NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE AGING

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Kathy Hochul, Governor Greg Olsen, Acting Director

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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION	**Number: 25-PI-05**
	Supersedes: 24-PI-07
	Expiration Date: 12/31/25

DATE: May 20, 2025

TO: Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Directors

SUBJECT: 2025 Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) Information and Instructions

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this Program Instruction (PI) is to provide administrative instructions and forms for the 2025 Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP).

BACKGROUND: The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets collaborates with the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Office for the Aging, and Cornell Cooperative Extension in administering the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). The purpose of the program is to promote local farmers by expanding their sales at farmers' markets and farm stands, and to foster healthy communities through the consumption of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

HIGHLIGHTS:

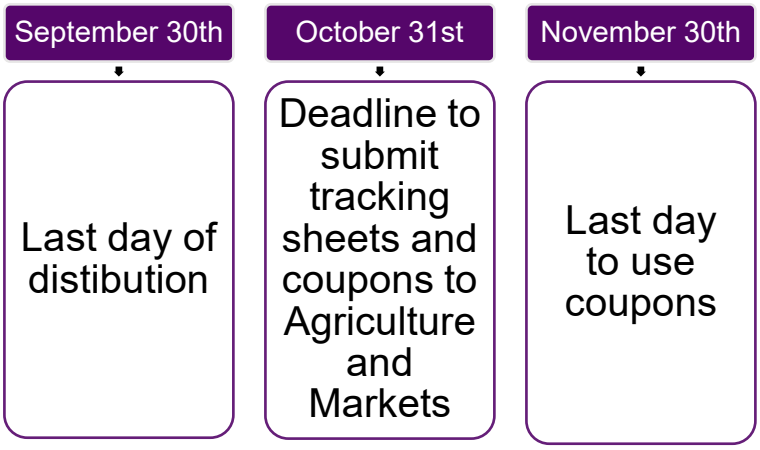
- Each SFMNP coupon booklet is worth $25 and contains five (5) $5.00 coupons.
- Coupon color for this program year is lavender.
- Eligibility is determined by two factors, age and income.
- Each older adult in a household is eligible to receive a booklet if they meet the age and income requirements.

PROGRAM DATES:

- **Start of Distribution:** Coupons can be issued by the AAA once all materials are received, coupons are inventoried, and appropriate AAA staff have completed the training webinar.

- **End of Distribution:** Coupons cannot be issued after **September 30, 2025.**

- **Last Day to Use:** Coupons may be used by recipients through **November 30, 2025.** Not all markets remain open through November 30th. Please encourage recipients to contact their local farmers' market prior to their visit.



TRAINING WEBINAR:

- Training for the 2025 SFMNP will be conducted via a pre-recorded webinar. The recorded training will be posted on the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets' website, and access information will be sent by email to each AAA. Completion of the webinar will be logged electronically by the system. It is required that each AAA have at least one staff member complete the training before the AAA engages in SFMNP distribution activities.

PROGRAM MATERIALS:

1. Shipments
   - SFMNP booklets: Allocated quantities will be sent to the AAA from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Booklets will be shipped in wrapped bundles of 20 booklets. Each booklet contains 5 coupons valued at $5 each, for a total of $25. The coupon color for this year is lavender.

- Pocket folders: Quantities similar to your agency's allocation of coupon booklets, or as requested in pre-season form, will be shipped. Unused pocket folders can be retained for the next season.

2. Market schedules
   - SFMNP Coordinators will receive bi-weekly emails with updated market schedules. Market schedules are also available online: https://agriculture.ny.gov/farming/farmers-markets. SFMNP Coordinators should regularly print the most recent schedule from one of these electronic sources as the season progresses. This will result in older adults receiving up-to-date information with their coupon booklets.

3. Receipt of Shipment Form (Attachment A - SAMPLE)
   - A Receipt of Shipment Form specific to each AAA will be emailed to each Coordinator. Once shipment is received, the form should be completed and returned following the instructions on the form.

