



COVID-19 Transitioning – Obligatory Conditions and Guidelines for Open Air Markets

Mandatory conditions applicable to Open Markets

- a. Market hawkers shall wear face masks or visors at all times during the opening hours of the open air market;
- b. Market hawkers shall also provide hand sanitizers to be used by the customers;
- c. All customers visiting any open-air market shall wear either a visor or a face mask and keep at a minimum distance of two (2) metres apart from other persons;
- d. Market hawkers shall deal with customers from behind their respective stalls and shall maintain their distance at all times. Products for sale shall be handed by market hawkers to their customers after having sanitized their hands;
- e. Market hawkers shall place a sign at their stall indicating that customers shall not touch the products;
- f. Market hawkers standing adjacent to one another shall erect an acrylic divider such as Perspex between their stall and the one adjacent to it, which divider shall be installed at least half a metre away from the stall facade. Each market hawker shall provide one (1) acrylic divider such as Perspex for this purpose;
- g. Market hawkers shall ensure that there shall be no more than six (6) persons, including the hawkers themselves, in front of their stall;
- h. Any returned items shall be held by market hawkers in store for at least seventy two (72) hours before such items are put up for sale again. A dedicated area for the storage of these items in the van is to be provided;
- i. Existent conditions regarding the provision of bins by the hawkers will be enforced.



Guidelines for the application of COVID-19 mitigation measures in Open Markets

All hawkers are being advised to operate in accordance with the conditions for good practice included in this document. The document shall also be applicable to Farmers' Markets.

Principles for business continuity

Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency and that business continuity in respect of COVID-19 should be founded on expert public health advice and dialogue, the following principles shall apply:

- ✓ All workers and/or owners of stalls in open markets, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.
- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic requires a focused approach to work health and safety as it applies to non-essential retail shops.
- ✓ To keep open markets healthy and safe, stall owners, in consultation with their customers and the Public Health Authorities need to assess the way they work to identify, understand and quantify risks and implement and review control measures that address those risks.
- ✓ Social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures are critical to the success of the transition.

How COVID-19 spreads

COVID-19 presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as counters, display items, tables, machinery, perspex screens or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Standing closer than two metres of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period, one can catch the disease by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

Duties of Owners of Stalls in Open Markets

Owners of stalls in Open Markets are expected to take care both of their health, safety and welfare and also that of any other workers and all clients visiting their stalls.



Hawkers and stall owners must minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for themselves and their customers by taking reasonable and practical measures to mitigate risk.

Protection of both stall owners and customers from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 may include, for example:

- ✓ Requiring everyone to practice social distancing
- ✓ Requiring all involved to practice good hygiene for example by the use of hand sanitisers
- ✓ Reminding stall owners or visitors to the open market to stay home when sick
- ✓ Cleaning the stalls regularly and thoroughly
- ✓ Limiting the number of people in front of stalls at any given time
- ✓ The wearing of masks or visors
- ✓ Adapting stalls in order to mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 such as for example through the use of acrylic partitions such as Perspex. Enforcing existent conditions regarding the provision of bins by the hawkers
- ✓ The proper disposal of any used face masks.

Stall owners have the duty to consult with relevant stakeholders such as their Regulators, the Health Authorities, Local Councils and the general public and clients on matters related to COVID 19.

Promoting good hand and respiratory hygiene

Stall owners and people visiting open market clients should wash or sanitise their hands before and after eating, after coughing or sneezing, after going to the toilet, when changing tasks and after touching potentially contaminated surfaces. Hand washing with soap and water for twenty (20) seconds is the preferred option. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol or 70% alcohol can be used as an alternative.

As in most cases forms of contactless payments are not available in stalls, stall owners shall ask for the exact payment. Hawkens are to sanitise their hands with 70% alcohol every time they handle cash. Hawkens can opt to use disposable gloves when they collect money from customers. In such situations, one pair of gloves per customer is to be used and used gloves are to be thrown away safely after use.

Good respiratory hygiene requires everyone at any stall to, at all times:

- ✓ cover their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a clean tissue (and no spitting)
- ✓ avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth
- ✓ dispose of used tissues and cigarette butts hygienically in bins
- ✓ wash or sanitise their hands before and after smoking a cigarette, and
- ✓ have no intentional physical contact, such as, shaking hands and patting backs.

