

# Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Market and Grower Manual  
2025 Season

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

**Contents**

Introduction ..... 3

Grower Eligibility..... 4

Eligible and Ineligible Foods..... 4

Grower Authorization Process..... 4

Setting Up at an Authorized Farmers’ Market..... 5

How to Accept FMNP Coupons..... 6

How to Redeem FMNP Coupons ..... 6

    Hybrid Solution Overview- Redemption Options ..... 6

Civil Rights Requirements ..... 7

Monitoring ..... 7

    Compliance Buys ..... 7

    Violations and Sanctions ..... 8

    Suspensions ..... 8

    Disqualification ..... 9

    Appeals ..... 9

Market Authorization ..... 10

    Farmers’ Market Eligibility Requirements ..... 10

    Process..... 11

    Market Visits..... 11

Contact Information ..... 12

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement..... 12

# Introduction

In Minnesota, the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) is administered as a combination of both the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (S/FMNP). These programs are distinct from one another but are generally referred to as FMNP throughout this manual. FMNP is designed to bring new customers to farmers’ markets and improve the diets of low-income, nutritionally-at-risk children, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and people over 60, by providing them with fresh, locally grown produce. The programs are funded by a combination of state and federal money and administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and local agencies that serve the target populations.

## FMNP coupons are given to two types of recipients:

### WIC Recipients

Some Minnesotans participate in the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**. WIC is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and is administered by the Minnesota Department of Health, and serves nutritionally at-risk children, pregnant women, postpartum women, and breastfeeding women. Not all WIC participants receive FMNP coupons. For those that do, FMNP coupons are distributed at WIC local agencies and can be used to purchase eligible items from authorized growers selling at authorized farmers’ markets.

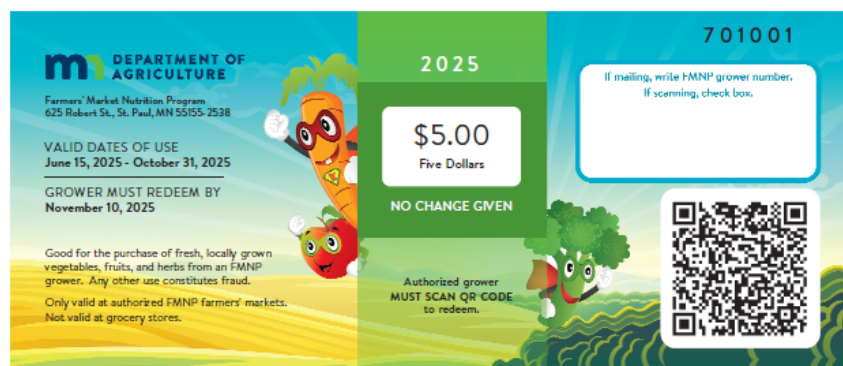
WIC participants receive a variety of benefits. The FMNP coupons that WIC recipients receive are different than benefits that are distributed on their *eWIC* cards.

### Senior Recipients

The **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** is a program for income eligible seniors aged 60 and over. FMNP coupons are distributed to participants at some (but not all) CSFP benefit issuing sites in Minnesota. For seniors who receive FMNP coupons, coupons are picked up at their local agency and may be used to purchase eligible items from authorized growers selling at authorized farmers’ markets.

### Coupons

Each WIC household will receive four \$5 coupons (\$20 total) and each participating senior will receive ten \$5 coupons (\$50 total) this summer. This year the coupons will be multicolored and contain a unique QR code.



## Grower Eligibility

---

To be authorized to accept FMNP coupons, growers must meet the following criteria.

**Sell Fresh, Unprocessed, Locally Grown Fruits and Vegetables:** Fresh, unprocessed, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and cut herbs are the only items that can be purchased with FMNP coupons.

**Sell at an Authorized Farmers' Market:** FMNP coupons may only be accepted while at an authorized farmers' market. Check with the market manager to see if the farmers' market is FMNP authorized.

