

Alaska WIC Program Handbook



Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

Effective January 1, 2014

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Public Assistance
Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program
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A. About the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs

Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) FMNP

WIC is a federally-funded health and nutrition program for women, infants, and children. WIC helps families by providing food assistance coupons to buy nutritious supplemental foods from WIC-authorized vendors. WIC also provides nutrition education to participants. To qualify for the program, participants must meet the federal income guidelines, be nutritionally at-risk, and be pregnant, new mothers, infants, or children under age five.

WIC Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs)

As part of their food benefit, WIC participants in Alaska receive one FVV each month. FVVs may have a value of \$4, \$8, \$10, or \$15, and they can be used at a retail store or at a farmers' market or farmstand.

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

Eligible WIC participants may also qualify for Alaska WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) benefits during the Farmers' Market season (June 1 – October 31) each year. Since Farmers' Markets and farmstands are not available in every region of Alaska, WIC FMNP coupons are distributed only to participants who have access to authorized farmer-vendors. Participants receive five (5) \$5 coupons for purchase of fresh, nutritious, locally grown produce from Alaska WIC-authorized farmers' markets.

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

The SFMNP serves eligible senior citizen participants sixty (60) years of age and older who are nutritionally at-risk, and who meet income, residency and ID guidelines. Senior participants are provided with five (5) \$5 SFMNP coupons that may be used at authorized farmers' markets and farmstands during the June 1 – October 31 season.

B. Farmer-Vendor and Farmers' Market Eligibility

Alaska FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs can only be accepted by authorized Farmer-Vendors at designated farmers' markets and farmstand locations that have been approved by the State program. FVVs may be spent at authorized grocery stores as well as at authorized farmstands and farmers' markets.

Who qualifies for the programs?

- A farmer who grows at least one-third (33 percent) of the produce s/he offers for sale at a farmers' market or farmstand.
- A farmer whose produce offered for sale is "locally grown" - grown only within Alaska's borders.
- A farmers' market that includes enough authorized farmers participating in the market, or, if a farmstand, provides enough variety and quantity of produce to meet the demand of WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP participants in the area served.

- A farmers' market or farmstand that is open for a minimum of four hours on at least one day every week for the period stated in the Farmer-Vendor Agreement.
- A farmers' market or farmstand that is located in an area that serves enough eligible WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP participants to justify the need for a farmers' market or farmstand.
- A farmers' market or farmstand that is located in an area where the local WIC and/or Senior Agency are able to provide necessary services to administer the programs.
- A farmer who can meet the General Requirements described on page 3.

Who does not qualify?

- A wholesale or retail farmer who grows less than 33 percent of the produce s/he sells.
- A farmer who sells only through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or harvest box.
- A farmer who is in violation of other Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) programs such as Food Stamps.
- A farmer who is currently disqualified, sanctioned, or under investigation by the WIC or Food Stamp Program.

C. Farmer-Vendor Authorization Process

Farmer-Vendor authorizations are for a two year period, starting on even years. Applicants who apply during even years will be authorized for both years; those who apply in odd years will be authorized for that year only. All interested farmers and farmers' markets must submit a new application for each two-year cycle. Applications must be submitted during the open application period from March 1- June 15 each year. Applications submitted outside of the open application period will not be processed.

An application form (Appendix A) and Banking Information Form for authorization as a Farmer-Vendor under the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are available on the Alaska WIC Program website at the below address, or you may request to receive the forms by mail:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/nutri/wic/default.aspx>

How to Apply

- 1) Complete the appropriate application form, and the banking information form and submit them by mail to the following address:

Division of Public Assistance/WIC
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
130 Seward Street, Room 508
Juneau, Alaska 99801

- 2) You may also download and complete the Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer Agreement, and submit it with the application. If your farm/farmstand is authorized, the State Agency will finalize the agreement and return an original copy to you with your start-up package.
- 3) Applications are accepted from March 1 until the deadline of June 15 of the current year. Applications received after June 15th will not be processed and will need to be resubmitted the following year.

Authorization Process

Applications for authorization to accept the FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs are processed within 15 days of receipt by the WIC Program. Applications with missing information, e.g. required signatures, or the Banking Information Form, will not be processed until the packet is complete.

If your application is denied authorization by the WIC Program, then you may not accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FFVs. All applicants that are denied authorization will receive written notification of the denial and the right to an appeal.

If your application is approved by the WIC Program, a Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be sent to you for your signature. (If you have already submitted a Farmer-Vendor Agreement with your signature, the final agreement, with the WIC Program Director's countersignature, will be returned with the start-up package.) The Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for both market seasons during the two-year cycle. If you have applied during the second year of the cycle, the Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for that season only. After the signed agreement is returned to the WIC Program, it will be signed by the WIC Program Director, and your farmstand will be authorized to begin accepting FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs.

