

# U-Pick operations in the time of COVID and beyond



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***U-Pick is a wonderful way to connect people to their food and the natural environment. As with any part of your enterprise, it's okay to start small, assess, and grow over time.***



# Basic CA U-Pick Regulations

- **Generally allowed “by right” or with low-fee “administrative” permit on land zoned agricultural in most CA counties**
  - Check with your county or city planning department
- **Other usual requirements and limitations (check with Planning Dept.):**
  - Provide on-site parking
  - Provide accommodations for people with disabilities
  - Hours may be limited
  - Size and location of signs may be restricted
  - Requirements may apply to entrance & exit roads and driveways

# General U-Pick Planning Considerations

- Crop diversity and packaging
- Location and Layout
- Quality of product and service
- Communication and Promotions
- Permitting and regulatory compliance
- Financial planning and budgeting
- Staffing
- Food safety
- Risk management
- Pricing
- Complementary products and attractions
- Evaluating and adapting



# Planning a U-Pick Operation on Your California Farm

A U-Pick operation is a direct marketing channel where customers visit the farm to harvest fruits, vegetables, flowers, or trees on their own. Like any marketing channel, a U-Pick has advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it offers customers fun, memorable experiences that often become seasonal outdoor family traditions. For farmers who spend the majority of their time on their property, bringing in customers can be a nice way to meet neighbors and community and can be an additional sales channel that eases marketing risk. On the other hand, bringing visitors to your fields and orchards opens you up to many risks. This guide examines the U-Pick model, helps you determine whether it's suitable for your farm and gives examples and suggestions for planning and building your U-Pick operation.



*Blueberry pickers at Riverdance Farms, Livingston, CA*

## In this Guide:

Advantages and disadvantages of U-Pick  
Assessing Yourself as a U-Pick Farmer  
Important Elements of a U-Pick Operation

- Crop Diversity and Packaging
- Location and Layout
- Quality
- Communications and Promotions

Planning and Building your U-Pick Operation

- Permitting and regulatory compliance
- Financial planning and budgeting
- Labor planning
- Food safety & Risk management
- Pricing
- Complementary products, attractions
- Other considerations

Evaluating and Adapting  
Budget Template  
Resources

## Advantages and Disadvantages of a U-Pick Operation

Farmers considering U-Pick enterprises weigh both positive and negative considerations when deciding whether to start inviting farm visitors to pick their own. These are the basic issues:

### Advantages

- Reduced labor needs for harvesting
- Opportunity to meet customers and educate them
- Elimination of some post-harvest handling tasks (sorting, storage, packing, shipping)
- Reduction in packaging costs, particularly when customers bring their own

## Guide available online

- Download pdf from  
[UC ANR California  
Agritourism website:](https://ucanr.edu/sites/agritourism/files/305919.pdf)

[https://ucanr.edu/sites  
/agritourism/files/305  
919.pdf](https://ucanr.edu/sites/agritourism/files/305919.pdf)

# **Guidance for Farm Direct Sales and Pick-Your-Own operations during COVID-19 from CDFA**

## **General Layout, Physical/Social Distancing and Signage**

- Notify customers to maintain 6 ft. distance from one another
- Limit number of customers to maintain social distance
- Establish entry and exit points that serve as crowd control
- Provide signage and mark 6 ft. delineations
- Clearly indicate procedures and rules
- Staff should reinforce guidance and rules verbally when necessary
- Families should stay together, keep children together
- Encourage expedited purchasing to avoid lingering

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## **Enhanced Sanitation and Hygiene**

- Post signs with COVID-19 safety and hygiene guidelines:
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>
- Provide hand washing stations and hand sanitizer stations
- Remind customers: “you touch it, you take it”
- Customers should adhere to state and local requirements for wearing face coverings/masks
- Install check stand protective shields where possible
- Separate employees accept payment or handle produce, if possible, or wash hands/sanitize between transactions.
- Increase frequency of cleaning and sanitizing tables, high-touch surfaces and equipment



# **Guidance for Farm Direct Sales and Pick-Your-Own operations during COVID-19 from CDFA**

## **Enhanced Sanitation and Hygiene - continued**

- Supply customers with new, single-use harvest bags/containers and boxes
- Store harvest bags/containers and/or boxes away from customer flow and covered with plastic covering and do not let customers select their own containers
- Suggestion: Hand out harvest containers at registration or entry point
- Only use EPA-approved cleaning and disinfectant products
- Limit use of tablecloths to make it easier to clean surfaces
- Discontinue use of display items and contact surfaces that cannot be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected



# **Guidance for Farm Direct Sales and Pick-Your-Own operations during COVID-19 from CDFA**

## **Suspend non-essential activities:**

- Eliminate non-essential/non-related services such as hayrides, bands, crafts, seating/dining areas or other entertainment
- Suspend any food sampling activities

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## **Enhanced services:**

- Create opportunities to accommodate individuals at higher risk for COVID-19
  - Curb-side pickup, pre-order, alternate hours
- Donate extra to populations in need
- Continue to accept EBT, if applicable
- Communicate to your customers what steps you are taking to keep them safe
- If feasible, create options for pre-registration and scheduled picking times to manage flow

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## **Agritourism and Direct Sales; Best Practices in times of COVID and beyond**

<https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/agritourism2021>



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