



Growing healthy families and communities.

250 S. Arizona Ave. Suite 6, Chandler, AZ 85225 | (480) 307 – 6360 | www.pinnacleprevention.org

March 16, 2020

The Honorable Douglas A. Ducey
Governor of the State of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dr. Cara Christ
Director, Arizona Department of Health Services
150 N. 18th Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85001

Director Mark Killian
Arizona Department of Agriculture
1688 W. Adams St.
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Re: Urgent Action Needed- Farmer's Markets Essential to Decrease Food Scarcity in Rural Arizona
Request for Exemption from Covid-19 Related Restrictions

Dear Governor Ducey,

Farmers markets are vitally necessary for the livelihood of tens of thousands of farmers and for food access for millions of consumers. Farmers markets provide essential services for food access in the same manner as grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential public services as decisions are made regarding containment protocols.

Pinnacle Prevention and the Arizona Food Systems Network applauds Governor Ducey's recent actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. **In addition to these directives, we formally request that the Governor exempt farmers markets from the gathering prohibitions of 50 people or more.**

Many farmers markets have modified operations to limit community gathering, offering drive-up and quick pick up options, promoting everyday preventive handwashing and hygiene actions, and practicing social distancing among patrons and vendors. Farmers markets also provide several additional benefits as food outlets such as:

- A shortened supply chain which means that food passes through far fewer hands than other retail outlets;
 - Markets are open air with space to practice CDC best practices of six feet or more of social distancing;
 - Market trips are brief;
 - Market booths are non-permanent, so products are not constantly being touched 7 days/week and can be wiped down regularly by vendors;
 - Markets provide valuable information on how to stretch food dollars in times of economic uncertainty and how to limit food waste; and,
 - Markets provide connection points to local emergency food services, such as food pantries
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In addition, we would also like to share other actions that can be taken to support Arizona's food system recognizing that this pandemic presents serious challenges, but it also provides an opportunity to come together in solidarity, share information, strategize and develop responses to protect and connect across our food-based economy. For that to happen, we need to ensure that the links in the local food value chain have the funding and infrastructure to continue their work of feeding their neighbors and strengthening their communities. We offer the following four protocol modifications to reach that goal:

1. In Support of Households: Offer paid sick leave and temporary deferment of loan payments as events and schools are canceled; approve the operation of a Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) for households who do not normally qualify for D-SNAP to assist temporarily food insecure households after a disaster; support schools to utilize the Special Summer Food Service Program provisions to continue to offer meals to needy children.
2. In Support of Farmers: Expand economic loss relief to include small specialty crop farmers; provide funding for food pantries to pay market prices for farmers who donate food they can't sell due to demand disruptions.
3. In Support of Small Businesses: Immediate, short-term financial relief for community food businesses whose demand has been disrupted by COVID-19 containment efforts, such as deferment of loan payments, etc; Make emergency working loans available.
4. Action by Value Chain Integrators: Deploy excess capacity and infrastructure to avoid food loss and move food to where it is needed, i.e., allow school buses to deliver meals and allow local producers to use freezers and refrigerators of large facilities to store food.

We would be happy to elaborate on these recommendations or assist you in any way that you see fit. Thank you for your leadership and support to keep Arizonans healthy and thriving in this time of stress and need.

Sincerely,



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cc: Christina Corrieri, Senior Policy Advisor, Arizona Governor's Office
Chuck Podolack, Policy Advisor, Arizona Governor's Office
Colby Bower, Assistant Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs, Arizona Department of Health Services



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Rob Smook, PIO/Legislative Liaison, Arizona Department of Agriculture

Emily Mercado, Policy Advisor, Arizona House of Representatives

Melissa Taylor, Deputy Chief of Staff, Arizona Senate

Tracy Lopes, Staff Attorney and Policy Advisor, Arizona House of Representatives

Patsy Osmon, Staff Attorney and Policy Advisor, Arizona House of Representatives