The WIC Program will mail you a **start-up package** that includes:

- A copy of the fully executed Farmer-Vendor Agreement.
- A single self-inking stamp with a uniquely assigned Farmer Number. This Farmer Number will be used to identify the farmer in program files, the banking system, and as an identifier at the farmstand. All FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs must be stamped with your vendor stamp prior to presentment for payment.
- The Alaska WIC Program Handbook for the FMNP & SFMNP Programs.
- A WIC Farmers' Market Poster that **must** be displayed prominently at your farmstand or market. Posting the sign lets participants know that they can use their FMNP or SFMNP coupons and FVVs at your farmstand or market. Failure to comply may result in sanctions (see page 14).

IMPORTANT: Do not accept any FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs until you have received your signed Farmer-Vendor Agreement and vendor stamp.

General Requirements

The authorized Farmer-Vendor will:

- Accept and redeem FMNP and SFMNP vouchers and coupons only after you are authorized by the WIC Program.
- Accept vouchers and coupons within the dates of their validity and submit them for payment within the allowable time period established by the State.
- For FMNP coupons, request to see the Food List/Participant ID Folder; the FMNP coupons do not require a signature. If a WIC shopper does not have the Folder, do not accept the coupon(s).
- For FVVs, check the WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder and compare the signature for WIC participants.
- No ID is required for SFMNP coupons.
- Stamp each transacted coupon or voucher with a Farmer-Vendor number prior to depositing at your bank. SFMNP coupons must be stamped with the vendor number before redeeming at the assigned payment agency (Appendix H-1, H-2)
- Assure that FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs are accepted only for eligible foods grown within Alaska's borders.
- Provide eligible fruits and vegetables at the current price or less than the current price charged to other customers.
- Accept training on FVV, FMNP, and SFMNP procedures and provide training to farmers and employees with responsibilities for such procedures.
- Be accountable for actions of farmers or employees in WIC coupon and voucher handling and processing.
- Agree to be monitored for compliance with FVV, FMNP, and SFMNP requirements, both overtly and covertly.
- Provide access and cooperate with WIC Program representatives when being monitored for compliance with program procedures and requirements.
- Agree to reimburse the Alaska WIC Program for any coupons transacted in violation of program requirements.
- Comply with the nondiscrimination provisions of USDA regulations:
No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability, be excluded from participation, be denied benefits, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination, under the FMNP.

- Offer WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP shoppers and/or their proxies the same courtesies as other customers.
- Notify the State Agency within 10 business days if any farmer or farmers' market ceases operation prior to the end of the authorization period.
- Handle the FVV's, FMNP and SFMNP coupons as you do cash. They should be stored in a secure, locked location. Lost or stolen vouchers and coupons will not be replaced.
- Understand that the State of Alaska may deny payment and require reimbursement for any improperly redeemed vouchers or coupons; for example, if they are redeemed prior to authorization, or accepted for non-eligible foods, etc.
- Prominently display the WIC Farmers' Market Poster at the point of sale or on your farm stalls so WIC and Senior participants can identify you as an approved Farmer-Vendor.

The authorized Farmer-Vendor will not:

- Collect sales tax on FMNP or SFMNP purchases.
- Seek restitution from FMNP participants for checks not paid by the WIC Program.
- Claim reimbursement for an amount greater than the face value of the FVV, or FMNP or SFMNP coupon.
- Issue cash change for purchases that are in an amount less than the value of the FMNP or SFMNP coupon(s), or FVV's.
- Accept and exchange FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's for cash.
- Accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's for non-eligible foods.
- Charge more or levy a surcharge for participants who use FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's.
- Commit fraud or abuse of the WIC, FMNP, or SFMNP programs.
- Participate in the WIC, FMNP, or SFMNP programs if you are sanctioned or disqualified by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.
- Accept FMNP or SFMNP or coupons that are canceled, marked VOID, or appear to be reproduced or tampered with.

D. Farmers' Market Authorization Process

A farmers' market must be authorized by the Alaska WIC Program before allowing farmers to accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVV's. The Market Manager agrees to perform the duties as required by the program as described in this Handbook.

Farmers' Market authorizations are for a two-year period, starting in even years. Applicants who apply in even years will be authorized for both years; those who apply in odd years will be authorized for that year only. All interested farmers and farmers' markets must submit a new application for each two-year cycle.

An application form (Appendix B) for authorization as a Farmers' Market under the Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs is available on the Alaska WIC Program website at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/nutri/FMNP/FMNPVendorInfo.htm>. A Banking Information Form is also available on the website, or you may request to receive the forms by mail.

How to Apply

- 1) Complete the appropriate application form, and the Banking Information Form and submit them by mail to the following address:
Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
Division of Public Assistance/WIC
130 Seward Street, Room 508
Juneau, Alaska 99801
- 2) You may also download and complete the Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer Agreement, and submit it with the application. If your farmers' market is authorized, the State Agency will finalize the agreement and return an original copy to you with your start-up package.
- 3) Applications are accepted from March 1 until the deadline of June 15 of the current year. Applications received after June 15th will not be processed and will need to be resubmitted the following year.