4. Distribution Site Master List (Attachment B)
   - This form should be used to track all distribution sites. Return to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets by 10/31/25.

5. SFMNP Statement of Eligibility Form (Attachment C)
   - AAAs should duplicate this form.
   - This document is being provided in English as well as twelve other languages (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish) and is a fillable form. If there is a population with limited English proficiency (LEP) in your service area, it may be necessary to translate this document into additional other languages. Language assistance must be made available by the AAA to these individuals as necessary (e.g., telephonic interpretation).
   - Retain completed forms for three years.

6. Booklet Reporting Log Sheet (Attachment D)
    - This form is used for tracking **all** booklets.
        - If all booklets were issued and without incident, please place a check in the upper right corner of the form indicating that all booklets were issued.
        - **If any booklets were lost, stolen, or unissued, please record them on the form. Additional directions for lost or stolen booklets can be found on page 5 of this document.**
    - Return this sheet along with any unissued booklets (not pocket folders) to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets by 10/31/25 following the instructions on the form.

7. Distribution Site List Tracking Log (Attachment E- OPTIONAL)
    - This form is optional and may be sent to the distribution sites to track both booklets received and distributed. If utilized, return to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets by 10/31/25.

8. Proxy Form (Attachment F)
    - This form is completed when proxies are utilized for picking up the coupon booklet. This document is being provided in English as well as twelve other languages (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish). If there is a population with limited English proficiency (LEP) in your service area, it may be necessary to translate this document into additional other languages. Language assistance must be made available by the AAA to these individuals as necessary (e.g., telephonic interpretation). Attach the proxy form to the corresponding older adult's Statement of Eligibility. Retain completed forms for three years.

COUPON INVENTORY AND HANDLING:

The shipment of SFMNP coupons must be accepted and signed for by the AAA Director or staff assigned by the AAA Director. When the coupons are delivered the following procedures should be enacted immediately:

1. Review coupons to ensure the total amount and the coupon numbers correspond to the pre-populated receipt (Attachment A SAMPLE). Immediately return a copy of the signed receipt to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets via email: farmersmarkets@agriculture.ny.gov

    - If the shipment of SFMNP coupons is incomplete or inconsistent in any way with the Attachment A, Receipt of Shipment Form, immediately contact both:

        - NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets:

Farmers' Market Team
Phone: 518-457-7076 prompt #1
farmersmarkets@agriculture.ny.gov

- NYSOFA:
  - Martha Harvey (518) 474-2809;
    martha.harvey@aging.ny.gov

2. **All SFMNP coupons must be stored in a secure, locked location until needed**. Coupons must NOT be kept on top of desks or other such places. The AAA (and/or any local agency partners) is responsible for ensuring the security of coupons that have not yet been issued to participants.
   - The AAA must have a procedure in place for keeping track of where the SFMNP coupon booklets are being stored and issued.
   - Distribution Site Master List (Attachment B) should be kept up to date throughout the SFMNP season and submitted to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets via mail or email by October 31, 2025.

3. If SFMNP coupons are lost or stolen before issuance, they must be reported as follows:
   - Immediately report the numbers of any lost or stolen SFMNP coupons to NYSOFA via Martha Harvey at (518) 474-2809 or martha.harvey@aging.ny.gov

   - NYSOFA will notify the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. A decision will then be made as to whether the local police should be contacted if this has not already occurred.

   - Lost or stolen SFMNP coupon numbers must be noted on the Booklet Reporting Log Sheet (Attachment D) and submitted to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, farmersmarkets@agriculture.ny.gov with subject line "SFMNP Lost/Stolen Booklets".