**Grow the Items that You Sell at the Farmers' Market:** Growers may only accept FMNP coupons for fruits, vegetables, and cut herbs they have grown. If you did not grow the item, you cannot sell it in exchange for an FMNP coupon.

**Be a Resident of Minnesota or a Bordering State:** Growers must reside in and farm in Minnesota or a bordering state.

## Eligible and Ineligible Foods

---

Growers may only accept FMNP coupons for fresh, unprocessed, fruits, vegetables, and cut herbs that they have grown in Minnesota or a bordering state.

Items such as meat and eggs, canned goods, jams and jellies, baked products, and flowers are not eligible, as well as items such as pineapple, mangos, oranges, and other tropical fruits. Any items purchased from another grower or wholesaler are also not eligible. FMNP coupons cannot be used for (potted) plants, including vegetable and herb plants.



## Grower Authorization Process

---

All growers must be authorized to accept FMNP coupons each year that they wish to participate in the program. Growers are never automatically reauthorized for the next calendar year. If your authorization lapses for a year or more and you'd like to participate in the program again, you will need to retrain and receive new grower signs.

**To become an authorized grower for the 2025 season, new growers must:**

### **Step 1: Watch the 2025 FMNP Training Video**

The web-based training video is approximately 13 minutes long and available on the MDA FMNP website. Information about training is shared with market managers and returning growers. The website is updated for the upcoming season by mid-March and then the training video is available until June 1.

## Step 2: Complete the FMNP Post- Training Quiz

The FMNP post-training quiz is available online and is to be taken after watching the training video. The last question on the quiz asks for your email address and once submitted the MDA will send you an email within 2 business days with the link to fill out your grower authorization agreement.

## Step 2: Complete an MDA Grower Authorization Agreement

Registration is completed online. The link to register as a grower will be emailed after you have finished the post-training quiz. By completing the online authorization form, a grower agrees to abide by the provisions stated in the agreement. Paper copies of the agreement are available upon request. If mailed, authorization agreements must be postmarked by May 1. Agreements received after the deadline will not be processed.

## Step 3: Receive Authorization Letter and Materials

Growers are not authorized until they receive written approval from the MDA via email. In addition to a letter confirming your authorization, the MDA will mail:

- New growers will receive FMNP grower signs to display at the market
- Growers who were authorized in 2024 will receive stickers to attach to their existing grower signs indicating they are authorized for the 2025 season.

The signs are the property of the State of Minnesota and will be confiscated if used improperly. Keep your grower sign secure, and do not give your sign to another market member to use. Contact the MDA if you need a new sign.

## Setting Up at an Authorized Farmers' Market

You may only accept FMNP coupons when selling at an authorized farmers' market. You can check our Authorized Markets webpage to verify that your market is authorized by the MDA: <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/authorized-farmers-markets>.

### Step 1: Display your Grower Sign

You must display your FMNP grower sign in an easy to see place with your grower name and ID number visible. This sign shows program participants that you are an authorized grower and can accept FMNP coupons.

### Step 2: Price your Produce

You must price all FMNP eligible produce sold at the market. USDA requires that growers charge program participants no more for produce than other customers. In addition to being a program requirement, posting prices is also a good marketing practice.



# How to Accept FMNP Coupons

## Step 1: Know Program Dates

You may only accept FMNP coupons from June 15 until October 31, and you cannot accept FMNP coupons until you have received your authorization letter and materials from the MDA. Even if the market opens earlier in the year or stays open later, you can only accept FMNP coupons during these dates.

## Step 2: Eligible Foods

FMNP coupons can be accepted for fruits, vegetables, and cut herbs that are:

- a) fresh and unprocessed
- b) grown by the grower
- c) grown in Minnesota or a bordering state

## Step 3: All Coupons are \$5

Each FMNP coupon is worth \$5. You are encouraged to work with the FMNP participant to make sure they get the full \$5-value of each coupon. If a participant does not wish to use the full value of the coupon, change cannot be given under any circumstance.