Authorization Process

Applications for authorization to accept FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs are processed within 15 days of receipt by the State Agency. Applications with missing information, e.g. missing signatures, or not including the banking information form, will not be processed until the packet is complete.

If your application is denied authorization by the State Agency, then you may not accept FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs. All applicants that are denied authorization will receive written notification of the denial and the right to an appeal.

If your application is approved by the WIC Program, a Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer Agreement will be sent to you for your signature. (If you have already submitted a Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer Agreement with your signature, the final agreement, with the State Program Director's countersignature, will be returned with the start-up package.) The Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for both market seasons in the two year cycle. If you have applied in the second year of the cycle, the Farmer-Vendor Agreement will be valid for that season only. After the signed agreement is returned to the State Agency, it will be signed by the WIC Program Director, and your market will be authorized to begin accepting WIC coupons and vouchers.

The State Agency will mail you a **start-up package** that includes:

- A copy of the fully executed Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer Agreement,
- The Alaska WIC Program Handbook for the FMNP & SFMNP Programs,
- A WIC Farmers' Market Poster that **must** be displayed prominently at your market. Posting the sign lets participants know that they can use their FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs at your market. Failure to comply may result in sanctions (see page 14).

Important Note: Your Farmers' Market may not accept any FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs until you have received your signed Farmers' Market/Farmstand/Farmer Agreement.

FMNP Farmers' Market Requirements

The authorized Farmers' Market Manager will:

- Ensure that the WIC Farmers' Market Poster is prominently posted at all Market Manager information booths and Farmer-Vendor stalls,
- Provide the WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP information and training to farmers requesting authorization to participate in these programs,
- Provide the State Agency with the location and scheduled dates and hours of market operation, and
- Report to the State Agency any alleged or suspected misuse, abuse, fraud, or violation in connection with the FMNP policy and procedures.

E. Termination of Farmer-Vendor or Farmers' Market Agreement

A Farmer-Vendor may terminate his/her participation in the WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP by giving the WIC Program at least 30 days written advance notice. You must remove any WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP materials supplied by the program and return the stamp issued to you to the following address:

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
Division of Public Assistance/WIC
130 Seward Street, Room 508
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Upon termination of the Vendor Agreement, all FMNP coupons and FVVs must be deposited in the bank within 15 days. SFMNP coupons must be mailed to the payment agency within 15 days.

F. Approved Produce List

The fruits and vegetables that are approved for purchase by WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP participants are also called **eligible foods**. See **Appendix E** for a complete list of Approved Produce.

There are some distinctions between the fruits and vegetables that are eligible for purchase with FMNP and SFMNP coupons and the eligible foods for FVVs. This can cause confusion for participants and for farmers' and farmers' market employees. We recognize that farmstands and market stalls frequently do business at a brisk pace and need to keep the customers flowing. We strongly recommend that you familiarize yourself with the Approved Produce List, and keep a copy with every cash box for quick reference.

Generally, for FMNP and SFMNP coupons and FVVs, the following rules apply:

Allowed:

- WIC-approved fruits and vegetables (without added sugars or oils)
- Fruits and vegetables that are not processed or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes.

Not allowed:

- Baked goods.
- Meats, seafood, eggs, or dairy products.
- Dried fruits and vegetables, fruit leathers or fruit roll-ups.
- Ornamental corn or gourds.
- Nuts or seeds.

Table 1: Coupons & Vouchers – What's Different?

FMNP or SFMNP Coupons	Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs)
Fruit or vegetable item must be locally grown (within Alaska's borders)	Fruit or vegetable item must be locally grown (within Alaska's borders)
Allows only fresh fruits, vegetables, and fresh-cut herbs.	Allows fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.
Allows white potatoes	Does not allow white potatoes
Allows fresh-cut herbs	Does not allow fresh-cut herbs or spices.
Can be used at authorized Farmstand or Farmers' Market only	Can be used at authorized Farmstand, Farmer's Market, or grocery store.

G. Accepting FMNP and SFMNP Coupons

All FMNP/SFMNP coupons and FVVs must be handled like cash; lost or stolen coupons or vouchers are not replaceable. If you suspect abuse, please report it to the State Agency.

