

**NORTH CAROLINA SENIORS  
FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM (SFMNP)  
Guidelines for Farmers 2022 – 2024**

For the purchase of North Carolina grown fresh fruits and vegetables only at certified Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program farmers' markets.

The purpose of the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is to encourage the purchase of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables directly from farmers as well as to improve nutrition of older adults. These transactions increase the farmer's share of the food dollar, keeps more of the consumer dollar in local communities and helps to revitalize rural areas.

Attached are the Seniors FMNP guidelines for participating farmers. Please review them carefully and complete the updated Farmer's Agreement. If you were issued a stamp in or since 2005, you will continue to use this same stamp. You must complete a Farmer's Agreement for 2019-2021 for each market where you participate and return to the administrator before accepting coupons. Please contact us with any questions.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services administers the program in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

If you have questions or concerns, contact one of the following Program Administrators:

- **Monica Wood**  
North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services  
(919) 733-7417  
[monica.wood@ncagr.gov](mailto:monica.wood@ncagr.gov)
  
- **Audrey Edmisten**  
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
(919) 855-3418  
[audrey.edmisten@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:audrey.edmisten@dhhs.nc.gov)

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### **1. Farmers Eligibility to Participate**

- A. Farmers must be certified to participate in the program. All farmers must complete an updated Farmer's Agreement on the Current Guidelines before accepting coupons. If a farmer sells at more than 1 FMNP market, a Farmer's Agreement must be completed for each market. The farmer is accountable for the actions of employees in the provision of foods and other activities related to the Program.
- B. Farmers and their employees or agents must have farmer stamps throughout the season. The farmer stamp will be issued upon completion of certification training.
- C. Farmers may accept coupons only at markets authorized to participate in the program. If unsure, check with the market manager. Do not accept coupons at an unauthorized site.
- D. Notify the market manager if ceasing to participate in the program during the period of the Agreement.
- E. Farmers must comply with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Department of Agriculture regulations on non-discrimination (7 CFR parts 15, 15a and 15b), and Food and Nutrition Service Instructions as outlined in 7 CFR 248.7.
- F. No farmer who is employed by or who has a spouse, child, or parent who is employed by the state Seniors program or the local Seniors program serving the county in which the farmer does business can participate in the FMNP. A farmer shall not have an employee who handles, transacts, deposits or stores FMNP coupons who is employed by or who have a spouse, child, or parent who is employed by the state Seniors program serving the county in which the farmer does business. Such situations present a conflict of interest.
- G. Neither the State Agency nor the farmer has an obligation to renew the Agreement. The State Agency or farmer may terminate the Agreement for cause after providing 30 days advance written notice.
- H. No new farmer's Agreements will be accepted after September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.

### **2. "Grow-Your-Own" Farm Produce Requirements**

- A. Grow-Your-Own: Farmers may accept FMNP coupons only for farm products they produce, defined as follows:

1. Locally grown. Boundaries set by individual markets. FMNP coupon redemptions are limited to fresh fruits and vegetables produced by a farmer on his/her farm. This may include land under lease or license, provided that the farmer who leased the land carries out the production (e.g., cultivation, planting, harvesting, etc.). Farmers may be required to show proof of lease arrangements.

Farmers may accept coupons for products they obtain cooperatively from other North Carolina farms if this is allowed by the farmer's market rules. Farmers must allow on-farm visits to verify product sources. Farmers who do not produce at least 50% of the produce they are selling may not participate.

- B. Wholesale Buying: Products cannot be purchased from a non-farm source and then redeemed for coupons.
- C. Farm Visits: All farmers must agree to allow on-farm inspections to verify product sources and acreage under production. If farmers sell products obtained cooperatively from other farms, inspectors must be allowed to visit those farms to verify product sources. Farmers must provide assistance to allow inspectors to document crops and conditions at the time of visit.

### 3. Display of Prices

- A. Farmers must post prices for all items on sale at all times. Prices must be prominently displayed on signs that are easily seen and read by customers.
- B. Each participating farmer must display a FMNP poster at all times.

### 4. Description of Coupons

- A. The **Seniors FMNP coupons have a \$3.00 face value**. The background color of the coupons will change each summer. The manager will notify you of this color.
- B. Issuance of coupons to Senior recipients will begin in July.
- C. **All Seniors FMNP coupons will expire on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Do not accept coupons after that date.**
- D. **Farmers must deposit the Seniors FMNP coupons by October 31<sup>st</sup>.**

### 5. Eligible Foods

- A. Seniors FMNP coupons are good only for fresh, locally produced, and unprocessed fruits and vegetables. Produce may be cleaned, trimmed and packaged, but not otherwise processed, heated or cooked.
- B. FMNP coupons cannot be redeemed for nuts, honey, jelly, jam, eggs, baked goods, plants, flowers, or other non-food items, or items not produced on local farms.

