

Farmers' Market Guidance

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SPEAKERS

Speaker 3, Christa Hartsook, Joe Hannan, Shannon Coleman, Paul Ovrom



Christa Hartsook 00:15

Hello, and welcome to the Small Farms Podcast, a production of the Small Farms Program at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Our podcast covers the opportunities and challenges associated with rural life. I'm Christa Hartsook, Program Coordinator with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. And welcome to the Small Farms Sustainability Podcast. Today we will be talking about Governor Reynolds' recent proclamation on April 24th for farm markets across the state. And today I have several guests with me, including Paul Ovrom, State Horticulturalist for the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, Shannon Coleman, Assistant Professor of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Iowa State University, and Joe Hannan, Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Paul, let's start with you. On April 24th, Governor Reynolds issued a proclamation that farmers markets would not be prohibited as mass gatherings, but set in place some limitations for those markets. The first that I noticed is that only farm products and food can be sold at the market. So could you define for our listeners what are considered farm products and food?



Paul Ovrom 01:31

Sure. Thanks, Krista. And thanks to Johannah too, for inviting me onto this podcast. Yes, you're correct. The governor issued that proclamation on April 24th and that included part

of that proclamation included farmers markets with some restrictions in that proclamation and then one of those touched on farm products and food. And after that was issued we got a lot of questions. I know ISU Extension did and IDALS did as well. So we're asking for more clarity on farm products and food. So the Iowa Department of Agriculture reached out to the governor's office and the legal counsel there got back to us within a few days with some clarity there. When it comes to farm products and food, they're talking about dairy and dairy products, poultry poultry products, and I'm reading a list here it's rather extensive but it also includes livestock, fruits, vegetables, flowers, seeds, grasses, trees, fish, honey and other similar products. So anything that's plant or animal related that supplies people with food, fiber, feed, or fur so to extend on that a bit more that would include vendors at markets that might be selling lotions, soaps, sanitizers that are made with farm products, for example, soy milk or goat's milk, honey, bees wax products, lip balms would be included there. When it comes to food, more specifically, that would include pet food products, coffee beans could be for sale. A lot of liquids, we think of farmer's markets would be for sale that we could consume including lemonades. Again, coffee, teas, we even had bubble tea as a question and that would be included. Also Iowa wines that's a big one that would be included, it could be for sale markets. The legal counsel there at the governor's office did say there was one exception they would allow to be sold that didn't fall into the definition of farm products or food, and that would be the COVID-19 homemade air filtration masks. Those could be allowed at the markets for sale as well. So with that information from the governor's office, that was really good clarity that helped alleviate a lot of anxiety out there at the markets at the market manager and vendor level on what could be sold at the markets.

C

Christa Hartsook 03:56

That's a really good list, Paul. And when I was reading over the proclamation, it looked like to me that the rest of it is really focusing on some best practices for social distancing, eliminating some non-food sales and maybe special activities or congregated seating, things like that. Joe, can you talk to me a little bit about some best practices for markets that they could implement during this season this year to promote social distancing?

J

Joe Hannan 04:23

Sure, Christa. I can talk a little bit about social distancing practices. I guess the first one I'll start with, it's gonna be tough, part of the whole Farmers Market thing is about community and it's about talking to the farmer and the customer. But trying to maintain that distance either between the booth space and putting in a table or some sort of spreader barrier between you and the customer is one thing to help maintain that six foot distance. I think the proclamation also calls out a six foot distance in between vendor

booths, but other things that markets may or may not be able to do is look at traffic flow through the market are you able to flow traffic in one direction from start to finish rather than having people walking in both directions and minimizing some of that crossing of paths from people as going from vendor to vendor. Markets can also try to promote the online preorder and pick up from the farmer on site that would reduce the amount of contact time that you have with people as well as just being out in the general public area. Other things that vendors can do and buyers can really promote and work for is reducing cash transactions going more of that touchless pay type systems that allow you to step back and be further away from the vendor. There's a lot of different touchless pay systems, I think Android and Apple both have their systems, a lot of farmers use Square and Square now has the touch to pay card readers that you can get, I think it's like a \$50 add on. So it's rather reasonably priced, and get that hardware. And then there's also things like Venmo, so there's lots of different options out there for doing those touchless type payments.