DOs:

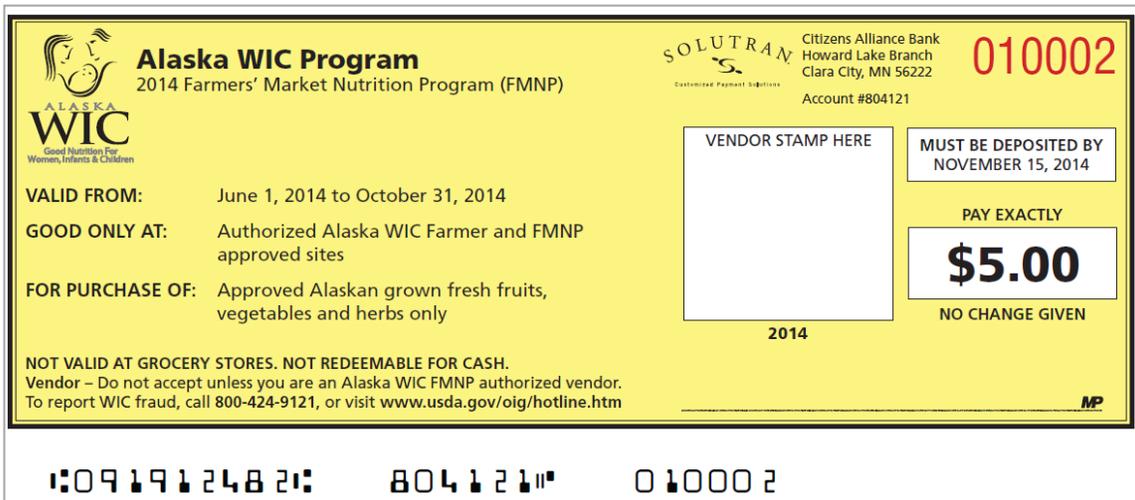
- Do accept coupons only within the valid market dates of June 1 – October 31 of the current year.
- Do allow participants to combine multiple FMNP or SFMNP coupons and FVVs in a single transaction.
- Do offer to add produce to equal the amount of the coupon if a purchase is less than the value of the coupon(s).

DO NOTs:

- **Do not accept coupons tendered outside of the valid market dates.**
- **Do not give change for a coupon.**
- **Do not charge or collect sales tax on the value of the coupons presented. You may collect sales tax on the amount of the purchase that exceeds the value of the coupons.**

FMNP Coupons

WIC Local Agencies distribute FMNP coupons worth \$5 each to eligible WIC participants during the Farmers’ Market season. Currently, a participant receives five coupons, for a total of \$25. Multiple coupons may be used in a single transaction.

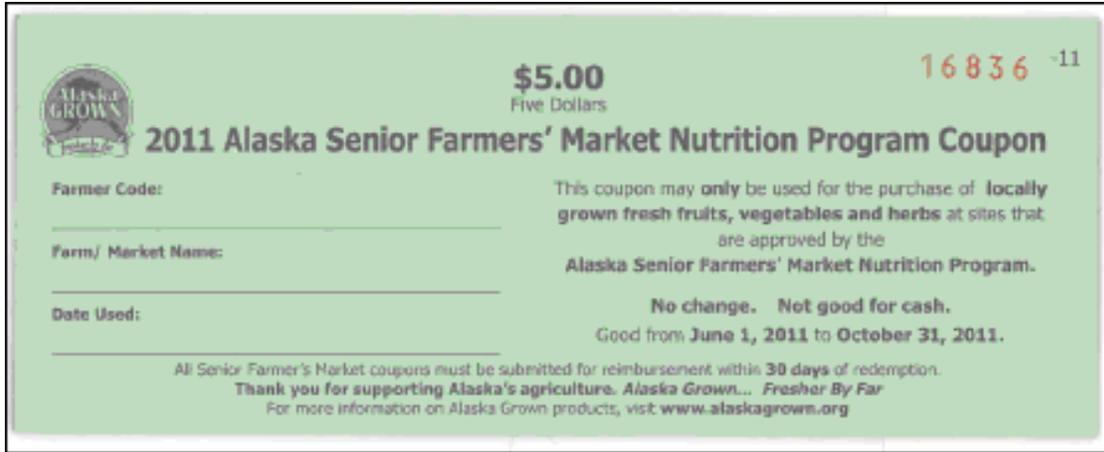


FMNP Coupon Handling Process

- 1) Have the participant, authorized representative or proxy sign the coupon.
- 2) Stamp your Farmer-Vendor number on the FVV in the box marked “WIC vendor stamp.” Do not hand-write your vendor number or leave the box blank.
- 3) Deposit all FMNP coupons in your bank before **November 15** of the current year.

SFMNP Coupons

Eligible senior participants receive five SFMNP coupons worth \$5 each during the Farmers' Market season, for a total of \$25.



SFMNP Handling Process

- 1) Stamp your unique WIC farmer-vendor ID number on the "Farmer Code" line on the front of each coupon. **Do not leave the Farmer Code line blank.**
- 2) Request reimbursement for all SFMNP coupons **within 30 days of receipt**. Do not wait until the end of the season to submit SFMNP coupons for redemption.
- 3) To redeem, send the SFMNP Coupon Reimbursement Form (**Appendix H-1, H-2**) with the original SFMNP coupons to the assigned payment agency – **the Senior coupons cannot be deposited in the bank**. Farmers or Farmers' Market Managers may send the SFMNP coupons to the following payment agencies for reimbursement:

United Way of Mat-Su (Palmer) processes the coupons for Kenai Peninsula, Anchorage, Copper Center, and Mat-Su communities.

