

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Fact Sheet

What is the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)?

The SFMNP is a federal program which provides coupons for low-income seniors to buy fresh, unprepared foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. It is administered by the US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.

The program is designed to improve the health of seniors by providing access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs. It is also designed to increase domestic consumption of agricultural commodities, and specifically to help support and create more farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.

Who is eligible to participate in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?

Seniors (60 years of age or older) with incomes less than 185% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines are eligible to participate (for households of one and two, the maximum allowable incomes in 2003 are \$16,613 and \$22,422, respectively). Some state agencies grant categorical eligibility to seniors enrolled in other means-tested programs, like the Food Stamp Program, or the Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Who participates in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?

In FY 2001, 419,127 seniors nationwide received coupons through the SFMNP. Those coupons ranged in size, from \$10 to \$540, with the average benefit level at \$66. The coupon amounts are not determined by income levels. Each State agency determines the individual coupon amount.

Also in FY 2001, 8,508 farmers in 1,205 farmers' markets, and 49 community supported agriculture programs, accepted the coupons.

How does the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program work?

The federal government awards grants to individual state agencies to fund the program. The state agencies then distribute the money to low-income seniors in the form of coupons. The federal government provides no money for program administration.

SFMNP benefits can only be used during the growing season, which varies from quite long in some states, to quite short in others.

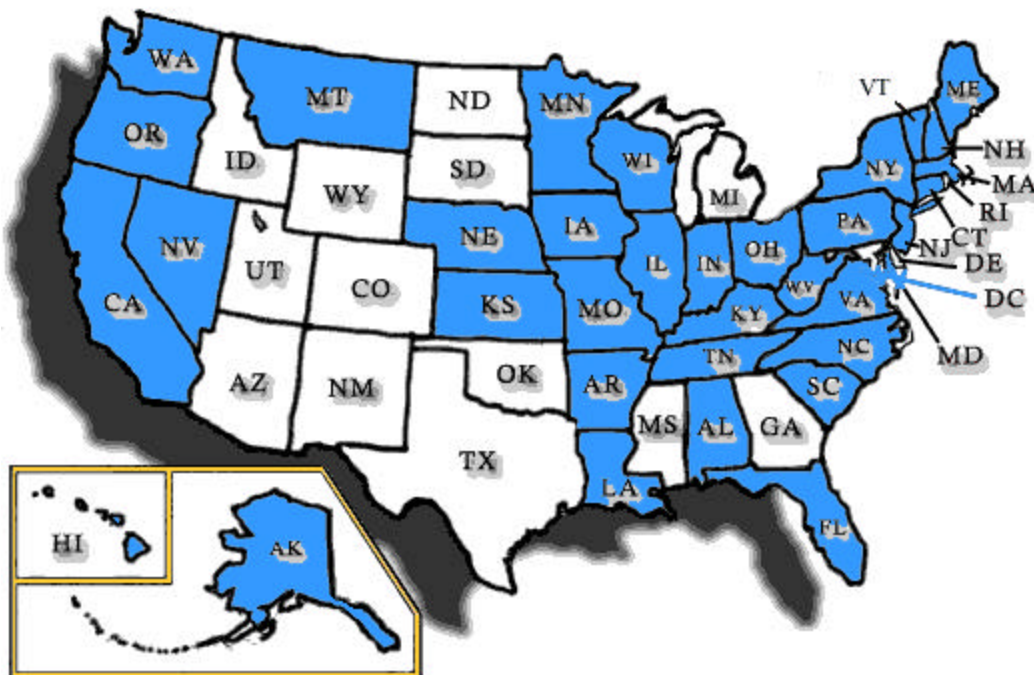
Some state agencies restrict use of the coupons to *locally grown* produce, to encourage support of their state's farmers. Dried fruits and vegetables, potted fruits and vegetables, rice, and honey are not eligible for purchase with SFMNP coupons.

How is the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program funded?

In FY 2003, the SFMNP has \$16.7 million available for coupon benefits. That amount is the combination of the congressionally appropriated \$15 million, and \$1.7 million left over from FY 2002. The FY 2002 budget was \$15 million.

Where does the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program operate?

In FY 2003, the SNFMP is operating in 35 states, 3 Indian Tribal Organizations, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia¹. This is an increase over FY 2002 (Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, and Puerto Rico are all new participating agencies in 2003). Here is a map, showing all participating states shaded in blue:



Links and resources:

USDA SFMNP official website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SFMNPmenu.htm>

SFMNP state agency contacts:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SFMNPcontacts2003.htm>

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC): www.frac.org

Community Food Security Coalition: www.foodsecurity.org

¹ AL, AK, AR, CA, CT, DC, FL, HI, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MN, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OH, OR, PR, PA, SC, TN, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, Chickasaw Nation (OK), Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (MI), and Osage Tribal.