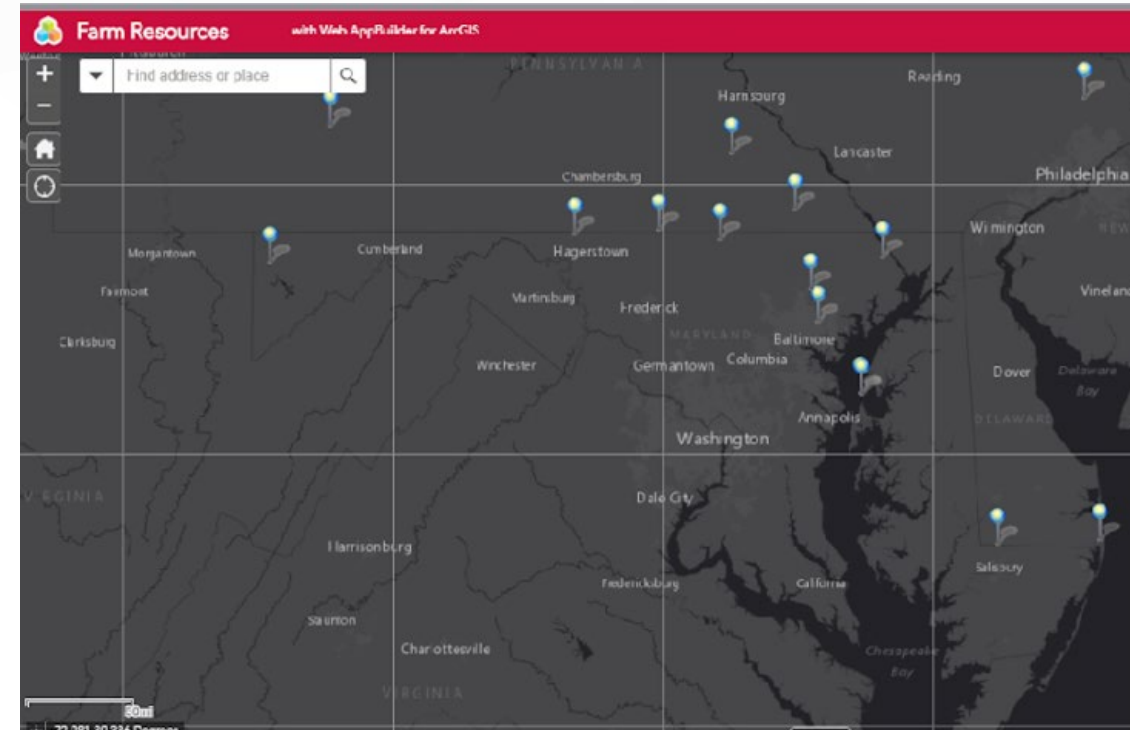
- **Farmers Market Food Safety Risk Reduction Checklist.**
- Use the checklist to help you organize implementation of food safety best practices.
- The checklist will help you track important information to communicate to vendors prior to and throughout the market season.

Farmers Market Food Safety Risk Reduction Checklist

	Yes	No	N/A
Market Facilities			
Potable water is used for all purposes at the market (produce washing, cleaning, handwashing etc.)			
Extra disposable face masks are available at the market entrance. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
If municipal water is not used, microbiological testing is conducted prior to each market season opening and as often as may be warranted.			
A handwashing station with soap, single use paper towels, running water, and a place to store the grey water is at the market entrance.			
Produce Production			
Produce vendors are encouraged to use Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs).			
Signage is clearly posted informing customers of proper handling and washing of produce before consumption.			
All water used in post-harvest handling of market products is potable.			
Sanitizers used in post-harvest washing are labeled for produce use.			
Transportation to Market			
Vehicles used to transport products to market should be visibly clean before loading products.			

Food Safety at the Market: Facilities

- All water used at the market should be potable.
- If not from a municipal source, water sources should be tested according to the drinking water standards (microbial, turbidity and nitrates) prior to each market season opening and as often as may be warranted.
- Extra masks at market entrance.
- The market should provide handwashing facilities for vendors and customers.



