

April 2, 2020

Dear Farm Manager:

As our nation works diligently to halt the spread of COVID-19, access to fruits and vegetables is vital to ensure a safe and steady food supply. Farms that allow customers to pick their own produce must do their part to protect the health of customers and employees.

This is *not* business as usual. It is critical that all participants in pick-your-own activities follow CDC guidelines to minimize risk of infection. We want to be sure that the ag industry complies with federal and state recommendations for good health.

Following discussions with Tennessee's agriculture industry leaders, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture makes the following recommendations to farms offering pick-your-own produce:

- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between customers and employees.
- Schedule appointments to limit the number of customers on site at one time.
- Only allow adults, teens, and older children to pick.
- Offer ordering online or over the phone.
- Implement pick up, drive through, and/or delivery options.
- Eliminate samples, eating areas, and on-farm activities.
- Limit employees to essential people.
- Sell pre-weighed packaged items to limit food handling and to keep customers moving.
- Ask customers to only touch items they intend to purchase.
- Have separate people to handle products and money. Employees should use hand sanitizer after every transaction.
- Regularly disinfect frequently-touched surfaces.
- Customers and employees showing signs of illness should stay home.
- Use signs, the web, and social media to communicate and promote new procedures.
- Enforce new policies with employees and customers.

This is a serious situation for our nation and our industry. Biosecurity is a longstanding practice in agriculture and we fully understand how important it is to immediately control a disease outbreak. We can work together to maintain our strong commitment to health. Even during these uncertain times, farmers remain resilient. We know that the agriculture community is uniquely prepared to weather this storm. Thank you for all you do to support agriculture in Tennessee.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M.