ELIGIBILITY AND TARGETING CRITERIA:

1. Issuance of SFMNP coupons is targeted to individuals 60 years or older, who are, or affirm that they are, low-income based on the following criteria. Gross monthly income at or below 185 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines:

Income Eligibility Guidelines
(Effective from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026)

Household Size	Federal Poverty Guidelines - 185%				
	Annual	Monthly	Twice-Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly
48 Contiguous States, DC, Guam and Territories					
1	$28,953	$2,413	$1,207	$1,114	$557
2	39,128	3,261	1,631	1,505	753
3	49,303	4,109	2,055	1,897	949
4	59,478	4,957	2,479	2,288	1,144
5	69,653	5,805	2,903	2,679	1,340
6	79,828	6,653	3,327	3,071	1,536
7	90,003	7,501	3,751	3,462	1,731
8	100,178	8,349	4,175	3,853	1,927
9	110,353	9,197	4,599	4,245	2,123
10	120,528	10,044	5,022	4,636	2,318
11	130,703	10,892	5,446	5,028	2,514
12	140,878	11,740	5,870	5,419	2,710
13	151,053	12,588	6,294	5,810	2,905
14	161,228	13,436	6,718	6,202	3,101
15	171,403	14,284	7,142	6,593	3,297
16	181,578	15,132	7,566	6,984	3,492
Each add'l fam mem add	+ 10,175	+ 848	+ 424	+ 392	+ 196

Income eligibility for the SFMNP is determined using income standards as prescribed under 7 CFR Section 249.6(a)(3) of the SFMNP regulations. The income limit is 185 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines, as adjusted. Guidelines are revised annually to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. The annual revision for 2025 was published by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) at 90 FR 5917.

2. Make every effort to distribute all the coupon booklets that have been allocated to your AAA. Coupon booklets should be provided to all eligible individuals that desire coupon booklets on a first come first served basis. **As required by USDA, if needed, keep a list of eligible adults seeking coupons who did not**

receive them, should more become available.

3. **Each older adult in a household is eligible to receive a booklet if they meet the age and income requirements**.

4. Selection of sites for issuance of SFMNP coupons should be determined by the AAA in collaboration with appropriate agency partners to increase coupon distribution to low-income older adults. The intent of this program is to economically support local farmers and provide low-income older adults with access to local fresh produce. It is very important that each area agency make every effort to distribute allocated booklets for the maximum benefit for older adults and the local economy.

   Criteria for site selection for the distribution of the coupons may include the following:
   - Sites in communities or neighborhoods with a high proportion of low-income older adults (including congregate sites and senior centers);
   - Sites in close or reasonable proximity to participating farmers' markets;
   - Sites with access to transportation to participating farmers' markets;
   - Low income housing complexes;
   - Other sites that serve current participants in programs such as SSI, HEAP, public assistance, or Section 8 housing subsidy that qualify older adults for SFMNP participation; or
   - Farmers' markets in low-income communities may be used as issuance sites with the approval of the market sponsor or manager.

   Please issue coupons in as many communities with farmers' markets as possible to increase geographic variability and benefit the most farmers and low-income older adults.

   Participating farmers' markets including sponsor or manager information can be found at the following link: https://agriculture.ny.gov/farmersmarkets

COUPON ISSUANCE:

1. SFMNP Statement of Eligibility (Attachment C)
   After explaining the program, including eligibility criteria, to an individual, if they are interested in participating, each eligible recipient must complete the SFMNP Statement of Eligibility (Attachment C). This may be done electronically.
   - The form has the participant's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and the Race/Ethnicity questions. As with other federal benefit programs, collection of this data is used to help oversight agencies determine that benefits are distributed in a fair and equitable way. Please note, race and/or ethnicity will not determine eligibility. While participants are not required to disclose race or ethnicity, AAAs should attempt to collect this data by asking participants to self-identify.

2. Proxies: Proxy Form (Attachment F)
   Proxies may pick up coupon books on behalf of an older adult if the older adult has signed a statement of eligibility and completed the proxy form. Note: one individual may serve as the named proxy for multiple older adults. Each participant requires an individual proxy form.

3. Power of Attorney:
   A valid Power of Attorney (POA) may sign for coupons and pick up booklets for an eligible older adult. POA must bring proof of their being someone's POA. You do not need to photocopy POAs proof/documents and retain them in your records. POA's will then sign as follows:
   (Agent's signature) acting as Agent for (Principal's name)
   or
   (Principal's name) by (Agent's signature) as Agent.