### 6. Receiving Coupons From Customers

- A. FMNP customers cannot exchange coupons for cash or give them away. If unsure, farmers may ask FMNP customers where they obtained their coupons.
- B. Never give change for coupon purchases or exchange cash for coupons.
- C. Do not collect State or local taxes on purchases made with FMNP coupons.
- D. Do not accept FMNP coupons that are damaged, canceled, marked "VOID" or appear to be reproduced or tampered with.
- E. If you suspect any type of abuse, please do not accept the coupons and inform the market manager or your local FMNP office as quickly as possible.
- F. FMNP customers should pay the same price for items as do customers paying with cash. Any overpricing for FMNP purchases is forbidden.
- G. All customers should receive courteous service. Remember that Federal law prohibits discriminating against customers on the grounds of race, color, sex, disability, national origin or age.
- H. **Do not accept Seniors FMNP coupons after September 30<sup>th</sup>. These coupons will not be reimbursed.**
- I. The FMNP customers must sign on the appropriate line when redeeming their coupons.

### Enforcement of Coupon Program Guidelines

- A. Regular monitoring activities will be conducted to ensure compliance with guidelines. For farmers, these may include:

1. Regular visits to markets to assure farmers have certification, and to answer any questions about procedures.
  2. Compliance buys to check for proper redemption procedures.
  3. Farm visits to check production sources of farmers.
- B. The compliance committee will determine violations and assess penalties. FMNP customers may file a grievance and the compliance committee will investigate.
- C. For the following violations, farmers will first receive a warning and may not be reimbursed for the coupons involved:
1. Accepting coupons before the farmer is certified.
  2. Failure to carry Farmer Stamp.
  3. Redeeming coupons for unauthorized products.
  4. Redeeming coupons for non-local products, as defined in the "Grow-Your-Own" requirements.
  5. **Accepting coupons after September 30<sup>th</sup>.**

Repeated infractions will result in non-payment for coupons and suspension from the Program.

- D. Farmers may be suspended from FMNP for the following violations immediately following fifteen days notice of the adverse action:
- a. Accepting FMNP coupons at unauthorized markets.
  - b. Paying customers cash for FMNP coupons.
  - c. Exchanging FMNP coupons with another farmer for cash or product.
  - d. Charging extra for products purchased with FMNP coupons.
  - e. Accepting FMNP coupons for items obtained from unauthorized sources.
  - f. Repeated or blatant infractions of any guidelines.

Farmers and/or markets that are disqualified can request a fair hearing by contacting Monica Wood at the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Payments may be withheld for all FMNP coupons involved in infractions of this nature and repayment sought if payment has already been made. A farmer who commits fraud or abuse is liable to prosecution under applicable Federal, State, or local laws.

Farmers may not seek restitution from FMNP customers for coupons not paid by the State Agency.

#### Guide to Reimbursement for FMNP Coupons

Farmers may deposit the FMNP coupons at their local bank by following the rules below:

1. Stamp the front of the coupon legibly with your Farmer Stamp in the box entitled "Farmer Stamp" and endorse on the back.
2. After you have stamped and endorsed the coupon, have the market manager stamp the coupon legibly in the box entitled "Market Manager Stamp". The market manager will verify that you have used the correct farmer stamp # corresponding to the market.
3. **If selling at more than one FMNP market, it is very important that you label each farmer's stamp according to the market at which it was issued so that you are sure to stamp the coupons with the appropriate farmer's stamp and then have the corresponding market manager stamp the coupons. You will be issued a separate farmer's stamp for each market that you are authorized to participate in FMNP.**
4. The FMNP coupon is for deposit only. Please endorse the coupon with your individual name or with the name of your farm (whichever is appropriate to the bank account you are depositing the coupon into). All FMNP coupons must also have the appropriate stamps in the appropriate boxes on the coupons in order for payment to be received. If any of this information is missing, the coupons will be returned to the bank and service charges will be added, which may result in no payment.
5. **Deposit coupons every week. All Seniors FMNP coupons must be deposited by October 31<sup>st</sup>. Pay close attention to the date. Payment will not be reimbursed after this date.**
6. If any problems arise with the bank, contact the Program Administrators for clarification.