

# **Vermont Farm To Family Program** *As of October 2012*

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## **What is it?**

A farmers market coupon program with two goals: (1) to get nutritionally at risk people to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and (2) to promote and increase sales at local farmers markets.

## **Who Runs It?**

In Vermont, the Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division (ESD). The Department of Health and the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living are its state partners. The coupons are issued by district Health offices, the Health Department Ladies First Program, and by Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Federal funds cover about three quarters of the program budget.

## **What Does It Offer?**

\$30 a year in coupons redeemable only for locally grown produce sold fresh at Vermont farmers' markets. Coupon distribution begins in late June, and the coupons expire October 31. Coupon recipients get a brochure with tips about produce selection and shopping at farmers markets, instructions about which foods the coupons can and cannot buy, and a list of the markets where they may be redeemed.

## **Who Qualifies For The Coupons?**

Households with incomes below 185% of the current federal poverty limits, roughly a fourth of the Vermont population. Federal law restricts most of the coupons to participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) and to households with someone aged sixty or older. The CAAs have some state-funded coupons to offer other income-eligible households.

## **Is It Offered Statewide?**

Yes, where there are participating markets and as long as coupon supplies last. About 350 produce vendors at over sixty market sites now take part. The coupons may not be redeemed at single-vendor farmstands or roadside stands.

## **How Do Farmers Qualify?**

By selling at a participating farmers market fresh produce that they grew on Vermont land or U.S. land within 30 miles of the VT border. Growers sign annual participation agreements valid for that June-October season. Each April, ESD invites growers who were enrolled the previous year to pre-enroll for the upcoming season. All other growers, plus those who did not return the pre-enrollment agreement, need to sign up at the participating market(s) where they want to accept the coupons.

## **How Does A Market Qualify?**

The market must be located in Vermont and sell goods produced entirely or predominantly by its vendors. It must have a designated manager, paid or volunteer, and be open at least three consecutive hours a week for at least eight consecutive weeks. It needs at least three vendors who are enrolled in the program and selling non-Canadian produce that they grew locally, with at least two of them at the market on a steady basis. The market or its sponsoring organization must have a bank account and a federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) linked to that account.

## **Is There A Lot Of Paperwork?**

It may seem that way at first, but once the season is underway, the process is simple. There are tasks and responsibilities, but ESD provides the program supplies and training to the market's Farm To Family manager.

## **When and How Can Markets Apply Or Get More Information?**

USDA requires ESD to visit a market to see it in action before inviting the market to join the program. The annual list of participating markets needs to be finalized in March so ESD can finish the program gear-up and training process in time for coupon distribution to start in late June. Therefore, new markets cannot be added until the year after the preauthorization site visit. A new market wanting to enroll should ask ESD for an application packet, and as soon as the market location and schedule are decided, return the short application form. ESD needs that application by July so it can schedule a visit to the market that same summer.

For a market application packet with details about how the program works for markets and their vendors, contact:

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