# How to Redeem FMNP Coupons

In 2025, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program will continue to use the same hybrid coupon model used in 2024. Eventually, the program will modernize to a fully electronic solution.

Important updates: The grower portal has moved to a new URL: <https://fmvendor.com> and the mobile application and portal have been rebranded as **fmVendor**. To find the mobile app in the app store on your smart phone you will need to search for fmVendor.

## Hybrid Solution Overview- Redemption Options

### 1. fmVendor Mobile App Option

Growers can download the fmVendor mobile app to scan and redeem coupons right at the farmers' market or post-market from the comfort of their home. When scanning coupons, make a mark of any kind in the box. If you fail to put a mark in the box on the coupon it will not scan. Coupons redeemed using the mobile app will be paid-out on a weekly basis. Please reference the training documents from RP Solutions when setting up your online account and downloading the mobile app to redeem coupons. The FMNP Team will email these documents to authorized growers in early May 2025.

\*Please note that returning growers, authorized in 2024, that created an account and downloaded the app do not need to set up a new account. They can use the same log in information as last year and update any information in the system as needed.

## 2. Mail-in Option

Growers have the option to redeem coupons by mailing them to the FMNP processing center for redemption. It's required that the grower stamps or writes their 4-digit FMNP grower number on every coupon prior to mailing. It is best practice to mail these coupons with a tracking number. The MDA is not responsible for coupons that are lost in the mail.

Coupons redeemed using the mail-in option will be paid-out on a monthly basis.

Coupons should be mailed to:

**RP Solutions**  
**ATTN: FMNP Processing**  
**P.O. Box 4200**  
**Ithaca, NY 14850**

When redeeming by mail, growers must clearly stamp or write their Grower ID number in the space provided. Coupons that are not stamped or are illegible may be returned to the grower. If you have issues redeeming your coupons, contact the FMNP Team ([FMNP.MDA@state.mn.us](mailto:FMNP.MDA@state.mn.us)).

FMNP coupons must be redeemed by **November 10**. In the mobile app, coupons need to be scanned by 11:59 p.m. on November 10. The mobile app will not allow you to scan coupons after this date. Coupons that are mailed to the FMNP processing center need to be postmarked by November 10. Coupons mailed with a postmarked date after November 10 will be returned to the sender. We recommend that you scan or mail FMNP coupons often throughout the summer.

## Civil Rights Requirements

---

Federal law prohibits discrimination of any kind on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap. You can ensure that you are in compliance with Federal law by treating all participants with respect and training all of your workers on program procedures.

## Monitoring

---

It is the responsibility of the MDA to ensure that authorized FMNP growers comply with program procedures. Failure to adhere to program procedures jeopardizes federal funding received for FMNP. This manual, other materials created by MDA, and training sessions are all meant to help authorized growers understand procedures.

The MDA monitors authorized FMNP growers to ensure that they are complying with the FMNP requirements. The MDA also produces various reports that identify growers that may have problems following proper program procedures.

## Compliance Buys

Compliance buys are done to determine if program procedures are followed at the market. During a compliance buy, a representative of the MDA goes to a market and makes sure that authorized growers are posting their FMNP grower signs, that the market is actually being held during posted hours, and that there is an authorized grower at every session of the market. The representative may also spend FMNP coupons while at the market.

The representative may try to buy an ineligible item, ask for change for a purchase made with an FMNP coupon, or purchase from growers not displaying a grower sign. The representative keeps a careful log of when and where the buy took place, and which items were purchased.

## Violations and Sanctions

If there is a violation, the MDA will, within a reasonable amount of time, send written notification to detail the violation, the sanction, the effective date of the sanction, and the process to appeal. The level of sanction you receive will depend upon the severity of the violation. Failure to adhere to FMNP rules may result in non-payment, suspension, or even disqualification from the programs. Below is a chart showing some of the violations of both programs and the sanctions imposed as a result.

