

ARKANSAS WIC FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM



FARMER HANDBOOK 2017-2019

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General Information

WIC FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM – AN OVERVIEW

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was established July 1992, under Public Law 102-314. FMNP served millions of WIC participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) since that time. The mission of the FMNP is to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs directly to WIC participants, and to expand the awareness and use of local farmers' markets.

The FMNP provides WIC participants in the WIC Program with FMNP coupons to purchase locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs at authorized local farmers' markets.

The FMNP is currently authorized in certain areas of 46 States, territories or Indian Tribal Organizations.

The Arkansas Department of Health administers the FMNP. During the 2016 season, the FMNP operated from May through September at 29 farmers' markets in 19 counties within the state of Arkansas. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and the Arkansas Department of Health provide funds for the operation of FMNP. The program operates on a matching grant basis. Food benefits comprise 83% of the program with no more than 17% being used for administrative costs.

The Arkansas Department of Health operates FMNP coupon issuance. The FMNP coupons are issued to eligible WIC participants through local health units. Pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and children (ages 1-5) are eligible to receive \$16 worth of FMNP coupons to purchase Arkansas/locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs from authorized markets from May through September.

FMNP nutrition education is planned and provided by the Arkansas Department of Health WIC nutrition staff. Topics covered include but are not limited to:

- Instruction related to the selection, preparation and storage of Arkansas/locally grown, fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs.
- Instruction regarding fruits and vegetables which contain nutrients often found to be deficient in the WIC population's diets - along with their demonstrated health benefits.
- Instruction related to the long-lasting benefit of increasing fruits and vegetables in the diets of WIC participants' and their families.

What is WIC?

The WIC Program is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. The WIC Program was authorized originally by Public Law 92-433, an amendment to Section 17 of the

Child Nutrition Act of 1966. Congress recognized that a substantial number of pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and young children from families with inadequate income are at special risk with respect to their physical and mental health by reason of inadequate nutrition and/or health care.

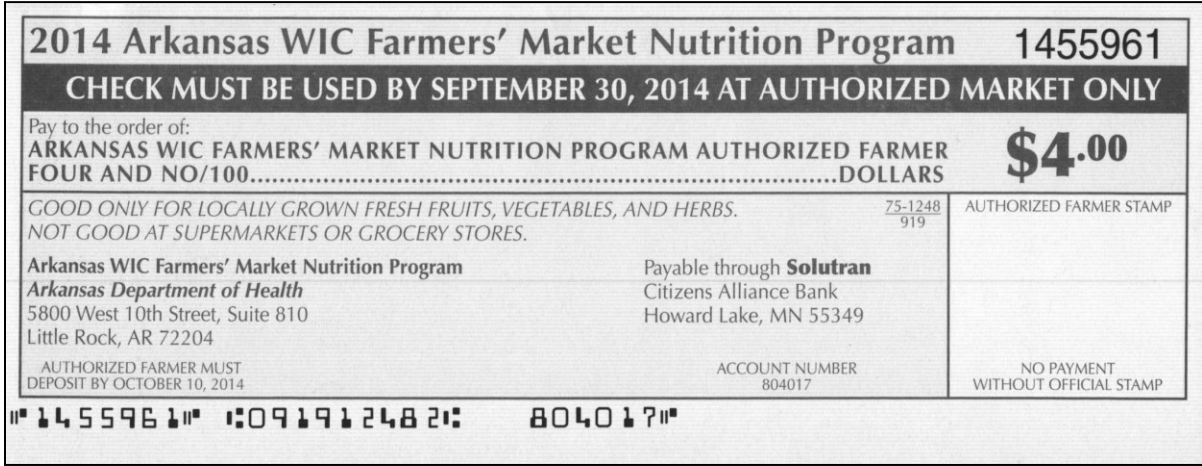
The Arkansas WIC Program is administered by the Arkansas Department of Health through a grant provided by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The WIC Program provides supplemental foods and nutrition education to eligible pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children up to the age of five.

The basic goals of the WIC program are:

- To provide supplemental foods high in nutrients (i.e., protein, calcium, vitamin A, Vitamin C and iron) during times of critical growth and development.
- To provide nutrition education designed to improve dietary habits and health status and to emphasize the relationship between nutrition and health.
- To provide breastfeeding education and support.
- To inform WIC participants about and encourage participation in other health services.

Copy of a Previous Year WIC FMNP Coupon



The FMNP coupons for 2017-2019 will have a \$4 value and will read “2017 Arkansas WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program” during 2017; “2018 Arkansas WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program” during 2018 and “2019 Arkansas WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program” during 2019. The FMNP coupons must be used by September 30th at authorized farmers’ markets only.

Foods Eligible for FMNP Coupon Redemption

Only food grown in Arkansas or “locally grown” is eligible for redemption with FMNP coupons. Arkansas WIC defines “**locally grown**” as Arkansas or the out-of-state county that borders the county in Arkansas where the farmers’ market is located.

