



# *Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program*

## **1. What is the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)?**

The SFMNP awards grants to States, U.S. Territories and Federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. The majority of grant funds must be used for benefits. State agencies may use up to 10 percent of their grants for program administrative costs.

## **2. What is the purpose of the SFMNP?**

The purposes of the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey through farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs to low-income seniors; and increase the consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding, developing, or aiding in the development and expansion of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs.

## **3. Who is eligible for SFMNP benefits?**

Low-income seniors, generally defined as individuals who are at least 60 years old and who have household incomes of not more than 185% of the Federal poverty income guidelines are the targeted recipients of SFMNP benefits. Some State agencies accept proof of participation or enrollment in another means-tested program, such as the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), for SFMNP eligibility.

## **4. How many recipients are served?**

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, 811,809 people received SFMNP benefits.



## **5. Where does the SFMNP operate?**

For FY 2017, 52 State agencies, U.S. Territories, and Federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) received grants to operate the SFMNP: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, the Chickasaw Nation (OK), the Choctaw Nation (OK), Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos (NM), Florida, Georgia, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (MI), Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Osage Tribe (OK), Pennsylvania, Pueblo of San Felipe (NM), Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (ND), Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Not all States operate the SFMNP on a State-wide basis.

## **6. How does the SFMNP operate?**

The SFMNP is administered through a Federal/State partnership in which the Food and

Nutrition Service (FNS) provides cash grants to State agencies. The SFMNP is administered by State agencies such as State Departments of Agriculture, Area Agencies on Aging, or ITOs. As a prerequisite to receiving Federal funds for the SFMNP, each applying or participating State agency must submit an annual State Plan describing how the State agency intends to implement, operate and administer all aspects of the SFMNP within its jurisdiction. Coupons or checks are issued to eligible SFMNP participants to buy eligible foods from farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, or CSAs that have been authorized by the State agency to accept SFMNP coupons or checks. The farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands or CSAs then submit the redeemed SFMNP coupons to the bank or State agency for reimbursement.

The Federal SFMNP benefit level, whether for a household or individual, must be at least \$20 and cannot be more than \$50 per year, except for certain State agencies that were grandfathered into the SFMNP using a different benefit level. State agencies may also supplement the Federal benefit level with State, local or private funds.

Nutrition education is provided to SFMNP recipients by the State agency, often through arrangements with the local WIC agency or other program partners. For example, Cooperative Extension Programs, local area agencies on aging, local chefs, farmers or farmers' markets associations, and various other non-profit or for-profit organizations may provide nutrition education to SFMNP recipients. These educational arrangements help encourage SFMNP recipients to improve and expand their diets by adding fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as to educate them on how to select, store and prepare the fresh fruits and vegetables they buy with their SFMNP coupons.

## **7. What foods are available through the SFMNP?**

A variety of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey may be purchased with SFMNP benefits. State agencies shall consider "locally grown" to mean

produce grown only within State borders but may also include areas in neighboring States adjacent to its borders.

## **8. How does a farmer or farmers' market become authorized to accept SFMNP benefits?**

Each State agency is responsible for authorizing individual farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, CSAs, or all of the above to participate in the SFMNP. Only farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands and CSAs authorized by the State agency may accept and redeem SFMNP coupons. Individuals who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized to participate in the SFMNP.

## **9. How many farmers and farmers' markets participate in the SFMNP?**

In FY 2017, 19,449 farmers, 3,641 farmers' markets, 2,541 roadside stands and 94 CSAs were authorized to accept SFMNP checks or coupons.

## **10. What is the current funding level?**

The 2014 Farm Bill provided \$20.6 million annually to operate the Program through FY 2018; however, a rescission of \$1.421 million reduced the amount available in FY 2017 to \$19.178 million.

## **11. How can I obtain further information?**

SFMNP State agency contacts can be found at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/sfmnp-contacts>  
For further information about the SFMNP, please visit our website at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program-sfmnp>