North Star Council on Aging (Fairbanks) processes the coupons for Fairbanks, Nenana, Delta Junction, Bethel, and Dillingham.

United Way of Mat-Su
550 S. Alaska Street, Suite 205
Palmer, AK 99645

North Star Council on Aging
1424 Moore Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701

- 4) All reimbursements of SFMNP coupons will be processed by one of the above payment agencies no later than December 31. SFMNP coupons received after November 15 will not be reimbursed.

Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs)

Program rules for accepting FVVs are more complex than the rules for FMNP/SFMNP coupons, and it is important to learn and follow the rules to ensure that FVVs will be redeemable.

DOs:

- Do allow FVVs to be combined with FMNP coupons in a transaction.
- Do add produce to equal the full value of the voucher, if the purchase is less than the amount printed on the FVV.
- Do allow the participant to pay the difference using her/his own funds, if the purchase is more than the amount printed on the voucher.
- Do compare the participant or proxy's signature with the WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. If a proxy is shopping for the participant, their signature must appear on the food list as one of the Authorized Representative/Proxy Signatures.

DO NOTs:

- **Do not charge or collect sales tax for a purchase up to the value of an FVV. Payment for the excess portion of a sale over the amount of the FVV can be subject to any applicable sales tax.**
- **Do not accept FVVs after October 31 of the current year.**
- **Do not ask for the participant or proxy's driver's license or picture ID.**

		The Alaska WIC Program Supports Breast Feeding - 130 Seward St., Suite 508 - Juneau, AK 99801		75-1248 919 804113	00063616
PARTICIPANT NAME - WIC ID# 00089954 GRETTA GREEN		FIRST DATE TO USE 11/6/2013	DATE OF SALE 11/6/2013	LAST DATE TO USE 12/5/2013	
Vendor must deposit within 60 days from the first date to use					
QTY \$6.00	DESCRIPTION FRUIT or VEGETABLES, FRESH, FROZEN or CONTAINER XXX END OF ORDER XXX				
					AMOUNT OF SALE \$
					WIC VENDOR STAMP
Vendor - Do not accept unless you have an Alaska WIC Contract: Not to Exceed \$200.00 To report WIC fraud, call (800) 424-9121, or visit www.usda.gov/oig/hotline.htm					Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative
⑈00063616⑈ ⑆091912482⑆ 804113⑈					

FVV Handling Process

- 1) Check the valid dates on the FVV. You may accept an FVV only during the 30-day period printed on the face of the voucher. FVVs redeemed outside of the valid dates will be rejected by the bank.
- 2) Compare the signature of the participant or proxy with their WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. If a proxy is shopping for the participant, their signature must appear on the food list as one of the Authorized Representative/Proxy Signatures.
- 3) Write the actual amount of the sale in the amount box on the FVV. Then ask the participant or proxy to sign the FVV. Compare the signature to the signature on the customer's WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. Always write in the amount of the sale *before* the customer signs the FVV.
- 4) The total purchase price entered on the face of the FVV must never exceed the face value of the voucher.
- 5) Stamp your Farmer-Vendor number on the FVV in the box marked "WIC vendor stamp." Do not hand-write your vendor number or leave the box blank.
- 6) **Deposit the FVV in your account within 60 days of the first valid date printed on the FVV.** FVVs deposited outside of this time frame will *not* be reimbursed.

Understanding the Maximum Allowable Reimbursement

Every WIC check has a maximum allowable reimbursement (MAR), For FMNP coupons and FVVs, as well as for SFMNP coupons, the value printed on the face is the MAR, and the item will not be reimbursed for a higher amount than that value.

FVVs also have a "Not-to-Exceed" amount of \$200 printed on the check. That is a control for the State of Alaska to ensure that, if an error occurs and an amount over the MAR is accidentally accepted by the bank, an overage of more than \$200 will never be cleared by a banking institution.

Vendor staff regularly review redemption data and will establish a claim when a vendor is paid an amount over the MAR in error.

Preventing and Correcting FVV Errors

FVVs are "pre-edited" (screened for errors) by the WIC check processor (bank), Solutran, Inc. The coupons and vouchers are reimbursed if there are no errors. An error may be "non-fatal" (correctable); in this case it will be returned to you for correction. If the error is "fatal," the bank will reject the voucher and payment will be denied (see Table 2 for list of error types).

Important Notes: Your bank may charge you a returned check handling fee for each incorrectly deposited WIC FMNP coupon or FVV. Please make certain to check your coupons and vouchers for errors before you deposit them into your account.

