



April 13th, 2020

Dear Supporters of the Vancouver Farmers Market,

Our community is in the midst of incredible challenges as we work together to respond to the current global COVID-19 outbreak. First and foremost, let me assure you all that the Vancouver Farmers Market is an organization grounded in community health and wellness. The safety and health of our shoppers, small businesses and staff is our highest priority.

There has been considerable feedback to the idea of your farmers market opening during this public health crisis. As part of our role in supporting a healthy community, we are committed to our mission that you, our valued shoppers and supporters, have safe access to high quality, healthy local food. One of the ways we are doing this is by working with the City of Vancouver and our other community partners to find a safe and responsible way to open a market for our customers to shop at. Please know that even before the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Clark County, we have been working closely with Clark County Public Health to create a safe environment for everyone, and continue to have their full support and approval of the safety measures in place. **Currently there is not an opening date set for the market.** However, once opened, those who feel comfortable attending will find a market vastly different from what they remember. For example, we will have discontinued all entertainment, product sampling, prepared foods and public seating areas. There will be hand-washing stations for customers, constant sanitation of high touch areas throughout the day and enforced limits on social distancing and market occupancy as needed. Vendors and staff will be following all CDC recommendations, including wearing of facemasks and use of gloves when handling products. A full, and constantly updated list of all safety measures will be available on our website, www.vancouverfarmersmarket.com/covid19.

In addition to partnering with local and state health officials, we are communicating with markets who continue to operate across the county in heavily hit areas like New York and California, learning from their experiences in heavily trafficked and dense cities. Additionally, our vendors will be adhering to strict safety standards, not just in the market, but from the moment they harvest the food you eat. One of the many benefits of shopping from a local small business is the assurance that the product you purchase has had minimal contact with others and has always been handled in a careful and safe fashion.

During this closure, we continue to refine our safety and operations plan, but it is important to note that the Vancouver Farmers Market and farmers markets across the State have been deemed “essential businesses” by Governor Inslee’s Proclamation found [here](#) Markets throughout Washington and the country continue to provide safe access to food while adhering to all public health and other governmental directives.

In addition to providing a venue in which our customers can shop from great, local producers, the Vancouver Farmers Market remains committed to providing food to the under resourced citizens of Vancouver. In 2019, over 1750 families used their SNAP benefits to purchase food for their tables. Additionally, the Vancouver Farmers Market provides matching funds to help their SNAP dollars go further, funds than can only be accessed at a farmers market and in 2020 can provide a family up to \$20 in extra purchasing power each time they come to the market. Our farmers also donated thousands of

pounds of food to the Clark County Food Bank. For many in Downtown Vancouver, the market is not a place to congregate with friends; it is a vital resource to get food for them and their families.

We recognize the social space the farmers market creates for many, but please do not confuse that for our primary goal of inspiring and providing for a well-fed community. Even in this crisis, our needs regarding food access remain unchanged. Our partners in public health share our belief that outdoor markets with clear safety measures in place, combined with short and tightly controlled supply chains, provide one of the safest ways to obtain food during this crisis.

In the absence of a physical location for your local food providers and farmers to setup, the Vancouver Farmers Market is working hard to connect our consumers with their favorite products. You can find contact information for many of our vendors on our website and through our social media channels. Many of these businesses are finding ways to provide you access to food outside of a traditional market and you can find all the latest info online. If you wish to support your favorite farmers as they find new ways to feed our community, please consider contributing to the [Vancouver Farmers Market Foundation Vendor Relief Fund](#). Please know that in this rapidly evolving situation, our commitment to support local food producers and giving the citizens of Vancouver and the surrounding areas access to these products in a safe and responsible way remains unchanged.

We are in this together. With the continued hard work and support of all those working to feed our community, from local restaurants to our food banks and markets, as well as our committed shoppers and patrons, our community will emerge from this crisis stronger and more resilient than ever.

As always, we welcome your questions or concerns at info@vancouverfarmersmarket.com.

Stay healthy,

Jordan Boldt
Executive Director
Vancouver Farmers Market Association