S

Shannon Coleman 06:02

This is Shannon, and I want to add that for both food safety purposes and to reduce the risk of passing on the virus, you want to also make sure that you're washing your hands regularly for vendors and consumers. If there is the option for them to wash their hands. You want to use hand sanitizers if you have it, or if hand washing is not available. Vendors should also consider having their own hand washing station at their booth. And vendors should also consider wearing gloves as well as practicing proper glove maintenance, such as changing the glove when it becomes soiled.

J

Joe Hannan 06:38

That's a good a couple of additions there Shannon, one thing what the hand washing stations were finding, it's hard to purchase the prebuilt hand washing stations, but there's lots of options out there for building and making your own hand washing station for \$20-\$30 bucks. So there's options out there to have your own station on site at your booth. And one of the other things with hygiene and cleanliness at the market is rather than having like a cloth tablecloth, having a plastic or vinyl tablecloth, all that type services that you can clean regularly throughout the market period, especially if you have high traffic flow.

C

Christa Hartsook 07:11

Joe, talk to me a little bit too, if you're having multiple people at a booth, for example, you know, is it a good idea to consider maybe one person handles the produce or the bagging

for the customer and a different individual handles the financial transaction?

J

Joe Hannan 07:27

Yeah, Christa. So that's a good thought there. Especially if you're going to be taking payments and things have one person managing the payment side of things and the other person doing the bagging of produce and passing it off. That puts only one person in contact with the customer and your other people can be prompting purchases. I do think if the customer brings their own bags though, let them pack their own bags, put stuff up on the table and let them pack up their bag.

C

Christa Hartsook 07:51

Okay, good reminder. Shannon, a lot of times you know, at farmer's market, we will see home processed goods. Can you talk to me a little bit about what vendors need to be thinking about there?

S

Shannon Coleman 08:02

Number one things that they need to be thinking about is making sure that they're following safe practices at home as they're preparing the food items, as well as pre-packaging their items before they come to the market. To give you examples of they can still be sold at the farmers market whether you have a license or not, and is based on your license for licensed home bakers. A reminder that at the farmers market if they want to sell temperature control for safety baked goods, that they will also need a farmers market license along with their home bakers license. They are allowed to place orders online with their customers so kind of know ahead of time of the market, how many orders they need to take out there. And they also are allowed to allow their customers to pay online, they do have an option which is found in our guidance document to ship their items if possible, something to think about what those temperature control for safety items such as cheesecake that you have to be very careful with those and make sure that you have ice, enough ice, to support that baked item. For the unlicensed baked goods that are sold by exempt Home Food operators at the market. They are also allowed to take orders online and pay online. The rules still stand in place where they can only distribute from the farmers market or at their home. So they can take the orders ahead of time and know that they need to take specific orders to the market. But they still have to do that direct contact, so you want to make sure you're following those social distancing recommendations that Joe had, and then they're also not allowed to ship their items. So if you don't have a license in your home bakery, you cannot ship your items you have to do direct sale of your product at the farmers market. Another popular item sold that the

farmers market are standardized jams. Those who are unlicensed, it'll be the same as the exempt home food operators. You can take their order ahead of time and allow them to pay online but you have to have that direct contact from either the farmers market or out of your residence to your customer. And you are not allowed to ship those jams to your customers. If you do have a license and you are a jam maker, you need to make sure number one that you are making your products in a licensed facility. And you can also sell that at the farmers market, you can have your customers place their orders and pay online. And you can either distribute it at the farmers market or you can ship your products because you have a license, you have that option to ship throughout the state. And so those are some of the examples that I see as far as the farmers market when I go and visit that those are some of the popular home processed items that are typically sold that people may still have questions about. And if people have specific questions, they can email me at scoleman@iastate.edu.

C

Christa Hartsook 10:51

Thanks, Shannon. I appreciate that. Paul, I'm assuming there's some other things that farmers markets should be thinking about specifically for this season, knowing we're in a challenging time here.

P

Paul Ovrom 11:01

They certainly have their hands full, don't they? All the markets that I've talked to the managers are thinking about when to start the markets, that's a big one, whether to start when they typically would in a given year, or to delay it. And many, many markets in Iowa are delaying. They want to be prepared, they want to get ready. They're looking at the guidance, they're looking at what's been issued by ISU extension, by IDALS, by the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, and thinking through the logistics, some of the things that Joe and Dr. Coleman just talked about. So a lot of issues. We can help where we can. There are little things like signage, we can offer them signage that helps direct people to think about six foot spacing, to think about if they've been ill, they shouldn't be at the market, those kinds of things. We're fielding a lot of questions and trying to do the best we can to help them as they prepare for the market season.

C

Christa Hartsook 11:57

It definitely is going to be a challenging one. Paul, I know, Joe mentioned earlier that part of the farmers market is that real sense of community, you get in that connection from the farmer to the consumer itself. A lot of times I noticed farmers wanting to promote sampling, for example, as a great way to bridge that connection to that consumer and

also get them to try their product and become a loyal customer. I'm wondering about sampling for this year.

P Paul Ovrom 12:22

I think we would all agree here that that should be discouraged. It's just not something that should be encouraged at all, maybe just flat out prohibited. The governor's proclamation does not do that. But it strongly encourages that markets abide by the guidance that was issued. Guidance was a separate document that went along in tandem with the proclamation that has highly recommended practices. And that's part of what we've been discussing today, those items, and that includes no sampling strongly encouraged that the markets do not allow sampling just for sanitary reasons.

C Christa Hartsook 12:58

Sure. For this year, it's definitely understandable. Joe, anything else that you can think of from an extension perspective of ways that we could have successful markets this year?

J Joe Hannan 13:09

Yeah. Paul talked a little bit about signage, Paul shared some signs I think with the farmer's market grew up here, maybe last week, last Friday, maybe. I've talked to a few other folks in the meantime that also have developed some signs. So I'm trying to work on accumulating those and post those up on the safe produce website, so people don't have to go through and download and duplicate to make their own new signs. And otherwise, you know, I've seen here a lot of farms already looking at other market opportunities to help distribute and move their produce outside of the farmer's market, just knowing that some people are not going to go simply for protections of themselves that don't close yourself off from other market opportunities out there.

C Christa Hartsook 13:49

Yeah, it's a really good reminder that we all need to think creatively this year of how to reach consumers.

J Joe Hannan 13:54

And hopefully some of those who stick around.

C Christa Hartsook 13:56
Yes, thanks to all three of you for being on today. We might as well plug some websites here if folks have some additional questions or concerns or are looking for some of those resources. Paul, do you want to start with the department's website?

P Paul Ovrom 14:09
Sure, you can just go to www.iowaagriculture.gov and from there you can click on programs, and one of those as farmers markets, and we have some resources there and my contact information is there as well. If anybody wants to call me it's 515-242-6239 or paul.ovrom@iowaagriculture.gov.

C Christa Hartsook 14:36
Thanks, Paul.

P Paul Ovrom 14:37
Thanks again for having me on.

C Christa Hartsook 14:38
You bet. Joe?

J Joe Hannan 14:41
Yeah, so the ISU Produce Safety Teams' website is safeproduce.cals.iastate.edu and you can find the contact information for myself and Shannon, but as well as Dr. Shaw and Teresa Wiemerslage, Connie's contact information. We're all on there and we all have different areas of expertise from restaurant retail to farm side of things. So give us a call if you need some specific help either at the farm level or at the market level.

C Christa Hartsook 15:15
Okay, thanks again to all three of you. We appreciate it.

S Speaker 3 15:18
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