We strongly recommend that you submit FMNP and SFMNP coupons for reimbursement as you receive them; do not wait until the end of the season to make a bulk deposit. Banking issues are difficult to resolve after the farmers' market season has ended.

Please remember that FVVs must be deposited no later than the 60th day after the first date to use.

If the wrong "total amount of sale" or "transaction date" is written on an FVV, the following procedures must be followed to correct the error. Failure to follow these procedures will likely cause the FVV to be rejected by the bank:

- 1) Draw a **single line** through the incorrect amount or date to ensure that these are still readable.
- 2) Clearly write the correct amount or date next to the error (within or close to the box) in ink.
- 3) Mark your initials next to the correction.
- 4) Deposit the FVV in your bank, as usual.

Sample Alaska WIC Corrected FVV

The Alaska WIC Program
Supports Breast Feeding - 130 Seward St., Suite 508 - Juneau, AK 99801

75-1248
919
804113

00063616

PARTICIPANT NAME - WIC ID#	00089954	FIRST DATE TO USE	DATE OF SALE	LAST DATE TO USE
GRETTA GREEN		11/6/2013	11-7-13 11-8-13 EM	12/5/2013

Vendor must deposit within 60 days from the first date to use

QTY	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT OF SALE
\$6.00	FRUIT or VEGETABLES, FRESH, FROZEN or CONTAINER	5.43 5.95 \$5.43
	XXX END OF ORDER XXX	

WIC VENDOR STAMP
9985

Vendor - Do not accept unless you have an Alaska WIC Contract: Not to Exceed \$200.00
To report WIC fraud, call (800) 424-9121, or visit www.usda.gov/ig/hotline.htm

ASmith
Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative

⑈00063616⑈ ⑆091912482⑆ 804113⑈

Table 2: Common Banking Errors and Consequences

Error	Result
<p>Missing Farmer-Vendor stamp</p> <p>Illegible Farmer-Vendor number</p> <p>Invalid Farmer-Vendor number</p> <p>Amount encoded by your bank of deposit disagrees with amount entered on face of FVV (must be corrected through your bank).</p>	<p>Non-fatal</p> <p>Bank will return the rejected FVV or FMNP coupon. Error may be corrected and the FMNP coupon or FVV may be deposited within valid dates.</p>
<p>Altered Farmer-Vendor stamp</p> <p>Missing participant signature</p> <p>Altered FVV or FMNP information</p> <p>Deposited after date specified for FVV/ FMNP coupon (stale-dated)</p> <p>Altered purchase price (if improperly corrected)</p> <p>Missing purchase price</p> <p>Altered signature or date</p> <p>Invalid transaction date</p> <p>Deposited prior to valid date</p>	<p>Fatal</p> <p>Bank will return the rejected FVV or FMNP coupon. Error may not be corrected, and the FVV or FMNP coupon cannot be re-deposited at vendor's bank.</p>

WIC Check Reconsideration

For Vendors who believe a payment denial has been made incorrectly, or believe there is a justifiable reason why payment should be made, the Program may consider payment approval with valid justification. A vendor must submit a WIC Check Appeal Request to the program within 30 days of rejection by the bank. A form and instructions for a WIC Check Appeal Request are included in Appendix F.

H. Program Monitoring

USDA regulations require State Agencies to monitor authorized vendors for compliance with the rules that are intended to ensure that federal funds allocated for FMNP and SFMNP are properly spent.

Monitoring Visits

State and Local Agency staffs conduct regular on-site visits and monitoring of farmer-vendors and farmers' markets – both covertly and overtly. The goals are to:

- Ensure compliance with the program requirements,
- Provide technical assistance and support to farmer-vendors and market managers, and
- Conduct investigations of complaints, alleged violations, frauds, or illegal activity.

Farmer-vendors who fail to comply with the WIC, FMNP and SFMNP program requirements are subject to warning, sanctions (penalties), and/or disqualification depending on the extent, severity, and frequency of the violation.

Sanctions for Program Violations

A farmer-vendor or market manager who commits fraud or abuse is subject to program sanctions, which may include repayment, fine, suspension, or disqualification from the program.

Violations are classified into four levels of noncompliance, Category I, Category II, Category III and Category IV. If a violation is documented, sanctions will be imposed. (See Table 3)

Table 3: FMNP Violations and Penalties

Violation Type	Description	State Agency Action/Penalty
Category I	<p>Failure to display a WIC Farmers' Market Poster.</p> <p>Accepting FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs for ineligible foods.</p> <p>Depositing or cashing FMNP/SFMNP coupons or vouchers without a valid farmer-vendor number stamped in the appropriate box. (First violation)</p> <p>Accepting an FVV without comparing their signature with their WIC Food List/Participant ID Folder. (First violation)</p>	<p>Violation will result in verbal or written warning, with corrective action requested.</p> <p>Additional training may be provided on-site or by teleconference.</p>

