

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) – Project FRESH



Facts About Michigan's FMNP – "Project FRESH"

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) with coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers at authorized farmers' markets and roadside stands. WIC participants receive these nutrition benefits in addition to their regular WIC food package and nutrition education. Farmers are reimbursed for the face value of the coupons. Known only in Michigan as "**Project FRESH**" (Farm Resources Expanding and Supporting Health), the FMNP directly enhances farmer earnings and supports their participation in local farmers' markets.

HISTORY OF INITIATIVE The program was initiated in 1986 when several states began initiatives on their own to use farmers' markets to make fresh produce available to low-income, nutritionally at-risk consumers. Congress authorized a three-year demonstration project in 1988 to test the concept in ten states: Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. The project's success led Congress to enact the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-314) and thereby established the FMNP as the 14th federal food assistance program of the United States Department of Agriculture. The Michigan Department of Agriculture was responsible for administering the FMNP pilot in FY '89 and FY '90. After a two-year hiatus, the Michigan Department of Agriculture recommended that the program be transferred to the Michigan Department of Community Health. As a result, the FMNP was reinstated on June 1, 1993.

SERVICE AND FUNDING TRENDS IN MICHIGAN During FY '03, Project FRESH resources consisted of \$515,490 in federal funding and \$314,174 in local, private, in-kind/similar program and WIC program income funding. These resources were targeted to serve more than 34,000 clients with a \$20 maximum benefit per client, through 44 local health agencies in 75 participating counties.

FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION Project FRESH is co-sponsored by the Michigan Department of Community Health, WIC Division, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture and Michigan State University Extension/Expanded Food and Nutrition Education and Family Nutrition Program (MSUE/EFNEP and FNP). The Project FRESH program is administered by the MDCH/WIC Program through Local Health Agencies and Michigan State University Extension Offices statewide.

Michigan's Project FRESH Program must meet a 30% matching requirement. This requirement is met through a cost relief grant from **Welch's**; a rebate check from **Northland Cranberries, Inc.**; in-kind/similar program funds from the **Michigan Agricultural Surplus System** and **Michigan 5-A-Day Program**; WIC Program Income and private/local donations. Private/local donations directly supporting local communities include: **Allen Foundation** (Clare/Gladwin, Midland, & Arenac Counties); **Central Michigan District Health Department** (Isabella County- Crop Walk); **Ionia County Health Department**; **District Health Department No. 10** (Newaygo County); **District Health Department No. 4** (Presque Isle County); and **Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency** (Branch, Hillsdale, & St. Joseph Counties).

What are Project FRESH coupons? Project FRESH coupons are worth \$2 each. Each client receives a \$20 booklet of ten \$2 Project FRESH coupons to be used June 1 through October 31 during the year of issuance. Coupons can only be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at authorized farmers' markets and roadside stands.

Who is eligible to receive Project FRESH coupons? Project FRESH coupons are issued to women and children (ages 1 through 4) who are currently enrolled in the WIC program. Women who are either breastfeeding or pregnant are targeted to help meet their special nutritional needs.

How are coupons issued? Local Health Agency WIC personnel identify the eligible WIC participants and

MSUE/EFNEP and FNP staff provide nutrition education and issue coupons at a local site.

What kind of nutrition education does MSUE/EFNEP and FNP staff provide? Project FRESH participants receive a 15-20 minute food and nutrition presentation. Presentations may include a food demonstration and taste test of recipes prepared with fresh fruits and vegetables and/or the viewing of a nutrition education video.

What if more nutrition education is desired? MSUE/EFNEP and FNP provide an opportunity to enroll in EFNEP/FNP classes. EFNEP/FNP uses a Eating Right is Basic (ERIB) curriculum model to teach basic nutrition concepts, food buying skills, proper food storage, sanitation and management of available resources. Project FRESH also collaborates with the 5-A-Day campaign and distributes "5-A-Day for Better Health" materials to Project FRESH clients.

What kind of fruits and vegetables may be purchased with Project FRESH coupons? Any locally grown "*fresh*" fruit and/or vegetable may be purchased. Fruits and vegetables highlighted during the food and nutrition presentation include broccoli, carrots, potatoes, squash, peaches, apples, and tomatoes. Produce rich in vitamins A, C, and folic acid are emphasized.

Which farmers' markets and roadside stands or farmers accept Project FRESH coupons?

The MSUE/EFNEP/FNP staff person at the local WIC clinic will tell participants which farmers' markets and roadside stands are **authorized** to accept coupons. All farmers participating in Project FRESH will have a laminated yellow-gold poster stating, "*We Accept Project FRESH Coupons.*"

How many counties are participating in Project FRESH? In FY 2003, 75 Michigan counties were involved.

How many people participated in 2003? In FY 2003, more than 34,848 WIC clients participated in Project FRESH and redeemed 245,899 \$2 coupons for fresh produce.

How many farmers' markets are authorized? In FY 2003, there were 71 farmers' markets and 58 roadside stands authorized to accept Project FRESH coupons.

How many farmers participated in 2003? 607 Michigan farmers participated in Project FRESH. Project FRESH coupon redemptions by WIC clients resulted in \$491,798 in produce sales to Michigan farmers.

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE The Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service declared Michigan's Project FRESH program a Program of Excellence in March of 2000. Michigan has the tenth largest FMNP program in the nation; the second largest program in the USDA Midwest Region V, which includes the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Ohio.

Michigan enjoyed a 70% coupon redemption rate during the 2003 season.