10 STEPS TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS



Fig. 1: 10 steps to wash your hands properly

Social distancing

Social distancing refers to the requirement that people distance themselves from others. **Public Health Authorities have determined that everyone must keep at least 2 metres from others.**

Hawkers are also obliged to ensure that there are no more than six persons including the hawkers themselves in front of their stall. Notwithstanding this, where spaces are restricted especially in the case of stalls on opposite side of the road, the 2 metre rule of social distancing shall be observed.

Place appropriate signage about social distancing both outside and around the stall. Stall owners may consult the www.covid19health.gov.mt website for links to a range of posters and resources to help people of the risks of COVID-19 and the measures that are necessary to stop its spread.

Personal Protective equipment (PPE)

Common PPE that can be used to protect against COVID-19 include masks, gloves, eye protection, and screens. ***The use of certain types of masks, gowns and disposable suits is restricted to healthcare settings. It is not recommended that these types of PPE are used outside of healthcare to protect against COVID-19.***

Eye protection, in the form of safety glasses, goggles or a face visor or shield, can be used as PPE for protecting against the risks of COVID-19. Eye protection can assist to act as a physical barrier from droplet spray and prevent unintentional rubbing of eyes between hand washing. Eye protection may be necessary for workers who are in close proximity to droplet spray. For many stalls, eye protection will not be a required control measure. Good hygiene practices should be followed if eye protection is used.

Do I need to use gloves?

Gloves will not normally be necessary in many stalls. A risk assessment must be conducted to help inform what gloves, if any, are appropriate for the stall. Stall owners shall be aware that wearing gloves may result in new risks. For example, wearing



Fig.2 proper removal of gloves

disposable gloves could cause skin irritation, contact dermatitis or other sensitivities in some persons. When using gloves, stall owners must be trained in how to put on, use, remove and dispose of gloves (Fig. 2). Even if gloves are worn stall owners should also



ensure that good hygiene practices including washing or sanitizing hands frequently are maintained.

For more information on proper use of gloves, visit www.covid19health.gov.mt

Do I need to install screens?

The Law requires that hawkers are obliged to erect an acrylic divider e.g. Perspex between their stall and the one adjacent to it, which divider is to emerge at least half a meter from the stall façade. Each hawker is, therefore, to provide one acrylic divider (e.g. Perspex) for this purpose.

Acrylic screens such as Perspex (also known as sneeze guards) can be considered at sites where persons are in close proximity to each other or to customers for long periods. For example, an acrylic screen (Perspex) screen could be considered where two persons work side by side or back to back for a whole day. This does not remove the obligation to wear a mask or face visor.

Whilst the acrylic screen e.g. Perspex divider between stalls is obligatory by law, the installation of dividers at other sites such as those between stall owner and client is at the stall owner's discretion. Perspex screens come in many different sizes and shapes and can be custom made for the purpose. Generally, they have a space cut out to allow for exchange between the worker and customer, with the screen covering the upper half of the body and head.

If stall owners choose to install a Perspex screen, they need to ensure that the screen is fit for purpose and protects him, other workers and clients from droplet spray. The screen must allow the workers to safely work and protect their face from exposure to droplet spray. Be aware that installing a Perspex screen may result in other risks that need to be considered. Perspex screens should be cleaned in the same manner as other frequently handled objects or surfaces. See cleaning guide below for more information on cleaning and disinfecting, including for specific surfaces.

Cleaning and disinfecting measures

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID- 19 virus. Stalls must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient.

How to clean and disinfect

Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Cleaning should start with the dirtiest surface first, progressively moving towards the cleanest



surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of the spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectants containing $\geq 70\%$ alcohol, ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (surfaces where liquids pool, and do not soak in). The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.

Which areas should be cleaned and disinfected, and how often?

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, e.g. counters and Perspex screens. Any surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned.

What should the person who does the cleaning of the stall wear?

In most circumstances, it will not be necessary to wear protective clothing to clean the stall. However, the person who cleans the stall should use personal protective equipment (PPE) that is necessary for the cleaning products being used. Gloves and a disposable apron are the minimum requirements. Clothes that can be washed afterwards are suitable.

Tips for managing stress from COVID-19

- ✓ Where you as a stall owner or any of your employees and helpers start to feel distressed about the challenging conditions caused by the pandemic, acknowledge these feelings about the situation and re-assure yourself and your collaborators that you are doing what can in the circumstances.
- ✓ Stay informed with information from official sources and regularly communicate or share this information with your peers.
- ✓ Make use of or refer anyone who needs it to professional psychological services available through the Helpline 1770 which is available 24/7.