4. Each SFMNP coupon booklet is worth $25 and contains five (5) $5.00 coupons. Each eligible individual may receive one booklet. Recipients MUST be issued the entire $25 benefit. Booklets may NOT be subdivided among recipients. SFMNP coupon booklets should be issued in numerical sequence.

5. As SFMNP coupons are issued, the book serial number should be noted on the bottom of the Statement of Eligibility form and signed by the staff issuing them.

6. Coupon books and all associated participant materials may be distributed in person or mailed.

7. "Justice for All" Posters – must be displayed at distributions sites.

8. AAAs must keep completed Statement of Eligibility documents (Attachment C) on file for 3 years as required by federal regulations for the program.

INSTRUCTING OLDER ADULTS IN THE USE OF THE COUPONS: It is very important to ensure that older adults know how to use their coupons.

1. When the coupons are received, the recipient should be informed of the following:
    - The purpose of the program (promote increased use of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and support local farmers);
    - What a farmers' market is (an assembly of individual local farmers – selling what they grow);
    - The nature of the SFMNP coupons (a booklet of five (5) $5.00 coupons worth $25); and
    - The key guidelines for their use:
        - SFMNP coupons may only be used at authorized farmers' markets and farm stands participating in the program and not at grocery stores.
        - Coupons may only be used to buy locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables from participating farmers -- although other items are also commonly available at the markets. (Farmers will not accept the coupons for ineligible items like cider, jams, honey, or baked goods, and recipients should not insist that the coupons be accepted for them.)
        - Coupons may only be used to buy from fruit or vegetable farmers who display the brightly colored Farmers' Market Nutrition Program sign saying, "We Gladly Accept Coupons Here".
        - Other vendors, such as producers of other food items or non-farmers will not accept the coupons and recipients should not insist they do.
        - Coupons cannot be used after November 30th of the current year. Program dates are listed on the face of each coupon and in the coupon folders that are issued with the coupons.
        - Individual Farmers' Market Coupons are worth $5.00. Farmers will not give change. If a purchase is less than $5.00, farmers may choose to assist in the selection of additional items to bring the purchase up to $5.00.
        - Coupons may be redeemed by caregivers/others on behalf of an older adult if the recipient is not able to shop in person at the farmers' market for produce.

2. In addition to the SFMNP coupon booklets, each recipient must be issued a SFMNP coupon pocket folder and a schedule of participating markets in the area.
    - Pocket Folder: The cover and inside of the pocket folder list guidelines and additional suggestions for coupon use – such as "Come early for the best selection."
    - Market Schedule: SFMNP Coordinators should regularly print the most recent schedule from the bi-weekly SFMNP coordinator emails or

https://agriculture.ny.gov/farming/farmers-markets as the season progresses. This will result in older adults receiving up-to-date redemption information with their coupon booklets.

3. Once coupons are issued to a recipient, the recipient is responsible for them. **Lost coupons cannot be replaced.**

4. AAAs can report units of Information and Assistance (I&A) to document their efforts issuing coupons for this program if their activity meets the standard definition. To enter these units in bulk without storing client information, create an Event profile in the Statewide Client Data System's Information and Assistance Workflow path. AAAs can choose to create one event for the whole program or one for each distribution site.

UNISSUED BOOKS: Un-issued books must be tracked on Attachment D: Booklet Reporting Log. Indicate that the coupons are unissued on the form. If all booklets were issued without incident, please place a check in the upper right corner of the form indicating that all booklets were issued. Return coupons and form to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets by 10/31/25. Email the form to NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Farmers' Market Team at farmersmarkets@agriculture.ny.gov with subject line **"SFMNP Unissued Booklets"**. Return the coupons and the completed Booklet Reporting Log. Keep any unused pocket folders for next season.