Maryland Map of Water Testing Labs
maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4228cc4917f84bc3aea03a00992ea563

Request a
handwashing station

Food Safety at the Market: Transportation

- Products should be transported to the market in a sanitary manner.
- Vehicles should be **visibly clean** before loading product.
- Cover product during travel to eliminate possible contamination while on the road.



Food Safety at the Market: Transportation

- Coolers, insulated containers, or refrigeration (required for eggs, meat, poultry and other potentially hazardous foods) can be used to maintain the proper temperatures during transportation.
- If transporting a mixed load, keep potentially hazardous foods, such as raw meats and eggs, **separate** from other foods such as fresh produce.



Food Safety at the Market: Activities

- Vendors should not come to the market and/or handle food when sick or injured.
- Hands should be washed:
 - Before harvesting, packing, transporting, bagging, displaying or otherwise handling food products
 - Before putting on single-use gloves
 - After touching and feeding animals
 - After going to the bathroom
 - After coughing or sneezing
 - Before and After eating, drinking or smoking
 - After handling dirty tools or equipment
 - After handling money



Photo Credit: Edwin Remsberg

Source: SDSU Extension, <https://extension.sdstate.edu/food-safety-production-farmers-market>

Food Safety at the Market: Activities

- Glove use at the Market
- Vendors should replace their gloves in the following situations:
 - If the gloves become **torn**.
 - If a task is **interrupted** (ex. answering a cellphone, gathering supplies, assisting with the cash register, handling money, or emptying trash).
 - After **two hours** of continual use.
 - If the gloves are contaminated (ex. sneezing).
 - When the food being handled changes from **raw to cooked** or ready-to-eat.

Food Safety at the Market: Activities

- Display correctly to reduce contamination:
 - Containers and tables should be cleaned and sanitized;
 - Food at proper temperature;
 - Raw meat, eggs, cooked products and produce separated;
 - Products off the ground;
 - Consumer handling discouraged; and
 - Bags/cartons should be new and free from chemicals



Food Safety at the Market: Activities

- Encourage vendors to keep traceability records
 - Source of products
 - Date sold at Market
- Encourage vendors to display their farm name and contact information to aid in traceability.
- Own Production
 - Produce
 - Field
 - Harvest Date
 - Table Eggs
 - Flock
 - Date of Lay
 - Meat and Poultry
 - Animal ID
 - Slaughter Facility
 - Harvest Date
- Purchased Products
 - Source
 - Producer/Manufacturer
 - Lot Number



Photo Credit: Edwin Remsberg

Food Safety at the Market: Activities

- Remind vendors and customers to wash their hands
- Don't assume customers know they should wash produce!
- Consider signage informing customers that food safety is a priority and to wash produce prior to consumption.

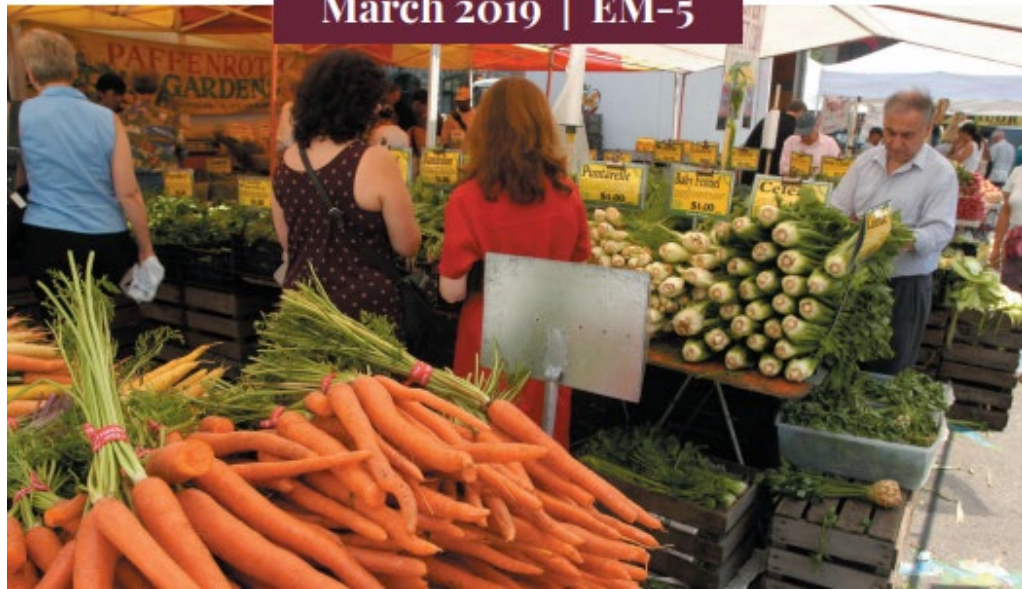
Request signs
today!