The **Arkansas/locally grown fresh, unprocessed** fruits, vegetables and herbs eligible for redemption for FMNP coupons are listed below:

- Apples
- Asparagus
- Beans
- Berries
- Beets
- Bok Choy
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Cherries
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Figs
- Garlic
- Grapes
- Greens
- Herbs
- Kohlrabi
- Lettuce
- Melons
- Muscadines
- Mushrooms
- Peaches/Nectarines
- Pears
- Peas
- Persimmons
- Peppers
- Plums
- Potatoes
- Pumpkins
- Onions
- Okra
- Radishes
- Rutabagas
- Squash
- Sweet Potatoes/Yams
- Tomatoes/Tomatillos
- Turnips

Authorization Criteria Information

The farmers' market is authorized when the market has:

- Provided all information required to determine market eligibility to FMNP including the following:
 - Description of market structure with a copy of any written charter or bylaws
 - Number of farmers participating in the market
 - Beginning and ending dates of market operation
 - Location of market
 - Days and Hours of market operation
 - List of the most commonly available fruits and vegetables available at the market
- Agreed to provide information regarding any changes in market organization or operations to the FMNP Coordinator in a timely manner. This includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - Changing days/times the market is open
 - Addition of new market locations
 - The market ceases operation
 - An individual farmer authorized by FMNP ceases operation at the market.
- Agreed to have at all times at least three (3) FMNP-authorized farmers as official members of the market.
- Agreed to accept training on, abide by and be monitored for compliance with FMNP policies and procedures.
- Agreed to receive face to face training on FMNP policies and procedures initially and written training thereafter.
- Agreed to provide face to face training for farmers when they are newly authorized- without having participated in FMNP previously. Training material is provided by FMNP.
- Designated a primary and an alternate contact person.
- Agreed to be accountable for the actions of market employees and farmers related to FMNP requirements.
- Agreed to abide by all non-discrimination provisions of USDA regulations.
- Agreed to offer WIC participants the same courtesies as other customers.
- Agreed to provide information necessary for FMNP operations and reports required by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
- A farmers' market representative with legal authority to obligate the market has signed the Farmers' Market Application/Agreement between the market and the FMNP.

The farmer is authorized when the farmer has:

- Provided all information necessary to determine eligibility to participate in the FMNP.
- Agreed to accept training on and agreed to abide by and be monitored for compliance with FMNP policies and procedures.
- Agreed to ensure that all persons working in the booth are familiar with FMNP policies and procedures.
- Agreed to be accountable for the actions of all persons working in the booth related to FMNP policies and procedures.
- Agreed to abide by all non-discrimination provisions of USDA regulations.
- Agreed to accept FMNP coupons only at authorized farmers' markets listed on their approval letter for the current three year approval period.
- Agreed to display in the booth area the official FMNP poster for the current year. The farmer

number and market number must be visible on the poster.

- Agreed to participate in the market on a consistent basis when he/she has fruits, vegetables or herbs eligible for the FMNP.
- Agreed to provide information necessary for FMNP operations and reports required by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
- Agreed to accept FMNP coupons only after an approval letter, FMNP poster and stamp have been issued.
- Agreed to accept FMNP coupons only in exchange for eligible Arkansas/locally grown fresh, unprocessed fruits, vegetables or herbs.
- Agreed to accept FMNP coupons only within the valid dates printed on the FMNP coupons.
- Agreed to charge WIC participants no more than other customers.
- Agreed to allow WIC participants to pay any amount over the face value of the FMNP coupon to complete the transaction.
- Agreed not to charge sales tax on FMNP coupon purchases.
- Agreed not to give cash, credit, rain checks, unauthorized food items or non-food items in exchange for any purchase made with FMNP coupons.
- Agreed to reimburse FMNP for any FMNP coupons transacted in violation of this agreement.
- Agreed not to seek restitution from WIC participants for FMNP coupons not paid by WIC.
- Agreed to ensure the value of food purchased with FMNP coupons is at least equal to the value of FMNP coupon(s).
- Agreed to offer WIC participants the same courtesies as other market customers.
- Agreed to stamp the front of the FMNP coupon with their farmer authorization stamp and to sign the back of the FMNP coupon before depositing.
- Agreed to deposit FMNP coupons for payment at least once monthly and all FMNP coupons by the first Friday in October.
- Signed the Farmer Application/Agreement between the farmer and FMNP.

Farmers and Farmers' Market Training Criteria

- Displaying authorization poster which identifies the booth as a farmer authorized to accept FMNP coupons.
- Procedures for accepting FMNP coupons from WIC participants.
- Redemption of FMNP coupons only for Arkansas/locally grown fresh, unprocessed fruits, vegetables and herbs.
- Accepting FMNP coupons only within valid dates.
- Not charging sales tax on any FMNP coupon purchase.
- Not giving change for any FMNP coupon purchase.
- Ensuring food purchased with FMNP coupons is as close to the value of the FMNP coupons as possible to maximize benefits.
- Offering FMNP customers the same courtesies as other market customers.
- Complying with all non-discrimination provisions of applicable Federal Law and Regulations of the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Depositing FMNP coupons for payment at least once each month and depositing all FMNP coupons no later than the first Friday in October.
- Reasons for denial of payment.
- Violations and sanctions and reasons for termination from the FMNP Program.