Violation	Sanction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charging for items not received</li> <li>• Charging FMNP participants a price for an item that is greater than that charged to non-participants</li> <li>• Accepting FMNP coupons in exchange for cash;</li> <li>• Giving change</li> <li>• Accepting FMNP coupons for non-locally grown fruits, vegetables, and/or cut herbs</li> <li>• Exchanging ineligible products for coupons</li> <li>• Refusal to accept valid FMNP coupons for locally grown, fresh fruits, vegetables, and cut herbs</li> <li>• Accepting FMNP coupons before being authorized as a grower for the current year</li> <li>• Accepting FMNP coupons before or after the programs' operating dates</li> <li>• Failure to appropriately display the FMNP authorized grower sign for the current program year while accepting FMNP coupons</li> <li>• Noncompliance with FMNP rules and procedures as outlined in the Grower Agreement not specifically listed as a violation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st violation – written reminder for program protocols and procedures</li> <li>• 2nd violation – warning letter detailing corrective actions needed</li> <li>• 3rd violation (regardless within 5 years of when 1st or 2nd violations occurred) – suspension for the remainder of the current year if the violation is not successfully challenged by the grower</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit fraud or engage in other illegal activity</li> <li>• Cashing FMNP coupons for a non-authorized farmer</li> <li>• Participating in discriminatory practices</li> <li>• Abusive or discriminatory treatment of FMNP participants or staff; or</li> <li>• Being suspended twice within a three-year time period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disqualification without reinstatement and liable to prosecution under applicable federal, state, or local laws</li> </ul>

## Suspensions

If you are suspended as an authorized grower, the suspension period will become effective from the date of receipt of sent email. During the suspension time, your grower ID number will become temporarily disabled, preventing you from redeeming FMNP coupons. During the suspension period, you must refrain from participation in FMNP. If the incident leading to the suspension is successfully challenged by you, the suspension will be immediately lifted.

If you wish to continue your participation in FMNP, you must attend a training session hosted by the MDA the following year. This will allow you to re-enroll as an authorized grower.

If you are suspended twice within a three-year period, you will be subject to disqualification.

## Disqualification

If you are a disqualified grower, you may not continue participation in FMNP. In the event you are disqualified, your authorized grower ID number will become permanently disabled, preventing you from redeeming FMNP coupons.

## Appeals

You may request a fair hearing to appeal the denial of an application, suspension, or disqualification. All requested fair hearings will be conducted by the MDA within three weeks of the date that the MDA receives the request for a hearing. The following procedures will be followed:

- You have 30 days from the date of the denial of application, suspension, or disqualification to request a fair hearing. The request may be made through the MDA. The request for a fair hearing may be written or verbal.
- The MDA will set a fair hearing date within three weeks of the receipt of the request.
- You will be notified in writing with a minimum of 10 days in advance of the time and place of the hearing. You will be given one opportunity to request to reschedule the hearing date.
- The fair hearing will be conducted by a fair and impartial official (a commissioner of the agency) according to 7 CFR 248.16(c) and 7 CFR 249.16(d) whose decision will rest solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and statutory and regulatory provisions governing FMNP in Minnesota.
- You will have the opportunity to:
  1. Present your case
  2. Question or disprove any testimony or evidence, including an opportunity to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses
  3. Be represented by counsel
  4. Bring witnesses
  5. Review the case record prior to the hearing
  6. Submit evidence to establish all pertinent facts and circumstances in the case
  7. Advance arguments without undue interference.
- You will be notified of the decision in writing within 60 days of the receipt of the original request.
- You may appeal the fair hearing decision in the Court of Appeals within 30 days of receiving the written decision, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 14.63.
- Expiration of an agreement with a grower and claims actions under Section 248.20 are not subject to appeal.
- An adverse action may, at the State Agency's option, be postponed until a decision in the appeal is rendered. If the adverse action is postponed, you will continue to be responsible for compliance with the terms of your written agreement with the State of Minnesota.