Food Safety: Vendor Agreement

Farmers Market Vendor Agreement Legal Guide

March 2019 | EM-5

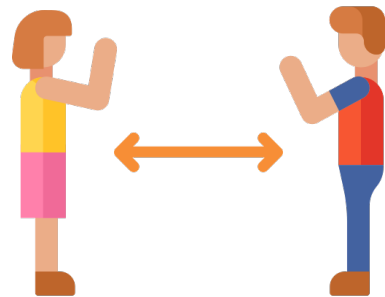


- A well-written vendor agreement should outline the standards, including food safety and COVID-19 precautions, of selling at the market.
- This resource helps market managers and vendors craft an agreement that is easy-to-understand and fair.

Agriculture Law Education Initiative

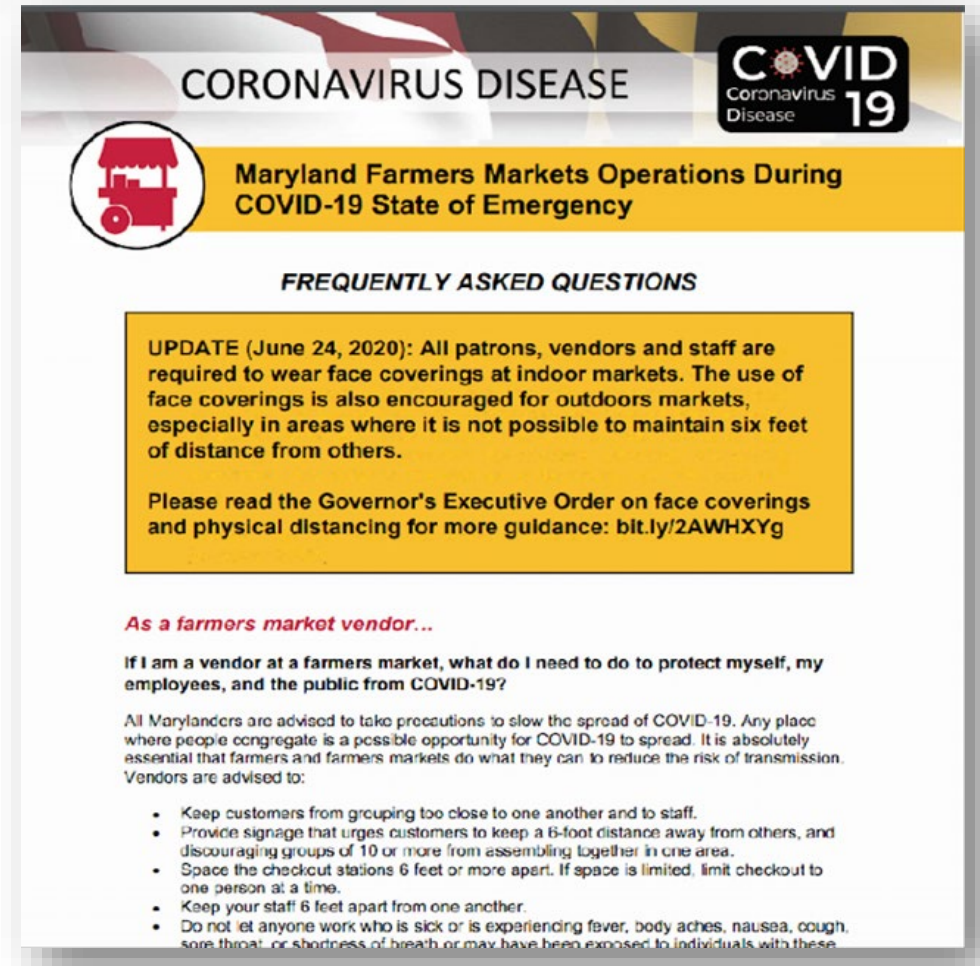
<http://umaglaw.org/download/farmers-market-vendor-agreement/>