Violation Type	Description	State Agency Action/Penalty
Category II	<p>Accepting FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs before authorization is complete.</p> <p>Accepting FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs at an unauthorized farmers' market, or other unauthorized premises.</p> <p>Discriminating actions against a WIC, FMNP or SFMNP participant.</p> <p>Attempting to collect or collecting sales tax on produce sold to WIC and Senior participants (coupon or FVV portion only).</p> <p>Two or more Category I violations.</p>	<p>Violation will result in a written notification of noncompliance from the State Agency.</p> <p>The farmer-vendor may be required to participate in special training to resolve the violation.</p>
Category III	<p>Charging FMNP or SFMNP participants more than other customers.</p> <p>Providing money back to participants where the amount of the purchase is less than the coupon or voucher.</p> <p>Two or more Category II violations.</p>	<p>Violation will result in disqualification from the WIC, FMNP and/or SFMNP Program.</p> <p>Disqualification will be for one market season. Farmer-vendor will need to reapply for authorization after suspension.</p>
Category IV	<p>Committing fraud or abuse in connection with the FVVs, FMNP or SFMNP/.</p> <p>Providing drugs, alcohol, or cash to a customer for coupons or FVVs.</p> <p>Two or more category III violations.</p>	<p>Violation will result in disqualification from the program. Farmer-Vendor may be required to repay the Alaska WIC Program for improperly redeemed coupons.</p> <p>Disqualification is for two years.</p>

I. Problems or Complaints

A Farmer-Vendor, Farmers' Market Manager, WIC participant, FMNP or SFMNP participant may report a problem or register a complaint with the WIC Program. To report a problem, call the WIC Program at (907) 465-3100 during regular business hours. We will work to resolve the problem and inform you when it has been resolved.

To file a written complaint, you may download a complaint form from the program website at <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/nutri/FMNP/FMNPOverview.htm>, or you may request a complaint form from the WIC Program by calling the above telephone number. A copy of the Complaint Form is included as Appendix G of this Handbook. We will review your complaint, investigate as appropriate, and provide a written response.

J. Discrimination Complaints

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested on the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20025-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

K. WIC Program Responsibilities

The Alaska WIC Program will:

- Provide each eligible FMNP participant a one-time benefit of FMNP coupons totaling \$25 (in \$5 increments) that may be redeemed only at WIC authorized farmers' markets or farmstands between June 1 and October 31. Distribution of FMNP coupons will be made by a Program grantee that provides services to seniors.
- Provide each eligible Senior citizen participant SFMNP coupons totaling \$25 (in \$5 increments) that may be redeemed only at WIC authorized farmers' markets or farmstands between June 1 and October 1. Distribution of the SFMNP coupons will be made by local senior centers and nonprofit agencies.
- Provide each eligible WIC participant a monthly benefit of FVVs (in \$4, \$8, \$10, or \$15 increments) that may be redeemed at WIC authorized farmers' markets or farmstands between June 1 and October 31.
- Assure payments (to authorized farmers) of valid FMNP coupons and FVVs deposited at the bank.

- Assure payments (to authorized farmers) of valid SFMNP coupons received by the appropriate senior reimbursement agency.
- Provide training and technical assistance to farmers' market managers, farmers, and farmstands.
- Provide WIC Farmers' Market Posters for the farmers participating in the WIC FMNP and SFMNP.
- Deny payment to a farmer for improperly redeemed coupons and FVVs and/or demand repayment to the WIC Program.
- Provide monitoring of farmers' markets, farmers, and farmstands to assure compliance with 7 CFR 246 (WIC regulations), 7 CFR 248 (FMNP regulations) and 7 CFR 249 (SFMNP regulations).

L. Administrative Appeals

The WIC Program will provide written notice of adverse action to be taken during the FMNP Farmer-Vendor or Farmers' Market agreement.

The State agency will provide Farmer Vendors with not less than 30 days advance written notice by certified mail of adverse action to be taken during the course of the agreement performance period. Adverse action will be implemented after the 30 day advance notice period has elapsed. **No advance notice will be provided for a disqualification due to a conviction of trafficking or selling firearms or illegal substances in exchange for FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs.**

A Farmer Vendor may request an administrative appeal for the following:

- Denial of a Farmer Vendor's, Farmers' Market Manager's, or a Farmstand Operator's application to become an authorized Farmer-Vendor.
- Termination of the Farmer's Agreement for cause,
- Imposition of a penalty, and/or
- Disqualification (except in case of a reciprocal WIC disqualification as a result of Food Stamp Program disqualification).

