

ADDRESSING HUNGER AND NUTRITION

A Tool Kit for Positive Results



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Farmers' Market Programs: Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

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Two Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs provide coupons to low-income senior citizens and WIC participants that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands and in the seniors' program community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs. These programs provide low-income people with a resource to gain access to fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs. Benefits are provided to eligible recipients for use during the harvest season.

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), created in 1992, is administered through a federal/state partnership in which the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) at the USDA provides cash grants to state agencies. The FMNP is administered by state agencies such as state agriculture and health departments or Indian tribal organizations.

Created in 2001, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) grants are administered through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The grant funds may be used only to support the cost of the foods that are provided. No administrative funding is available.

The SFMNP differs from the FMNP in many respects. The SFMNP is operated as a discretionary, competitive grants program. Although there is no matching funds requirement, there is also no money budgeted for administrative costs as there are in the FMNP. State agencies and federally recognized Indian tribal organizations submit a SFMNP grant proposal to the USDA that then is ranked by a technical review panel against the evaluation criteria. The grant applications recommended by the panel and chosen by the USDA selection officials are funded until all the appropriated money has been awarded.

For both programs, a state agency is responsible for authorizing the outlets that will be allowed to accept coupons and submit them for reimbursement. A state agency may authorize individual farmers who sell their produce through farmers' markets, roadside stands or CSA programs, and/or may choose to authorize the outlets themselves. Only farmers and/or farmers' markets and roadside stands authorized by the

state agency may accept and redeem FMNP coupons; in the SFMNP, payments may be made only to authorized farmers and/or authorized farmers' markets, roadside stands and/or CSA programs. Individuals who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else—such as wholesale distributors—cannot be authorized to participate in either program.

Eligibility

FMNP: Women, infants (over four months old) and children that are certified to receive WIC program benefits or who are on a waiting list for WIC certification are eligible to receive FMNP benefits.

SFMNP: Low-income senior citizens—generally defined as individuals who are at least age 60 and who have household incomes at 185 percent or below the federal poverty line—are eligible. Some state agencies accept for SFMNP eligibility proof of participation in another means-tested program, such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) or the Food Stamp Program.

FMNP:

For fiscal year 2005:

- \$19.8 million in federal funds was appropriated.
- The FMNP currently authorizes 46 grantees, including states and Indian tribal organizations.
- The benefit level for the FMNP is no less than \$10 and no more than \$30 per recipient per growing season. However, state agencies may supplement the benefit level with matching funds.

For fiscal year 2003:

- 16,226 farmers and 2,345 farmers' markets were authorized to accept FMNP coupons.
- Coupons redeemed through the FMNP resulted in revenues of more than \$24.2 million to farmers.
- More than 2.3 million WIC recipients received FMNP benefits.

SFMNP:

For fiscal year 2005:

- \$15 million was allocated for this program.
- There are 46 SFMNP grantees, including states and Indian tribal organizations.
- Benefit levels range from \$10 to \$315 per recipient per growing season with the average benefit at \$47.

More than 800,000 people received SFMNP benefits during FY 2003.

Program Issues and Challenges

Access to Markets

Transportation is the main barrier that seniors and low-income families face in gaining access to farmers' markets. In both rural and urban communities, lack of public transportation is a great concern. To address this concern, farmers' market coordinators around the country are implementing innovative programs to improve SFMNP/FMNP coupon distribution and market locations.

Program Models and Promising Practices

Going Where the Seniors Are

In Holms County, **Mississippi**, congregate meals are served to seniors by the Area Agency on Aging in six locations including churches, senior centers and town halls. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture has used these sites to distribute the SFMNP coupons and also has organized farmers to sell produce directly at the sites. Farmers rotate among the six sites, making visits about twice a month. This system ensures that seniors have access to the markets and that all the coupons are being used. Next year, organizers plan to create a regular schedule that can be advertised in the newspaper in order to expand participation by WIC FMNP recipients and cash customers. More information about the Mississippi Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs can be found at http://www.mdac.state.ms.us/n_library/programs/mfmnp/index_mfmnp.html.

Creating One-Stop Services

In Tucson, **Arizona**, the Community Food Bank has been operating a farmers' market for the past three years. The farmers' market sells fresh, locally grown produce twice a week; many of the items come from a garden at the same location. Having the market located at the food bank helps customers feel comfortable when they ask questions and use their coupons. Since the majority of the produce sold is grown at the food bank, the prices are low. To encourage people to try new foods, recipes and nutritional information are provided. The Community Food Bank also acts as a one-stop shop, offering many public services in one building. People can pick up their FMNP coupons, WIC vouchers/food instruments, and/or supplemental commodities; immunize their children; and shop at the farmers' market all at the same location. More information can be found at <http://www.communityfoodbank.org/dynamic/farmersmarket.aspx>.

Resources

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

- Federal Program Overview: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/FMNP/FMNPfaqs.htm>
- State Agency Contacts: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/farm.HTM>
- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**
- Federal Program Overview: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SFMNPmenu.htm>
- State Agency Contacts: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SFMNPmenu.htm>

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Definitions of commonly used hunger and nutrition terms can be found in NCSL's Hunger and Nutrition Partnership *Glossary of Hunger and Nutrition Terms* at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/Glossary.htm>.