

2021 AVICC Resolution

Farmers' Markets as Essential Services During Local Emergencies

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the importance of ensuring access to local food, food security and supporting the local economy and local businesses, including the 4,200+ vendors who sell at 145+ farmers' markets in communities across all corners of BC.

In March 2020, Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry designated farmers' markets as essential food and agriculture service providers in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to expand and strengthen this designation for future emergencies and crises of all kinds arising in communities across BC.

We have witnessed firsthand the impact of forest fires, flooding, road closures and other disruptions to food and other supply chains at the local, community level and demonstrated how farmers' markets and local food have filled the gap, especially in times of emergency. Such was the case with the Quesnel Farmers Market during the 2017 Cariboo Chilcotin wildfires and the closure of Highway 97 over multiple days.

As you may recognize, COVID has increased demand for local food and demonstrated the incredible resiliency, flexibility and adaptability of farmers' markets to meet local and community need in times of emergency and crisis.

Thinking long term and designating farmers' markets as essential services during all provincial and local states of emergency moving forward will help secure access to local food in times of crisis. Without this, other provincial or localized states of emergencies declared by communities in response to fires and flooding may not include farmers' markets as essential services, leaving a critical gap in local food security and the local economy.

Resource Links:

Covid-19 Essential Services: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/essential-services-covid-19>