



**Steering
Committee:**

Chair: Carle Brinkman
Ecology Center

Tanya Wolf Small
Agricultural Institute of
Marin

LaTisha Sohai
Alchemist CDC

Paul Stonebarger
Ghiggeri &
Stonebarger Farms

Erin Tormey
Irish Ridge Ranch and
Coastside Farmers'
Markets

Portia Bramble
North Coast Growers'
Association

Ben Palazzolo
Pacific Coast Farmers'
Market Association

Megan Goehring
Palm Springs Cultural
Center

Catt Fields White
San Diego Markets

Julie Schwarz
SoCal Farmers Markets

Elizabeth Bowman
Sustainable Economic
Enterprises of LA



March 16, 2020

Secretary Karen Ross
California Department of Food & Agriculture
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

CC: California Department of Public Health; Office of the Governor

Re: Urgent Action Needed for CA's Certified Farmers' Markets during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Dear, Secretary Ross.

The California Alliance of Farmers' Markets is a member-based coalition of Certified Farmers' Markets, farmers, and affiliate partners dedicated to promoting the direct farmer-to-consumer relationship, supporting California's independent farmers, and increasing access to fresh, healthy, locally-grown food. We represent Certified Farmers' Markets throughout the State of California and work to ensure local and state regulations strengthen the farmers' market industry.

As of now, Certified Farmers' Markets in several counties have had their permits revoked and are now unable to operate. **The Alliance and the undersigned organizations, businesses, and individuals write to request that the California Department of Agriculture (CDFA) take swift action by issuing a statement affirming the essential role Certified Farmers' Markets play for California's farmers, economy, and communities across the State, and affirmatively equate Certified Farmers' Markets with grocery stores and other retail outlets for the purposes of COVID19 containment policies.**

The rigorous regulations that normally govern farmers' markets exist to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and so farmers' markets and market vendors are exceptionally well prepared to enact additional precautions. Farmers' markets specifically have a number of additional benefits as food outlets including:

- A shortened supply chain means that food passes through far fewer hands than other retail outlets;
- Markets are open air with space to move away from people if needed;
- Market trips are brief, unlike prolonged events, and average shopper outings at the market average around 20-30 minutes;

California Alliance of Farmers' Markets

2530 San Pablo Ave, Berkeley, CA 94702 | (510) 548-2220 | www.farmersmarketalliance.org



- Farmers' market booths are non-permanent, so products are not constantly being touched 7 days/week, and can be wiped down regularly by vendors.

Farmers' Market operators care deeply about the communities they serve, and many have already taken proactive steps to protect market customers, farmers, and staff including new procedures around staff hand-washing and sanitizing of market surfaces; not allowing vendors who are sick to set up and eliminating any penalty associated with missing market; eliminating non-essential activities; and ceasing all food sampling.

We urge the California Department of Food & Agriculture to take swift action to protect California Certified Farmers' Markets, and the farmers who rely on them. The closure of hundreds of California Certified Farmers' Markets for several weeks, let alone several months could result in the permanent loss of many of California's family farms, which our communities' food supply and economy relies on.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to partnering with you to help California farmers and farmers' markets navigate this crisis.

Sincerely,
The California Alliance of Farmers' Markets Steering Committee

Carle Brinkman

Food & Farming Director, Ecology Center
Alliance Steering Committee Chair
carle@ecologycenter.org
510-548-1005

Other Signatories: