



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State of Illinois Offers Eligible Seniors Help Buying Farmers Market Produce

Illinois Department on Aging and Illinois Department of Human Services jointly administer program offering income-eligible older adults assistance

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – With farmers market season underway across Illinois, low-income older adults may be able to get help buying fresh, local produce.

The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), administered jointly by the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), offers income-eligible older adults benefits in the form of paper vouchers or “checks,” which can be used at participating farmers markets and roadside stands to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, cut herbs, and harvested honey. For the 2026 season, participants will receive up to \$40 in benefits per person, which is an increase of \$15 compared to the 2025 season.

During the 2025 season, due to limited federal funding, agencies were only able to issue \$25 in benefits per participant. But for the 2026 season, IDHS leveraged additional funding to increase benefits to seniors. Eligible older adults will now receive one free SFMNP booklet of checks, with each booklet containing four \$10 SFMNP checks. These booklets will be available to more than 24,000 low-income older Illinoisans for the 2026 season, which begins on July 10.

“Food assistance programs like SFMNP are vital at a time when SNAP benefits have been cut, and food costs are rising. Fresh fruits and vegetables enrich lives, and the mental and physical health of older adults in our communities,” **said Dulce M. Quintero, IDHS Secretary.**

“Now more than ever, low-income seniors need help from food assistance programs like SFMNP to help stretch their food budget and improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables,” **said Melanie Kluzek, IDHS Commodity and Special Nutrition Programs Administrator.** “In Illinois, we do what we can, when we can, to ensure our seniors receive the support they need to maintain their health and wellness.”

“Between cuts to SNAP and rising grocery costs, more older adults are struggling to access the food they need to stay healthy and independent,” **added IDoA Director Mary Killough.** “The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program helps eligible seniors obtain fresh, nutritious produce from local farms, making a big impact for healthy aging.”

Program participants must be at least 60 years old and have a household income at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. For a single-person household, that amount is \$2,461 monthly. For a two-person senior household, the income threshold increases to \$3,337.

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior Helpline at 1-800-252-8966; 711 (TRS).

Participants can use their checks between July 10 and Oct. 31 at participating farmers markets and roadside stands in 37 Illinois counties. SFMNP vendors display a yellow sign with black lettering indicating “Farmers Market Nutrition Program Benefits Accepted Here.” Checks are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis by 11 of Illinois’ 13 regional Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and the Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD) for the city of Chicago. Older adults are encouraged to reach out to their local AAA or the GCFD to enroll.

“When we distribute SFMNP vouchers, recipients are always excited about accessing fresh, local produce,” **said Amy Laboy, Vice President of Programs and Community Partnerships at the Greater Chicago Food Depository.** “The Food Depository is grateful to assist with this impactful program.”

About IDoA: IDoA serves and advocates for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life. For information about the Department’s programs and services for older adults and persons with disabilities, visit <https://ilaging.illinois.gov/> or contact the Senior HelpLine toll-free at 1-800-252-8966, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

About IDHS: IDHS is the State’s largest agency, with more than 14,000 employees. IDHS is a principal department of the State of Illinois that provides public assistance, family and community services, and services to people with disabilities throughout the state, and oversees mental health and substance use prevention and recovery services. IDHS is proud of its diversity, efficiency, and the services that the agency and its community partners provide to Illinois residents. IDHS always strives for and drives toward equity. IDHS is accountable for providing relief and assistance to those who are in greatest need and who have been marginalized from resources and opportunities. IDHS protects and supports people who experience or are at risk of homelessness, immigrant and refugee families, victims of domestic violence, victims of firearm violence, people with disabilities, opportunity youth, unemployed adults, and individuals and families who are at risk of being food insecure.

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