Mail only the coupons and log sheet to:

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
Farmers' Market Team
10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235

COORDINATION WITH FARMERS' MARKET SPONSORS OR MANAGERS:

1. Farmers' market sponsors are the organizations that operate farmers' markets – including cities and villages, civic and not-for-profit organizations like Chambers of Commerce, and farmer cooperatives or associations. Market managers are the people responsible for on-site market operations. Market sponsor/manager contact names and telephone numbers are listed on the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets website given in this instruction.

2. It is strongly recommended that a AAA representative contact the sponsors or managers of farmers' markets where SFMNP coupon redemption is most likely to occur, to discuss program operations. By clarifying the market's location, facilities, and schedule, as well as identifying the local produce items available at various times, you will help maximize the benefits of the program for older adults and farmers. This added information can help AAA staff best explain the program. A visit to the market or a pre-season meeting with the manager will also be helpful.

3. Partnering to maximize availability of transportation to local participating farmers' markets will optimize redemption rates and program impact.

4. Only the AAA or those with formal partnerships with the AAA can distribute coupons. There should be no conflict of interest between the local agency implementing the SFMNP and any participating farmer, farmers' market or roadside stand. For example: a farmer who participates in the SFMNP, or a market manager of a participating farmers' market, should not be tasked with distributing those coupons.

NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR THE SFMNP: Nutrition Education is a major component of this program. Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) facilitates nutrition education activities across the state at locations including farmers' markets and at FMNP coupon distribution events like those at congregate meal sites. The CCE FMNP team has educational material available on their website fmnp.nutrition.cornell.edu. It is important that AAAs explore and coordinate the provision of this service with their local CCE office in order to maximize the educational benefits of this program. See cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension/local-offices for local office information. Note that not all county based CCE educators provide FMNP education each year, but your local CCE office may offer other opportunities to engage and can connect you with a participating office. Please reach out to fmnp-outreach@cornell.edu with questions or concerns about connecting with CCE for FMNP nutrition education resources or activities.

PROBLEMS OR COMPLAINTS REGARDING FARMERS' MARKETS: The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets staff visits the farmers' markets participating in the SFMNP for compliance with program requirements. However, if you become aware of any problems or complaints the following steps should be taken:

1. Interview the recipient who reported the problem to determine the nature of the problem as specifically as possible (date, time, location). If an individual farmer at the farmers' market is involved, try to obtain the name of the farm or farmer or location within the market where the problem occurred.

2. If possible, interview other recipients to determine whether there may be similar complaints to see if a pattern exists.

3. Report the problem to NYSOFA via Martha Harvey at 518-474-2809 or martha.harvey@aging.ny.gov. State the nature of the problem and any suggestions you have to prevent the problem from happening again. Please do this whether or not you have resolved the problem yourself.

4. NYSOFA will contact the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets for their assistance. The Department is in close communication with markets and farmers and will follow up on reports.

5. Agency staff that receive complaints from SFMNP coupon recipients alleging civil rights violations must explain there is a complaint process and refer them within five days, as stated below:

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint, 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) mailing to:
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.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Receipt of Shipment (SAMPLE)
Attachment B: Distribution Site Master List
Attachment C: Statement of Eligibility Form (English and 12 additional languages)
Attachment D: Booklet Reporting Log
Attachment E: Distribution Site List/Tracking Log (OPTIONAL)
Attachment F: Proxy Form (English and 12 additional languages)
Attachment G: 2025 SFMNP Allocation Schedule
Attachment H: Agency Coupon Distribution Tip Sheet

PROGRAMS AFFECTED:

☐ Title III-B	☐ Title III-C-1	☐ Title III-C-2	☐ Title III-D	☐ Title III-E
☐ CSE	☐ WIN	☐ Energy	☐ EISEP	☐ NSIP
☐ Title V	☐ HIICAP	☐ LTCOP		

☒ **Other: Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**

NYSOFA CONTACT STAFF:
Martha Harvey (518) 474-2809 or martha.harvey@aging.ny.gov