



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

December 23, 2020

Dear Members of the Texas Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this report on the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). Through the FMNP, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) uses federal resources to connect participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program to locally grown, fresh fruits and vegetables available at farmers' markets throughout Texas. As required by Senate Bill 59, passed by the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, the enclosed report presents an assessment of the FMNP's viability, the number of persons served, vouchers redeemed, and federal funds received and expended.

During Program Year (PY) 2020, the COVID-19 public health emergency resulted in a decrease in total funds expended due to lower participation rates. PY 2020 notwithstanding, TDA is confident that the FMNP will continue to promote Texas-grown agricultural products among eligible women and children as well as provide support to Texas farmers markets and nonprofits.

It is my hope that by providing this information, we will be able to identify opportunities to continue to support and grow the FMNP across the state of Texas.

Sincerely,

Angela Olige  
Assistant Commissioner  
Food and Nutrition

AO/BGS

Enclosure

**Farmers' Market Nutrition Program  
Biennial Report  
2019 & 2020**



**Texas Department of Agriculture  
Commissioner Sid Miller**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in Texas. Senate Bill 59, passed in the 83<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature, requires TDA to submit a report to the Legislature biennially ([Title 2, Texas Agriculture Code, Sec. 15.006](#)). This biennial report for 2019 and 2020 provides an overview of how the program connects low-income women and children with local fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. This report also offers an assessment of the program's viability, the number of persons served, vouchers redeemed, and partnerships utilized, as well as funds received and expended.

## **Program Overview**

In 1992, Congress established the FMNP to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and to expand the awareness, use, and sales of products available at farmers' markets. The FMNP provides vouchers to eligible WIC participants in addition to their regular WIC benefits. These vouchers can be redeemed for fresh fruits and vegetables at a farmer's market that have been approved by TDA to accept FMNP vouchers.

The FMNP utilizes a statewide network of local food banks, private nonprofits, and governmental entities to distribute the vouchers and educational materials to WIC eligible clients. These Contracting Entities (CEs) provide vouchers to WIC participants, participants redeem the vouchers at approved farmers markets and the farmer returns the redeemed vouchers to the CE for reimbursement.

## **Administration and Support**

Federal funds support 100 percent of the food costs of FMNP. Federal funds also support 70 percent of the administrative cost of the program. States operating FMNP must match at least 30 percent of the administrative cost of the program. FMNP CEs assume management of FMNP along with the administrative costs needed to reach the 30 percent match.

TDA provides the federal reimbursements for FMNP and trains the CEs to operate the FMNP effectively and efficiently. Training is available through webinars, conference calls, and in person. TDA also conducts biennial, on-site reviews with each CE to ensure program compliance and encourages CEs to share best practices with each other. These practices ensure that eligible WIC participants receive and are able to redeem FMNP benefits.

## Program Participation

Currently, CEs distribute vouchers to WIC participants in 12 Texas cities and process the redeemed vouchers returned by the farmers. This represents a growth in the participating cities across Texas. In 2020, both Amarillo and Fort Worth returned to the program after a one-year absence and Abilene and Harlingen joined the program. CEs in Austin, Dallas, Houston, Lubbock, Pharr, San Antonio, Tyler, and Wichita Falls continue to offer the program. CEs enter into agreements with local farmers' market associations to participate in the program. In 2020, 20 farmers' market associations participated in FMNP. CEs also collaborate with local WIC clinics to ensure the vouchers reach the families.

Of vouchers distributed, redemption rates between 2019 and 2020 decreased by 5% from 75% to 70% respectively. More significantly, there was a considerable decrease of 61% in the number of coupons/vouchers distributed and a 63% decrease in those redeemed between 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Consequently, in some areas of the State, WIC participants faced challenges accessing voucher distribution locations due to WIC clinic closures and stay-at-home ordinances. Some markets remained closed or delayed opening until later in the season leading to decreased program participation throughout the 2020 season. During Program Year (PY) 2019, the City of Houston contributed significantly to overall FMNP participation; however, due to impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency, Houston was not able to access farmers' markets during PY 2020. TDA is hopeful that COVID-19-related challenges experienced during 2020 will not continue during PY 2021.

Between 2019 and 2020, the FMNP program redemption values decreased by 46 percent, from \$631,134.09 in total funds expended for 2019 to \$338,227.98 in 2020 due to the significant decrease in program participation attributed to the COVID-19 public health emergency. While these numbers decreased between 2019 and 2020, TDA notes that the FMNP continues to promote consumption of Texas-grown agricultural commodities among eligible women and children and continues to provide support to Texas farmers markets and nonprofits.

PY 2020 notwithstanding, CEs continue to implement proven strategies to increase participation such as hosting events to encourage voucher redemption and distributing vouchers during a farmer's market to encourage participants to use them immediately upon receipt. Food Banks also use social media to announce the availability of the vouchers

and the location of the markets. These strategies support the goal to maximize program redemption rates.

## 2019 & 2020 Federal Fiscal Year Summary

<b>Farmers' Market Nutrition Program 2019 Summary Report</b>	
<b>Funds Received (administrative &amp; food)</b>	\$1,024,377.00
<b>Funds Expended</b>	\$631,134.09
<b>Coupons/Vouchers Distributed</b>	102,215
<b>Coupons/Vouchers Redeemed</b>	76,165
<b>Number of Persons Served</b>	20,443
<b>FMNP Areas Served/Locations (8 locations)</b>	Austin, Dallas, Houston, Lubbock, Pharr, San Antonio, Tyler, Wichita Falls
Notes: The Number of Persons Served include all participants who received a voucher booklet but did not necessarily use/redeem the voucher. Funds Received from USDA consist of both administrative and food funds	

<b>Farmers' Market Nutrition Program 2020 Summary Report</b>	
<b>Funds Received (administrative &amp; food)</b>	\$1,006,494.00
<b>Funds Expended</b>	\$338,227.98
<b>Coupons/Vouchers Distributed</b>	39,670
<b>Coupons/Vouchers Redeemed</b>	27,854
<b>Number of Persons Served</b>	7,934
<b>FMNP Areas Served/Locations (12 locations)</b>	Amarillo, Abilene, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Harlingen, Houston, Lubbock, Pharr, San Antonio, Tyler, Wichita Falls
Notes: The Number of Persons Served include all participants who received a voucher booklet but did not necessarily use/redeem the voucher. Funds Received from USDA consist of both administrative and food funds.	