

Farmer's Market Nutrition Program Biennial Report

2017 & 2018



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 83rd session of the Texas Legislature, requires TDA to submit a report to the Legislature biennially. This biennial report for 2018 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

FMNP was established by Congress in 1992, to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and to expand the awareness of, use of, and sales of products at farmers' markets. FMNP provides vouchers that families exchange for fresh fruits and vegetables at a farmers market.

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 along with the training the CEs need to operate FMNP effectively and efficiently. Training is available through webinars, conference calls and in person. TDA also conducts on-site reviews with each CE biennially to ensure program compliance and encourages CEs to share best practices with each other. These practices ensure that WIC eligible clients receive and are able to redeem FMNP benefits.

Program Participation

Currently, CEs in 10 Texas cities distribute vouchers to WIC participants and process the redeemed vouchers returned by the farmers. This represents a growth in the participating cities; Dallas and Amarillo were added in 2016 and 2017, respectively. CEs in Austin, Houston, Fort Worth, Lubbock, San Antonio, Tyler, Wichita Falls and Pharr continue to offer the program. CEs enter into agreements with local farmers' market associations to participate in the program. In 2018, 23 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 2017 and 2018 increased from 74% to 78% respectively. Overall, program participation decreased due to challenges in the dissemination of WIC FMNP vouchers; however, TDA does not expect these challenges to occur in 2019.

Between 2017 and 2018 FMNP program redemption values increased 1 percent, from \$809,967.82 in total funds expended for 2017 to \$816,597.82 in 2018. These numbers demonstrate that FMNP increases consumption of agricultural commodities among eligible women and children and continues to provide vital support to Texas farmers markets and nonprofits.

CEs continue to implement strategies to increase participation. One food bank has hosted events to present incentive bags to clients when they spend all their vouchers. Another began distributing vouchers during a farmer's market to encourage participants to use them immediately. That same food bank uses 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.

2017 & 2018 Federal Fiscal Year Summary

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program 2017 Summary Report	
Funds Received (administrative & food)	\$1,054,646.00
Funds Expended	\$809,967.82
Coupons/Vouchers Distributed	142,175
Coupons/Vouchers Redeemed	105,113
Number of Persons Served	28,435
FMNP Areas Served/Locations (ten locations)	Amarillo, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock, Pharr, San Antonio, Tyler, Wichita Falls
Notes: The Number of Persons Served includes 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.	

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program 2018 Summary Report	
Funds Received (administrative & food)	\$1,054,646.00
Funds Expended	\$816,597.82
Coupons/Vouchers Distributed	132,205
Coupons/Vouchers Redeemed	106,218
Number of Persons Served	26,441
FMNP Areas Served/Locations (ten locations)	Amarillo, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock, Pharr, San Antonio, Tyler, Wichita Falls
Notes: The Number of Persons Served includes 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.	