



WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

1. What is the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)?

The FMNP is associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, popularly known as WIC, that provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to 5 years of age, who are found to be at nutritional risk.

The FMNP was established by Congress in July 1992, to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants, and to expand the awareness, use of and sales at farmers' markets.

2. Where does the FMNP operate?

The FMNP is currently authorized in certain areas of 44 States: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, the Chickasaw Nation, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Mississippi Choctaw, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Osage Tribal Council, Pennsylvania, Pueblo of San Felipe, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

3. Who can participate?

Women, infants (over 4 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 participate in the FMNP. State agencies may serve some or all of these categories.

4. How many recipients are served?

During fiscal year 2003, over 2.3 million WIC participants received benefits.

5. What foods are available through the FMNP?

A variety of fresh, nutritious, unprepared locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs may be purchased with FMNP coupons. State agencies can limit sales to specific foods in order to encourage FMNP recipients to support the farmers in their own States.

6. How does the program operate?

The FMNP is administered through a Federal/State partnership in which the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides cash grants to State agencies. The FMNP is administered by State agencies such as State agriculture departments or health departments or Indian Tribal Organizations. As a prerequisite to receiving Federal funds for the FMNP, each applying or participating State agency must submit a State Plan describing the manner in which the State agency intends to implement, operate and administer all aspects of the FMNP within its jurisdiction. Eligible WIC participants are issued FMNP coupons in addition to their regular WIC

food instruments. These coupons are used to buy fresh, unprepared locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs from farmers or farmers' markets that have been approved by the State agency to accept FMNP coupons. The Federal food benefit level for FMNP recipients may not be less than \$10 and no more than \$20 per year, per recipient. However, State agencies may supplement the benefit level with its matching funds. The farmers or farmers' markets then submit the FMNP coupons for reimbursement.

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

7. How does a farmer or farmers' market become authorized to accept FMNP coupons?

Each State agency is responsible for authorizing individual farmers, farmers' markets, or both. Only farmers and/or farmers' markets authorized by the State agency may accept and redeem FMNP coupons. Individuals, who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized to participate in the FMNP. The FMNP contact person for each State agency can be found at: www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Contacts/farm.HTM

8. How many farmers and farmers' markets participate in the FMNP?

During fiscal year 2003, 16,226 farmers and 2,345 farmers' markets were authorized to accept FMNP coupons. Coupons redeemed through the FMNP resulted in over \$24.2 million in revenue to farmers for fiscal year 2003.

9. How is the FMNP funded?

Congress provides funds for the FMNP. Federal funds support 70 percent of the total cost of the program. States operating the FMNP must match the Federal funds allocated to them by contributing at least 30 percent of the total cost of the program. Indian State agencies may receive a lower match, but not less than 10 percent of the total cost of the program. The matching funds can come from a variety of sources, such as State and local funds, private funds, similar programs, and program income.

10. What is the current funding level?

For fiscal year 2004, just over \$22.8 million was appropriated for the FMNP.

For further information, please visit our website at: www.fns.usda.gov/wic