Farmers' Market Operations During COVID-19



Farmers' Market Operations During COVID-19

- Recommendations from State Depts. of Ag and Health to slow the spread of COVID-19 at farmers' markets.
 - County Health Dept. may require additional precautions
 - [Contact numbers](#)
 - <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/pages/lhd-resources>
- Vendors need to plan ahead to protect themselves, their employees, and the public.



The image shows a document titled "CORONAVIRUS DISEASE" with a "COVID 19 Coronavirus Disease" logo. Below the title is a yellow banner with a red market stall icon and the text "Maryland Farmers Markets Operations During COVID-19 State of Emergency". The main section is titled "FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS" and contains an "UPDATE (June 24, 2020)" regarding face coverings and physical distancing. It also includes a question for farmers market vendors and a list of advice for vendors.

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE COVID 19 Coronavirus Disease

Maryland Farmers Markets Operations During COVID-19 State of Emergency

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPDATE (June 24, 2020): All patrons, vendors and staff are required to wear face coverings at indoor markets. The use of face coverings is also encouraged for outdoors markets, especially in areas where it is not possible to maintain six feet of distance from others.

Please read the Governor's Executive Order on face coverings and physical distancing for more guidance: bit.ly/2AWHXYg

As a farmers market vendor...

If I am a vendor at a farmers market, what do I need to do to protect myself, my employees, and the public from COVID-19?

All Marylanders are advised to take precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19. Any place where people congregate is a possible opportunity for COVID-19 to spread. It is absolutely essential that farmers and farmers markets do what they can to reduce the risk of transmission. Vendors are advised to:

- Keep customers from grouping too close to one another and to staff.
- Provide signage that urges customers to keep a 6-foot distance away from others, and discouraging groups of 10 or more from assembling together in one area.
- Space the checkout stations 6 feet or more apart. If space is limited, limit checkout to one person at a time.
- Keep your staff 6 feet apart from one another.
- Do not let anyone work who is sick or is experiencing fever, body aches, nausea, cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath or may have been exposed to individuals with these

https://mda.maryland.gov/maryland_products/Documents/COVID-19-Farmers-Market-FAQs.pdf

Farmers' Market Operations During COVID-19: Social Distancing



- Use directional arrows to encourage flow of customers through the market.
- Provide signage that urges customers to keep a 6-foot distance away from others.
- Discourage groups of 10 or more from assembling together in one area.
- Encourage vendors to separate work tasks among workers (e.g. one person handles product, one person stays at the register)?



<https://cstoredecisions.com/2020/04/03/free-social-distancing-floor-graphics/>

Farmers' Market Operations During COVID-19: Masks



- Have the market mask policy clearly posted online and at the market.
- Have masks available for those who forgot.
- Make a plan for servicing those who cannot wear a mask due to a disability (online pre-order, curbside pickup, etc.).
- Ensure all market vendors and workers are trained on the mask policy and how or when to enforce it.


Request signs
today!

Farmers' Market Operations During COVID-19: Handwashing Stations



- Handwashing stations encourage good hygienic practices.
- Place the station strategically at the entrance of the market, before vendor lines.
- Good handwashing stations have soap, single use paper towels, running water, and a place to store the grey water.

