

**Wisconsin
WIC Farmers' Market
Nutrition Program
(FMNP)**

2007 Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE 2007 WISCONSIN WIC FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

*Increases fruit and vegetable consumption
Increases sales at farmers' markets*

The Wisconsin WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) completed its 13th year of operation. The program provided statewide service for the fourth year including three tribal agencies who also participated in the WIC FMNP: Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin. In 2007, 71 local agencies issued \$15.00, three \$3.00 and three \$2.00 checks, to 68,765 WIC families to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs at 187 farmers' markets and 281 roadside stands. The total amount redeemed by 1,115 farmers was \$548,086; spending more than the allotment of \$502,498 available federal food funds.

WIC participants and farmers were surveyed in 2007 on the effectiveness of the program.

Impact on WIC Participants.

WIC FMNP Goal: "to provide fresh, nutritious unprepared foods, such as fruits and vegetables, from farmers' markets to women, infants and children who are nutritionally at-risk".

- Use of WIC FMNP checks, in addition to nutrition education, contributes to a positive long-term dietary change toward consumption of fresh produce. 72% of respondents said that because of the FMNP they ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual. 86% reported that they plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round.
- The WIC FMNP provides a unique opportunity to increase the variety of fruits and vegetables purchased by participants. 47% of the respondents reported that because of the FMNP, they purchased a fresh fruit or vegetable they never tried before.
- The WIC FMNP contributed to participants gaining new knowledge in the preparation and storage of fresh fruits and vegetables. 55% of participants said that because of the FMNP they learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables. 50% reported they learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables.

Impact on Farmers and Farmers' Markets.

WIC FMNP Goal: "to expand the awareness and use of farmers' markets and increase sales at such markets."

- The WIC FMNP generates new customers for farmers' markets. Of WIC recipients who received FMNP checks for the first time, 61% reported that they had not gone to a farmers' market before receiving FMNP checks. Of all respondents, 78% claimed said that they will continue to shop at farmers' markets even without FMNP checks to spend.
- The WIC FMNP enhances the potential for increased market sales. 80% of farmers reported increased sales by participating in the FMNP. 58% of participants reported spending money in addition to FMNP checks.

For more information, please contact the WIC FMNP Coordinator at (608) 261-8867.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides results of surveys conducted to evaluate the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in its 13th year of implementation in Wisconsin.

The WIC FMNP is a program regulated through USDA. In Wisconsin, the State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services is the administering agency of the WIC FMNP, and it is managed through the State WIC Program. The State WIC Program contracts with local agencies such as county health departments and other organizations to distribute the WIC and FMNP benefit.

Goals of the WIC FMNP are to provide fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to WIC recipients and to expand the awareness, use of and sales at farmers' markets. To assess goal achievements, WIC recipients and WIC FMNP farmers are surveyed for their experiences with the program.

Survey Construction

Questions from the National Association of the FMNP that were designed to assess achievement of WIC FMNP goals were used as a basis for the recipient and farmer surveys. The recipient survey was produced in both English and Spanish.

Survey Sample

Recipient Survey

1,351 surveys completed by WIC recipients were entered by the State agency. The sample was based on Metropolitan Statistical Areas as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This information was used to determine the percentage of urban, rural, urban/rural mix that exists in Wisconsin. The surveys were distributed accordingly. The goal is for the survey results to reflect the state as a whole. See table 1 in the Appendix for more information.

Farmer Survey

A survey was mailed to farmers selected by random in November of 2007. The farmers were asked to return the surveys by December 1. The State Agency entered 195 surveys from farmers.

2007 WIC FMNP Overview

WIC FMNP Benefit

The WIC FMNP benefit consists of three \$2.00 checks and three \$3.00 checks totaling \$15.00.

The benefit is given once per year to each eligible family. The checks are used to purchase locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs at selected farmers' markets and farmstands. WIC local agencies issued WIC FMNP checks beginning June 1 through September 30.

WIC Recipient Participation

In 2007, 68,765 WIC families statewide received FMNP checks totaling \$1,031,475. Families eligible to receive FMNP checks had one or more family member participating in WIC with the following characteristics: pregnant, breastfeeding, postpartum, or child between the ages of one year and five years.

Check Issuance Process

FMNP checks were issued to WIC recipients at the WIC clinic during WIC appointments or upon request. Recipients received a brochure containing information on how to use FMNP checks, a list of eligible produce, and shopping tips. Also given to recipients was a list of farmers' markets and farmstands approved to participate in the FMNP. An informational video on the proper use of FMNP checks and tips on how to shop at farmers' markets is also available at local agencies. Local agency staff instruct recipients to use checks only with certified farmers at approved sites. Certified farmers are identified by a yellow FMNP sign posted at their stalls.

Nutrition Education

The State and local WIC agencies have prepared nutrition education materials to teach WIC families how to buy, store, and prepare locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, many local agencies provide interactive activities such as the Veggin' Out Program where cooking demonstrations are performed at the farmers' market.