If the Farmer Vendor chooses to appeal the action, the Farmer Vendor must file a written Request for Administrative review within 30 days after notification of the adverse action to:

Department of Health and Social Services
 Director, Division of Public Assistance
 P.O. Box 110640
 Juneau, Alaska 99811

The request must include a statement setting forth the State agency action which the Farmer Vendor is contending and the reasons for appealing the action. Evidence supporting the vendor's statement should be included. Requests for Appeal will be reviewed, and hearings conducted, in accordance with the Administrative Review Process in Appendix I. The Farmer Vendor may be able to pursue judicial review of the agency's decision.

M. Definitions

AK DHSS stands for Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

Compliance Buy means a covert, on-site investigation in which a representative of WIC, FMNP and/or SFMNP poses as a participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy, transacts one or more food instruments (FIs) or FVVs, and does not reveal during the visit that he or she is a WIC, FMNP and/or SFMNP representative.

Coupon means a coupon, food instrument, warrant, voucher, or other negotiable financial instrument by which benefits under the WIC FMNP and the SFMNP are transferred to participants.

Days means calendar days.

Eligible Foods (FMNP and SFMNP) means fresh, nutritious, unprepared, **Alaska-grown** WIC approved fruits, berries, vegetables and herbs for human consumption. Eligible foods **may not be processed** or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes. Dried fruits and vegetables, honey, maple syrup, cider, juices, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat, cheese and seafood are examples of foods not eligible for purposes of the FMNP and SFMNP.

Eligible Foods (FVVs) means any combination of WIC approved fresh, **frozen or canned** fruits and vegetables. This includes whole or cut varieties. They may not have any added sugars, fats or oils. Edible blossoms or flowers, **herbs or spices**, fruit leathers or fruit roll-ups, **white potatoes**, vegetable-grain or fruit-nut mixtures, dried fruits and vegetables, canned or dried mature legumes, honey, maple syrup, cider, juices, nuts, seeds, eggs, meat, cheese and seafood are examples of foods not eligible for purposes of the FVV.

Employee Fraud and Abuse means the intentional conduct of a State, local agency or clinic employee which violates WIC Program, FMNP and/or SFMNP regulations, policies, or procedures, including, but not limited to, misappropriating or altering FIs or FVVs, entering false or misleading information in case records, or creating case records for fictitious participants.

Farmer means an individual authorized by the State Agency to sell eligible fruits and vegetables to participants at a farmers' market or farmstand. Individuals who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized to participate in the FMNP and/or SFMNP. This is also sometimes referred to as Farmer-Vendor throughout this document. A Farmer – Vendor authorized under this program may sell only locally grown produce in exchange for FMNP or SFMNP coupons or FVVs.

Farmers' Market means an association of local farmers who assemble at a defined location and scheduled time for the purpose of selling their produce directly to consumers.

Farmstand means a location at which a single, individual farmer sells his/her produce directly to the consumer. This is in contrast to a group or association of farmers selling their produce at a farmers' market.

Food List/Participant ID Folder means the Alaska WIC Allowed Food List booklet. The inside back cover of the booklet lists the Participant Name (with enrolled family members) on the right and Authorized Participant Signature and/or Authorized Representative/Proxy Signature on the left. The food

list is the participant's only authorized form of identification allowed for transacting Fruit & Vegetable Vouchers (FVVs).

FMNP stands for Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Fruit and Vegetable Voucher (FVV) means a check with a specific dollar value (for example, \$4, \$8, \$10, or \$15) which can be used only to obtain fruits and vegetables.

Local Agency means any nonprofit entity or local government agency which issues FMNP/SFMNP coupons and FVVs, and provides nutrition education and/or information on operational aspects of the Programs to eligible participants.

Locally Grown means produce grown only within Alaska's borders.

Participants means pregnant women, breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants and children who are receiving supplemental foods or FIs or FVVs under the WIC Program and/or FMNP, or low income seniors (age 60 and over) who are eligible for benefits under the SFMNP.

Participant Violation means any intentional action of a participant, parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, or proxy that violates Federal or State statutes, regulations, policies, or procedures governing the WIC Program, FMNP and/or SFMNP. Participant violations include intentionally making false or misleading statements or intentionally misrepresenting, concealing, or withholding facts to obtain benefits; exchanging FVVs, FIs or supplemental foods for cash, credit, non-food items, or unauthorized food items, including supplemental foods in excess of those listed on the participant's FI; threatening to harm or physically harming clinic, farmer or vendor staff; and dual participation.

Proxy means any person designated by a woman participant, or by a parent or caretaker of an infant or child participant, to obtain and transact FIs or FVVs or to obtain supplemental foods on behalf of a participant. The proxy must be designated consistent with the State agency's procedures established pursuant to 7 CFR § 246.12 (r) (1). Parents or caretakers applying on behalf of child and infant participants are not proxies. For the SFMNP, "proxy" means an individual authorized by an eligible senior to act on the senior's behalf according to 7 CFR §249.1.

Senior Citizen Participant means eligible low-income seniors age 60 and over.

SFMNP stands for Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

USDA stands for United States Department of Agriculture.

WIC stands for Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.