

Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Chapter 7: Accepting “Multiple Currencies” at Your Farmers Market

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The Farmers Market Nutrition Program, known as “FMNP,” is a federal nutrition assistance program, funded primarily by the federal government and administered by the State. There are two FMNP programs: one is the Women, Infants and

Children or “**WIC FMNP**”; and the other is the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program or “**Senior FMNP**.”

The purpose of FMNP is to:

- improve the health of participants by providing access to fresh, nutritious, unprepared locally grown fruits and vegetables; and
- raise awareness and increase the use of farmers markets and farm stores.

In Washington State, the **WIC FMNP** started in 1992 and is administered by the Department of Health. It primarily serves pregnant and breastfeeding women and children from age 1 to 5 who are enrolled in the WIC Program. WIC participants meet regularly with WIC staff to improve their nutrition and health. The **Senior FMNP** is part of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and serves low-income seniors (over 60). The WIC and Senior FMNP programs have different sources of funding, slightly different rules, and their own set of politics. WIC FMNP is currently funded through the federal “Child Nutrition and WIC

Reauthorization Act” while Senior FMNP is funded through the Farm Bill. Even though FMNP is a federal program, states are required to provide a financial match for WIC FMNP in order to receive federal funding each year.

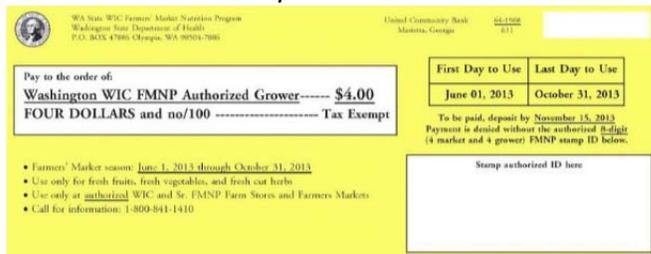
The rules for FMNP and funding situation may change from one year to the next. Please check the WSFMA website for the latest information or talk to DOH at the WSFMA’s annual conference.

The Washington State Farmers Market Association actively works with the state and partner organizations to monitor program and budget changes and impacts to markets each year.

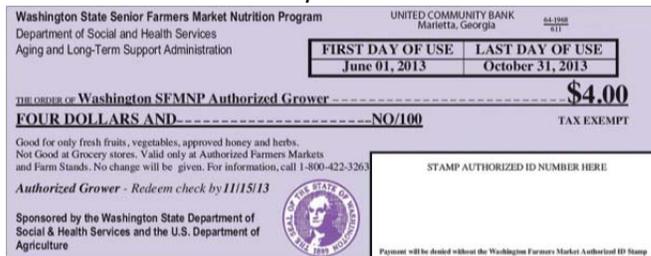
In both the WIC and Senior FMNP programs, eligible recipients receive checks to spend during the farmers market season. FMNP checks can be used for fruits, vegetables and cut herbs. Senior FMNP checks can also be used to buy honey.

In 2013, seniors will receive one booklet with ten \$4 checks totaling \$40. And WIC clients receive a \$20 booklet per client (a mother and/or child over 12 months old). In the past, FMNP checks were for \$2.00 each. However, this has changed this and in 2013 the denominations are \$4.00 for both WIC and Senior FMNP checks.

2013 WIC FMNP sample



2013 Senior FMNP sample



The WIC FMNP checks and Senior FMNP checks are always different colors to reduce confusion. Typically, FMNP checks are distributed to WIC clients and seniors from June to September and must be used by the end of October.

FMNP information online: Google “FMNP DOH” or go to:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/FarmersMarket.aspx>

The DOH has a website dedicated to FMNP resources, including state and local contacts, market and grower applications, nutrition information, FAQs and promotional materials in multiple languages. Be sure to review their “**FMNP Information Manual.**”



To help streamline operations, training, contracting and monitoring of growers and markets, the WIC and Senior FMNP programs are jointly administered by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).

For questions about applications, deadlines, rules, or any problems, please contact:

Diana Garcia
 WS DOH, Farmers Market Nutrition Program
 (360) 236-3780
 (800) 841-1410, Ext 3780
diana.garcia@doh.wa.gov
 or
FMNPTeam@doh.wa.gov



FMNP works with farmers and farmers markets

To be successful, the program depends on a partnership between market managers and the Washington State Department of Health. DOH authorizes growers, farmers markets, and farm stores to accept FMNP checks for a two year period. Note that both the farmers market and the farm vendor need to be approved based on eligibility rules. To participate, farmers markets need at least five produce farmers. Farmers must grow fruits and vegetables. If your market is not currently participating in FMNP and is interested, please contact Diana Garcia or email FMNPTeam@doh.wa.gov.

Managers are asked to stamp farmer checks, answer basic questions from farmers and relay problems to DOH staff. Farmers must deposit their checks in a timely manner to receive their money and have **all checks deposited by November 15**. If any farmers you work with have problems depositing checks, please refer them to Diana Garcia or email FMNPTeam@doh.wa.gov.

FMNP's Impact

The amount of the FMNP checks may seem small. However, the cumulative sales add up. According to the DOH, in 2012, 123 Washington farmers markets participated in FMNP and had combined sales of **\$987,509** (WIC and Senior). In addition to increasing market sales and supporting farmers, participating in the FMNP program is a great community connection by promoting health and nutrition among low income mothers, children and seniors.

67% of farmers said FMNP was "very important" for their farm revenue; and

98% of farmers said it was "important to accept FMNP so that low-income people could buy fresh fruits and vegetables."

Source: "Impact of WIC & Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs in Washington Communities" (WSFMA, Nov. 2011. N = 115)



The WIC FMNP is sometimes confused with the larger WIC Nutrition Program, formally known as the "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children."

WIC Nutrition Program benefits include monthly checks (\$6.00 for kids, \$10.00 for moms) to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at authorized grocery stores; *these checks cannot be used at farmers markets.*

In 2012, on average there were more than 132,000 households enrolled in the regular WIC program. Half of all babies born in Washington receive benefits from the WIC. There are local WIC clinics in every county in the state, as well as 14 tribal WIC clinics.

The Washington WIC Nutrition Program is working to convert from paper checks to an EBT electronic card system (like food stamps are now). The program plans to approve farmers to accept these WIC EBT cards after this new technology is rolled out within the next few years.