

New Mexico Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition and Senior Centers Program

2018 Legislative Request:

Sponsored by Senator Liz Stefanics and Representative Gail Armstrong

Provide \$470,000 to increase participation in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and \$30,000 towards a pilot program for City and County operated senior centers to purchase NM grown produce for meal programs and will report results to the Legislature. The program would be administered and managed by the NM Department of Health's WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

The NM Department of Health WIC Program administers the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program that is funded through two sets of funding:

- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)** from the USDA (annual federal funding)
- **Farmers' Market Nutrition Enhancement Program (FMNEP)** from the NM Department of Agriculture

SFMNP is funded by a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), to provide low-income seniors with checks that are used to buy eligible foods (fruit, vegetables, honey and fresh cut herbs) from farmers' markets, roadside stands and mobile farmers' markets. Seniors must be at or below 185% of Federal poverty income guidelines to qualify for SFMNP benefits. Current 2018 funding = \$324,663

FMNEP is funded by a grant from the NM Department of Agriculture (NMDA). This program functions using the same guidelines as SFMNP with the exception of income requirements. Seniors must be at or below 130% of federal poverty income guidelines for eligibility, targeting our most at risk seniors. FMNEP is meant to supplement and extend the benefits of SFMNP. This program is funded through a state recurring allocation of funds to the NMDA that originate from a 2008 legislative appropriation of \$125,000, HB 156, sponsored by Representative Tripp. Current 2018 funding = \$97,030

The purposes of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs are to:

- (1) Provide resources in the form of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey and herbs from authorized farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs to low-income seniors
- (2) Increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs, and
- (3) Develop or aid in the development of new and additional farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.

Eligibility: Individuals that are at least 60 years of age, are residents of New Mexico and who meet the income requirements.

Benefits: Qualified seniors can receive up to \$50 per farmers' market calendar year (July 1st to November 15th)

How the SFMNP operates: Coupons are issued to eligible SFMNP participants to buy eligible foods from farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, or mobile farmers' markets that have been approved by the State agency to accept SFMNP coupons. The farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands or mobile farmers' markets then submit the redeemed SFMNP coupons to the bank for reimbursement.

How a farmer or farmers' market becomes authorized to accept and redeem. SFMNP: Three-year agreements between the state and individual farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands and mobile farmers' markets, that meet selection criteria, are made. Individuals, who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, **cannot** be authorized to participate in the SFMNP.

Currently there are 800 farmers, 65 farmers' markets, 15 roadside stands, and 3 mobile farmers' markets with current agreements.

Distribution: SFMNP & FMNEP checks are distributed via the Commodity Supplemental Food Distribution Program (CSFP) providers covering 30 counties. *In 2017 16,973 seniors participated.*

Redemption: For both programs has consistently been in the 80-90 percentile. *The 2017 redemption rate was 93%.*

Caseload: In 2017 SFMNP had 13,160 participants and 3,813 participants for FMNEP.

2017 redemption rate: 93%

Funding 2018: SFMNP \$324,663 (USDA federal funding), FMNEP \$97,030 (State funding through the NM Department of Agriculture)

***The Need in New Mexico:**

- In New Mexico approximately 98,000 seniors fall below 185% of the federal poverty income guidelines.
- In New Mexico approximately 56,000 seniors fall below 130% of the federal poverty income guidelines.

***Scenarios to Expand the Program:**

- **If we were to expand the SFMNP to meet the needs of approximately 75,000 seniors (98,000 total minus current senior SFMNP participants at 16,000) at \$25 per SFMNP booklet of checks and at a 90% redemption rate, the total would be almost \$1.69 million.**
- **If we were to expand the SFMNP to meet the needs of an additional 25,000 seniors at \$25 per SFMNP booklet of checks the total would be \$625,000.**

*These are estimates for discussion and options.

Information provided by:

Pam Roy, Farm to Table, the Santa Fe Food Policy Council, and the NM Food & Agriculture Policy Council with program information and facts provided by the WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program at the NM Department of Health

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