Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program

The Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) operates in farmers’ markets across New York State from July 31 through October 31. The goals of the program are to:

- Promote health of eligible low-income, nutritionally at-risk residents with nutrition education at farmers’ markets.
- Enhance use of farmers’ markets by Women Infants and Children clients and low-income seniors through the distribution of coupons for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Support New York farmers through purchase of their produce at farmers’ markets.
- Encourage expanded and diversified fruit and vegetable production in New York state.
- Promote the development of farmers’ markets as a component of sustainable communities with high quality of life.

Program success is measured qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Program participants are observed enjoying the market as consumers even after their coupons are spent. Children at markets with their parents taste and enjoy new fruits and vegetables. Quantitative measures include the increasing number of farmers’ markets, vendors at markets, and redemption rate of FMNP coupons. On average, over 80% of senior FMNP coupons and over 58% of the WIC coupons are redeemed.

The New York state Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) operates through collaboration among the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Office for the Aging, and Cornell University Cooperative Extension.

Success story:
The Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program has worked over the past several years with The North Country Children’s Clinic, the agency that operates the United States Department of Agriculture’s Special Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) in Jefferson, Lewis, Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties. The staff at the clinic recognize the importance of getting fresh vegetables and fruits into the hands of their WIC participants. In order to increase the use of FMNP checks by WIC participants, they have worked to get a farmers’ market in the parking lot of their Jefferson County location in Watertown and collaborated with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County to produce the Local Food Guide, which advertises producers who accept FMNP checks. According to Elaine Garvey, North Country Children’s Clinic’s Director of Marketing, “We find that families are much more likely to use their fruit and vegetable checks for fresh local produce when we make it convenient. Our local vendors go out of their way to help young families understand how to cook and store their products, and they make them feel as if accepting WIC checks is as easy a transaction as using cash. It is a situation that benefits everyone.”

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