

# Vermont Farm To Family Program *As of July 2008*

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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 expand the use of farmers' markets.

## **Who Runs It?**

In Vermont, the Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division (ESD). The Department of Health, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, and Agency of Agriculture are its partners. The coupons are issued by district Health offices and Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Federal funds pay for about 72% of the program budget.

## **What Does It Offer?**

\$30 a year in coupons redeemable only for fresh locally grown produce sold at farmers' markets. Recipients get a list of enrolled markets, plus information about selecting and using produce.

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

Households with incomes below 185% of the current federal poverty limits, which covers 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 enrolled markets and as long as coupon supplies last. Over 250 produce growers at nearly fifty market sites now take part. The program does not include single-vendor farmstands or roadside stands.

## **How Do Farmers Qualify?**

By selling at a participating farmers market fresh produce that they grew on VT land or U.S. land within 25 miles of the VT border. Farmers may sign up for the program at the market itself.

## **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 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 before inviting the market to join the program. Since coupon distribution begins in June, market enrollment must be completed by early May. Therefore, new markets are not added until the year after that site visit. A new market wanting to enroll should ask ESD to send an application packet, and as soon as the market schedule is decided, return the short application form. ESD needs to get that application by July so it will be able to schedule the preauthorization 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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