Request a
handwashing
station



Regulatory Requirements for Vendors

Regulatory Requirements for Common Market Items

Poultry and Rabbit Meat

- Poultry and Rabbit Meat
 - Must be slaughtered under continuous USDA inspection or certification by MDA
 - USDA Inspected poultry/rabbit requires On Farm Home Processing license for storage
 - MDH Mobile Farmers Market License Required
 - Poultry and rabbit slaughter class is offered continuously online
 - Frozen – held at 0°
 - Fresh – held at 41°
 - More information:
https://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/poultry_rabbit_program.aspx
 - Email: Christopher.Laube@maryland.gov



Regulatory Requirements for Common Market Items

Meat Products

- Goat, Beef, Pork, Lamb
 - Must be slaughtered and processed under continuous supervision at a USDA inspected facility
 - MDH on-farm home processing license required for storage
 - MDH Mobile Farmers Market License Required
 - Frozen – held at 0°
 - Fresh – held at 41°



Regulatory Requirements for Common Market Items

Organic

- Organic Labelling
 - All producers with more than \$5,000 in annual sales must be certified
 - Labels must have producer's name and address with their accredited certifier listed
 - Producers with less than \$5,000 are exempt from the certification requirement
 - Can label as organic
 - Cannot use the USDA Seal or imply certified
 - Required to follow all requirements of the National Organic Program
 - More information:
https://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/certified_md_organic_farms.aspx
 - Email: organic.certification@maryland.gov



Regulatory Requirements for Common Market Items

Table Eggs

- Maryland Egg Law
 - Applies to all producers/packers of table eggs
 - As of October 1, 2020 all poultry eggs (quail, turkey, duck & chicken) included
 - Producer/packers must register with MDA annually
 - Eggs must be held at 45°F at Market
 - More information:
https://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/egg_inspection.aspx
 - Email: egg.inspection@maryland.gov



Regulatory Requirements for Common Market Items Value Added



- Value-Added Foods
- Mobile Farmers Market License
 - Required for sale of potentially hazardous value-added products
 - License from MDH – Covers all farmers markets in Maryland
- MDH On-Farm Home Processing License or Processing license
 - Required for acidified foods, dried foods, meat storage
- Cottage Food Producers
 - Non-potentially hazardous jams, jellies and baked goods
 - New this year: in addition to previously required labeling
 - A printed statement in 10 point type or larger, in a color that provides a clear contrast to the background of the label: “Made by a cottage food business that is not subject to Maryland's food safety regulations.”
 - Products made with an On-Farm Home Processing License are not required to put this statement

More information:

<https://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Documents/Processing%20and%20Selling%20Value%20Added%20Food%20Products%20in%20Maryland.pdf>

Email: value.added@maryland.gov

Regulatory Requirements for Common Market Items

Produce Safety Rule



- Food Safety Standards for Growing, Harvesting, Packing and Holding
 - Growers with less than \$25,000* in annual produce sales exempt
 - Crops that are rarely consumed raw are exempt
 - Qualified Exempt Farms at the Market
 - Required to be approved as Qualified Exempt by MDA annually
 - “Must prominently and conspicuously display, at the point of purchase, the name and complete business address of the farm where the produce was grown, on a label, poster, sign, placard...”
 - Remind vendors that they can use this to gain brand loyalty and assist with traceback!
- All others required to fully comply with the Produce Safety Rule

*Adjusted for inflation



Photo Credit: Edwin Remsberg

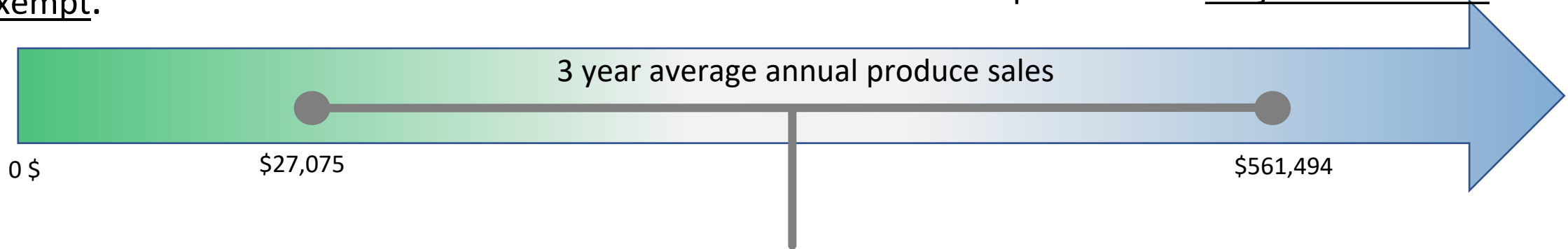
Food Safety at the Market: Education

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)- Produce Safety Rule (PSR)

Generally, the applicability of the PSR is dependent on farm sales.