# Market Authorization

---

## Farmers' Market Eligibility Requirements

To be an FMNP authorized farmers' market, the market must meet the following eligibility requirements:

### Requirement 1: Market Schedule

The farmers' market must have established days and hours of operation at established site(s).

### Requirement 2: Adequate FMNP Growers

The farmers' market must have a minimum of **three** authorized FMNP growers and the guaranteed presence of at least one authorized grower during posted hours of operation.

### Requirement 3: Market Contact

A market manager or market member must be designated as the MDA FMNP contact. That contact must have attended an FMNP grower training session and agrees to assist in program compliance.

### Requirement 4: Established Market Rules or By-Laws

The market must have market rules or by-laws that contain, at minimum:

- Method to establish and enforce market rules and operating procedures
- Process to amend market by-laws and rules

### Requirement 5: No FMNP Fee

The farmers' market cannot charge members a fee for participating in FMNP.

### Requirement 6: Successful Summer

The farmers' market must have at least one successful summer of operation prior to authorization.

The MDA has discretionary authority to waive the one successful summer of operation requirement in select, rare cases when:

1. A first-year market promptly provides a capability statement which includes a summary description of staff's prior experience with farmers' market projects or programs and a description of market procedures. Based on the capability statement, the MDA must conclude that the new market is able to successfully operate a new market and be able to carry out FMNP responsibilities; and
2. A first-year market promptly provides a market description of the new market's attributes, and the market's unique ability to engage FMNP coupon users to such a degree that by not allowing the first-year market to participate, the state would miss a significant opportunity to serve target populations. The market description must demonstrate how the new market will increase access to nutritious, FMNP eligible foods and expand awareness and use of farmers' markets in the region for target populations. Description must also include target population data, such as the estimated number of individuals served and data source(s).

The MDA will not invite a market to be authorized in subsequent years if more than 1/3 of authorized growers of that market had compliance issues in the previous year.

Markets that meet the above requirements will be advertised as Authorized Markets and will be listed in both the FMNP program brochure and on the FMNP website.

## **Process**

Farmers' markets are authorized annually, and authorization does not transfer to the next year. If your market has never been authorized to accept FMNP coupons and is considering participating in the program, make sure you meet each of the eligibility criteria and research whether FMNP recipients shop at your market.

### **Step 1: Complete a Market Agreement**

Market agreements are sent to participating farmers' markets each spring and are due to the MDA in mid-April. It is critical that all market information in the agreement is correct as this information is shared with FMNP participants.

### **Step 2: Send the MDA a Grower List and By-Laws/Rules**

Markets must send a list of growers to the MDA. Only growers appearing on your grower list will be authorized and count towards meeting the three grower criteria. New markets and those with updated rules/by-laws are required to submit them to the MDA.

### **Step 3: Receive Authorization Letter and Materials**

Markets are not authorized until they receive written approval from the MDA.

## **Market Visits**

MDA staff conduct market visits to make sure authorized growers are posting their grower signs, that signs include current authorization stickers, that the market is being held during posted hours, and that there is at least one authorized grower at every session of the market. If a grower or market is cited for noncompliance, a letter will be sent to the grower and/or market manager that explains what happened during the visit and the sanction for the program violation. If there is a pattern of disregard for program procedures at the market, an entire market may no longer be authorized.

As stated before, the state must comply with program procedures or risk losing federal funds for FMNP. However, it is in the best interest of FMNP, the market, the growers, and the FMNP participants to have as many growers as possible authorized for the program. The MDA will suspend grower authorization if it's necessary, but making sure everyone understands how and why FMNP works is the primary compliance goal.

## Contact Information

---

If you have any questions about FMNP, contact the FMNP Team:

### **MN FMNP Team**

Emily Mehr, Christina Iliev, and Allison Beauregard

[FMNP.MDA@state.mn.us](mailto:FMNP.MDA@state.mn.us) | 651-201-6060

MDA, Ag Marketing and Development Division

## USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

---

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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.