

Farmers Markets in New York State

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Farmers Markets operate year round in all regions of New York State from North Tonawanda to the tip of Long Island and all points in between, providing consumers access to the highest quality farm fresh products along with the opportunity to interact with the farmers who grew and brought those products to market. The diversity of products at a typical market ranges from fruits and vegetables to value added products such as maple syrup, cheese and wine. In addition, many markets now have vendors selling unique foods ready to eat or to take home and enjoy with your family. Every year the number and types of markets and the diversity of products expands the choices local products available to consumers. The one common denominator is that the products will be the best money can buy from the finest producers in the world

General Description

Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

The New York State Farmers Market Nutrition Program, (FMNP) began as a \$100,000 state pilot project in 1988, operating at five farmers' markets and benefiting 61 farmers, 4,374 WIC families, and 2,000 Seniors. The WIC component of the program grew significantly following a \$509,600 USDA grant to New York State in 1989 under the three-year federal WIC Farmers' Market Coupon Demonstration Project. Enactment of the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) by Congress in 1992 made it possible for the FMNP to operate on a statewide basis and to reach an increasing number of WIC participants each year. Establishment of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) by USDA in 2001, and its enactment by Congress as part of the 2002 Farm Bill, enabled the program to expand to serve all the county Area Agencies on Aging operating in New York State.

Both the Senior and WIC FMNPs served as vehicle for the expansion of the network of community farmers markets in New York State. The expansion in the number of farmers and markets has given customers greater access to a wider variety of fresh, locally produced products than was ever possible in the past.

In 2013, the FMNP operated at 511 farmers' markets in all 62 counties, benefiting 934 farmers, 237,248 WIC households, and 102,568 low-income Seniors and operating through hundreds of WIC local agency and Senior sites. In New York City it operates through 139 farmers' markets in all of the city's five boroughs. Under the FMNP, more than \$4.2 million in locally grown fresh produce was purchased at farmers' markets in 2013 by WIC families and Seniors (excluding cash sales) and added to the local farm economy -- over \$80 million since the program began in 1988.

EBT/Food Stamps/SNAP Program

In addition to FMNP customers can now use their federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at community farmers markets using wireless technology refined in New York State. As of 2002, all states were required by the federal government to have an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program to deliver SNAP benefits electronically to food stamp recipients, replacing paper-based food stamps. In 2002, New York State implemented a pilot program in the NYC metro area with 18 individual farmers, generating \$3,000 in SNAP sales. With the evolution of more advanced technology, specifically the transition from analog to digital wireless terminal technology, both SNAP sales and the geographic distribution of the program at farmers markets have grown significantly. In 2012, SNAP sales totaled \$2.6 million and the program operated at 292 farmers markets, 9 mobile markets, 53 NYC Green Carts, and with 18 farmers and 10 Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs).

Data Collection Methodology

Data on farmers and community farmers markets is collected annually beginning in February and extending well into the summer and early fall. Mailings are sent to markets and farmers listed in the database from the previous year. In addition, any new markets are solicited through channels to register their markets and farmers for inclusion on the Department of Agriculture and Markets website and to participate in the various nutrition programs administered by the Department. Data provided is used to update a master database that is used to update the Department website and to administer the state and federal nutrition Programs.

Statistical and Analytic Issues.

Many of the market managers supplying data to the Department are part time volunteers. Data is not always provided in a timely fashion and often has inconsistencies that when discovered are investigated and cleared up. The main database is always a work in progress and requires considerable manpower to keep it accurate and up to date.

Limitations of Data Use

Information on the times and places of community farmers markets as well as contact information on market managers and their phone numbers are subject to continuous change. Every effort is made to keep the database up to date, but if the Department is not notified of changes taking place after the initial information is collected in the spring there is no way to know that a listing may need to be updated until the data is collected the following spring. Consumers are strongly encouraged to use the information posted on the Department's website if they have questions regarding a specific market.