



MARK B HORTON, MD, MSPH
Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Public Health



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

Date: September 8, 2009

To: Farmers' Market Managers
Farmers' Market Associations
Farmers' Market Partners

Subject: **Application to Accept the New WIC Fruit and Vegetable Checks**

Purpose

I am writing to provide you information regarding the application process to participate as an approved Certified Farmers' Market to accept the new Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program checks for fruits and vegetables in May 2010. The State WIC Program will select a small group of certified farmers' markets to be part of the initial group to develop effective cashiering and check processing guidelines based on WIC and banking requirements that will be used statewide. The desired outcome of the initial group's efforts is to develop the training and infrastructure needed to expand to all eligible farmers in the State. This letter outlines the application and participation requirements and the implementation timeline for the first and subsequent implementation groups.

Background

On October 1, 2009, the State WIC Program will begin issuing checks for new WIC foods. The new WIC foods align with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans by reducing saturated fat and cholesterol, increasing the amount of dietary fiber, and include whole grains and soy products. For the first time in WIC history, a new "fruit and vegetable" check will be issued for WIC participants to use to purchase fresh, frozen and canned WIC-approved fruits and vegetables.

Initially, the new fruit and vegetable checks will be approved for use only at WIC-authorized grocery stores. However, in May 2010, farmers at up to five (5) farmers' markets will be authorized to accept the fruit and vegetable checks. The State WIC Program will approve additional markets and farmers throughout 2010 and thereafter.

The implementation date of the new fruit and vegetable check will coincide with the start of the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) season. Since 1992, the California WIC program has operated the FMNP, providing families \$20 in coupons to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets each year between May and November. Please go to <http://www.wicworks.ca.gov> for information on the FMNP and other farmer resources. On the left side of the page, click on "farmers' market" under the bold heading of "public resources."

The fruit and vegetable checks are very different from FMNP coupons because they are redeemed using WIC check processing requirements. These requirements include verifying the identity of WIC participants by viewing the identification folder, obtaining the WIC participant's signature on each check and submitting check serial numbers for payment authorization within 45 days from the checks "first day to use" before depositing checks into the bank. We plan to provide market managers and farmers special training and support to accept the WIC checks so that we will be ready to authorize farmers on May 1, 2010. This will allow us to develop the training and infrastructure needed for a successful implementation and to establish how the market managers can support the WIC check redemption requirements.

Expectations

The market managers in the initial implementation group will help the State WIC Program create and deliver the farmer training program to ensure compliance with the check redemption processes. Market managers will be expected to work with both WIC local agency managers and State WIC Program staff to coordinate the participant and farmer education process. Market managers must partner with a nearby WIC local agency to communicate plans and exchange training resources. See Attachment A for details.

Minimum Qualifications for Market Managers

Market managers must have the following minimum qualifications to be considered for accepting WIC fruit and vegetable checks:

- Possess a Certified Farmers' Market Certificate with the California Department of Food and Agriculture <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/egov/farmersmarket/>
 - Experience accepting WIC FMNP coupons.
 - Designate a participating market that operates year-round with a minimum of five farmers who will accept WIC fruit and vegetable checks.
 - Train and monitor farmer compliance on all check processing requirements.
-

**Requirements
for Farmers**

Farmers must have the following minimum qualifications to be considered for accepting WIC fruit and vegetable checks:

- Obtain a Producer's Certificate with the CA Department of Food and Agriculture http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/i_c/cfm.html
 - Complete a "farmer vendor" application and submit it to the California Department of Public Health WIC FMNP.
 - Sell only approved fruits and vegetables to WIC participants. Refer to Attachment B to identify differences between foods authorized for WIC and FMNP programs.
 - Comply with the check acceptance and redemption procedures.
-

**Support and
Training
Provided by
the State WIC
Program**

State WIC Program staff will meet with the initial group of market managers selected on several occasions throughout 2009 and 2010 to develop the implementation plans and training materials. Market managers will receive ongoing support by telephone, e-mail and site visits. Travel to Sacramento will not be required.

**Selection
Process**

The selection process used for the initial group will include an assessment of the completed farmers' market manager application, Attachment A. Farmers markets not selected in the initial group will be assigned an implementation date based on their preferences. The State WIC Program will announce selections by October 23, 2009.

**Application
Due Date**

Please submit your completed application materials by Thursday, October 8, 2009 via US Postal Service or mail delivery service to:

California WIC Program
Attention: Paula Griffin
Local Agency Support Branch
3901 Lennane Drive
Sacramento, CA 95834

Timeline for Application Submission and Project Activity

Application and Decision Activities	Dates
Release of Application	September 8, 2009
Send questions regarding the project to Paula.Griffin@cdph.ca.gov or by telephone to 916-928-8648	September 8- October 7, 2009
Due Date for Application (Attachment A)	October 8, 2009
Announcement of initial group approval and future group assignments	October 23, 2009
Workgroup Activities	
Project Development Workgroups	October 2009 to February 2010
Farmer Training	March - April 2010
Implementation of First Group	May 2010
Ongoing Monitoring, Assistance and Evaluation to Project Sites	May 2010 ongoing

If you have questions, please contact Paula Griffin at (916) 928-8648 or by e-mail at Paula.Griffin@cdph.ca.gov

Sincerely,

(original signed by)

Linnea Sallack, MPH, RD
Division Chief
Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program Division

Attachments