Procedures for accepting FMNP coupons from WIC participants

- Sell only eligible foods in exchange for FMNP coupons.
- Do not give cash, credit, rain checks, unauthorized food items or non-food items in exchange for any purchase made with FMNP coupons.
- If the purchase is more than the value of the FMNP coupon(s), allow WIC participant to pay the difference with their own money.
- Do not charge sales tax.
- Treat WIC participants with the same courtesies as other customers.
 - Charge WIC participants the same price as other customers.
 - Allow WIC participants to select their food in the same way other customers do.
 - Discrimination against WIC participants on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability is prohibited.

Farmer Submission of FMNP coupons for Payment

- Stamp each FMNP coupon with the rubber stamp provided by the FMNP with your individual farmer identification number.
- Endorse the back of the FMNP coupon just as you would any other check.
- Deposit the FMNP coupons in your bank at least monthly. Deposit as you would any other check.
- All FMNP coupons must be deposited in the bank **no later than** the first Friday in October.
- Payment will be denied for FMNP coupons that are not clearly stamped with the farmer identification number or if there have been alterations made on the FMNP coupons.

Monitoring of Farmers and Farmers' Markets

- Markets will be visited by FMNP staff to observe FMNP coupon transactions and provide education as needed to farmers and market personnel.
- Selected markets will have Compliance Buys conducted at the market. - A Compliance Buy is a transaction by a person hired by FMNP to pose as a WIC participant and buy food with FMNP coupons to ensure farmers are complying with all state and federal requirements.
- All complaints about farmers or farmers' markets will be investigated.
- Irregularities in farmers' redemption patterns will be investigated.

Violations and Sanctions

Payment for FMNP coupons will be denied for the following:

- Failing to stamp FMNP coupons with the farmers' approved FMNP stamp.
- Depositing FMNP coupons for unauthorized farmers or other vendors.
- Failing to deposit FMNP coupons no later than the first Friday in October.
- Altering FMNP coupons.
- Depositing FMNP coupons from a previous year.

Farmers will receive a written warning for each observed violation. Markets will receive a written warning if 35% or more of approved farmers receive violations during a monitoring visit. Two warnings in the same year will result in termination from the program for the remainder of the current year. Three or more warnings in the same or consecutive years will result in termination for the remainder of the current year, and the farmer or market will be ineligible to apply the following year. Violations include the following:

- Treating WIC participants differently from other customers.
- Charging WIC participants sales tax on food purchased with FMNP coupons.
- Selecting foods for WIC participants in a different manner from other customers.
- Failing to visibly post the current WIC FMNP poster (including their Farmer Number and Market Number) at their farmers' market booth.
- Providing cash, credit, rain checks, unauthorized food items or non-food items in exchange for any purchase made with FMNP coupons.
- Accepting FMNP coupons at locations other than the farmers' market(s) listed on the approval letter for the current three year approval period.
- Failing to abide by any other requirement listed in this Agreement and the current Farmer Handbook.

Any farmer or farmers' market that commits fraud or abuse is liable for prosecution under applicable Federal, State or local laws. A farmer may be terminated from the FMNP and assessed claims for fraud. Examples of fraud include, but are not limited to the following:

- Submitting FMNP coupons for payment for an unauthorized farmer or vendor.
- Purchasing FMNP coupons for cash.
- Providing drugs, alcohol or other illegal substance in exchange for FMNP coupons.

Notice: Any farmer or market may appeal any action by the FMNP, which denied the farmer or market participation in the FMNP, any sanctions imposed by the FMNP or termination of the farmer or market from the Program. Appeals must be made in writing and submitted to: FMNP, 5800 W. 10th Street, Suite, 810, Little Rock, AR 72204 within 15 days of the adverse

Withdrawal from FMNP

A farmer may choose to withdraw from FMNP at any time. The farmer must notify the FMNP at 501-661-2508 within 15 days of withdrawal and must return the stamp and authorization poster to the FMNP within 10 days of notification of withdrawal.

FMNP Assistance

For assistance with questions and/or problems, call the FMNP (501-661-2508 or 870 432-2923.)

Complaint/Civil Rights Requirement

All complaints relating to the Arkansas WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) must be reported immediately.

Complaints which are programmatic in nature are handled at the state level and are reported to:

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
Arkansas Department of Health
5800 West 10th Street, Suite 810
Little Rock, Arkansas 72204
(501) 661-2508

Complaints which are, or have the appearance of civil rights complaints are reported and/or forwarded to Arkansas WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) or United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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