Farms grossing less than \$27,075 /produce sales* are completely exempt.

Farms grossing more than \$561,494 in **food** sales* that grow covered produce are subject to the PSR.



Farms that gross between \$27,075 and \$561,494 in **food** sales annually and sell more than half of their food products directly to consumers, restaurants, or stores in their state or within 275 miles of their farm may be eligible for a qualified exemption.

* 3 yr. average adjusted for inflation

MDA Registration for Produce Farms

- All produce farmers are required to submit a one-time PSR General Registration.
- Farmers will submit additional registrations if Exempt or Qualified Exempt from the PSR.
- Video and quick navigation sheet: psla.umd.edu/extension/produce-safety/resources-ag-agents.
- All forms available here mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/Food-Safety-Modernization-Act.aspx.



More Information: <https://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/Food-Safety-Modernization-Act.aspx>



Education for Vendors

GAP vs Produce Safety Rule

BOTH = Food Safety Practices for Growing, Harvesting and Packing Produce

GAP

- Voluntary
- Required by some buyers
- Requires Food Safety Plan
- Minimum of annual audit to maintain certification
 - Can withdraw from certification at any time

Produce Safety Rule

- Mandatory
- Compliance required by law
- Food Safety Plan not required
- No inspection frequency
 - Refusing inspection has consequences

Example of Produce Products and Associated MD Regulation



	Fruits and vegetables that are commonly consumed raw	Fruits and vegetables rarely eaten raw	Value added products with a kill step	Cut fresh produce	Dried vegetables and herbs*
Applicable FSMA Rule	May Be Subject to PSR	Exempt from PSR	Preventive controls for human food	Preventive controls for human food	Preventive controls for human food
Eligible for GAP certification?	Yes	Yes	No	Growing yes, cutting no	No
Under purview of which MD governing body	MDA	MDA	Could be covered by MD cottage food law depending on product	Process – requires a license from MDH	Process – requires a license from MDH

*Does not apply to crops that are normally dried as part of harvest. For example onions.

Food Safety at the Market: Produce Production

- Vendors should be encouraged to produce, harvest and handle produce products following Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs).
 - <https://psla.umd.edu/extension/produce-safety>
- GAPs minimize microbial contamination of fresh produce and reduce the chances of foodborne illnesses.



Photo Credit: Edwin Remsberg

Food Safety at the Market: Produce Production

- MDA offers two types of GAP certification
 - MDA GAP
 - Specialty Crop Block Grant Funded – No Fees for audit or certification
 - Intended for Direct Marketers
 - Intended to Assist Growers work towards a more extensive certification required by buyers
 - USDA GAP Programs
 - USDA GAP/GHP – audit fees partially covered by Specialty Crop grant funds
 - Harmonized GAP – audit fees fully covered by USDA Risk Management
 - Harmonized+ GAP – audit fees fully covered by USDA Risk Management
- More info:
https://mda.maryland.gov/foodfeedquality/Pages/good_ag_practices.aspx

Farm Elements that Impact the Safety and Quality of Your Produce



Implementing Practices to Mitigate Risks



Conclusion

- To be successful, the food at the Market must be safe!
- Educate vendors about how they can reduce risks during:
 - Production
 - Transport to market and
 - Sale
- COVID-19 requires additional precautions at the Market.
 - Protect customers and vendors
- Order a portable handwashing station, directional markers, and signage to get you started:
<https://forms.gle/Rt5o8k65L3VZw5w76>

Questions and Assistance?

Produce Safety and COVID Resources

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Table Eggs, Produce Safety
Rule, Poultry & Rabbit Meat,
Organic Certification, GAP
Certification, COVID Resources

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