Farmer Participation

In 2007, 1,115 farmers were certified by the State Agency to accept FMNP checks. To participate in the FMNP, farmers must grow approved FMNP foods and sell their produce at an approved FMNP farmers' market or farmstand. Approved FMNP foods are locally grown fruits, vegetables and fresh cut herbs. Farmers receive a training manual and sign an agreement to participate in both the WIC and Senior¹ FMNP. A face-to-face training is required if it is the farmer's first year of participation.

Farmers' Market Information

The State Agency approved 187 farmers' market applications received from market managers as sites where FMNP checks can be spent throughout the state. Farmers' markets approved to participate in the FMNP had established sites, days and hours of operation and at least three farmers present selling at the market.

Farmstand Information

The State Agency approved 281 farmstands as sites where FMNP checks can be spent throughout the state. A farmstand is defined as a location at which a single, individual farmer sells his/her produce directly to consumers, and is also referred to as a roadside stand. Farmstands approved to participate in the FMNP had established site or sites of operation, days and hours of operation, and a FMNP trained seller present during farmstand hours.

Check Redemption Information

Once at a FMNP farmers' market or farmstand, recipients look for yellow FMNP vendor signs that certified farmers are required to post. The farmers take the FMNP checks in exchange for FMNP approved foods. The farmer stamps the FMNP checks with a unique ID number, and the checks are deposited in the farmer's bank and processed through the Federal Reserve System. In 2007, farmers statewide redeemed WIC FMNP checks valued at \$548,086.

¹The Senior FMNP serves senior citizens 60 years and older who meet income eligibility requirements.

SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact on WIC Recipients.

Use of checks to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets, as well as nutrition education provided by local WIC staff, are hoped to promote a positive dietary change toward consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. 72.4% of recipients said that because of the FMNP they ate more fresh fruits and vegetables than usual. 86.2% said they plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round (see table 3 in the Appendix). This suggests that the FMNP not only gives recipients greater purchasing power to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets, but also provides an impetus to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round.

The FMNP provides an unique opportunity to increase the variety of fruits and vegetables purchased by recipients. 47.2% of the recipients reported that because of the FMNP they purchased a fresh fruit or vegetable they never tried before (see table 3 in the Appendix).

The FMNP contributed to recipients gaining new knowledge in the preparation and storage of fresh fruits and vegetables. 54.7% of recipients said that because of the FMNP they learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables. 50.4% said they learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables to keep them from spoiling (see table 3 in the Appendix).

Impact on Farmers and Farmers' Markets

A Recipient's Perspective

The WIC FMNP generates new customers for farmers' markets. Of WIC recipients surveyed who received WIC FMNP checks for the first time, 61.0% reported that they had not gone to a farmers' market before receiving WIC checks (see table 3 in the Appendix). In addition, 77.8% of all recipients surveyed claimed that they will continue to shop at farmers' markets even without farmers' market checks to spend there. This is further supported with 51.4% recipients reporting that they returned to the market after spending their checks. This flux of new customers to farmers' markets should have a positive effect on market sales, especially since 57.7% of recipients claimed they spent money, in addition to farmers' market checks at the market (see table 3, 4, and 6 in the Appendix).

Recipients may be interested in returning to farmers' markets because the quality of produce is better than that found at local grocery stores. When asked how the quality of produce at the farmers' market compares to that found at local grocery stores, 62.3% of recipients said it was better (see table 5).

A Farmer's Perspective

Overall, the farmers who responded to the survey are pleased with the program. 89.7% say they would recommend the program to other farmers (see table 11).

Farmers agree that the FMNP helps to increase their sales with 79.5% reporting increased sales (see table 8).

Information for Improving the Effectiveness of the FMNP

Recipients and farmers wrote suggestions to improve the FMNP. A common request by both recipients and farmers is to issue checks earlier. Local agencies may want to consider designating FMNP check pick-up days in early June for those who would like to receive their checks before their scheduled appointments. The designated days can be promoted during the months prior to FMNP issuance.

Another common request from both recipients and farmers is to provide more money. One farmer noted that the small \$15 benefit is a tease and not enough to reap all of the seasonal produce the farmers' market has to offer.

Farmers would like recipients to receive more education about seasonal produce and how to prepare produce.

Recipients would like to see more variety and selection at the farmers' markets and would also like more farmers to be authorized to accept FMNP checks.

CONCLUSION

The survey results show that the WIC FMNP encourages recipients to consume more fruits and vegetables than they usually would.

The survey results also show that the WIC FMNP continues to increase awareness and sales at farmers' markets as indicated by farmers and by WIC recipients.

Therefore, the Wisconsin WIC FMNP is meeting its goals to provide fruits and vegetables to WIC recipients and to increase awareness and sales at farmers' markets.

As one WIC recipient wrote on the survey:

“This program ROCKS!!”

APPENDIX

Recipient Survey

Table 1.

Survey Sample	# of Surveys Entered	Category Type	Percent of Surveys Entered	Percent of Wisconsin per BRFSS*
**Dane	182	1		
Milwaukee	554	1		
Racine	89	1		
Subtotal	825	1	61.07	40.96
Marathon	60	2		
Washington	41	2		
Subtotal	101	2	7.48	18.19
Columbia	27	3		
Iowa	10	3		
Ozaukee	15	3		
Subtotal	52	3	3.85	10.00
Ashland	41	5		
Forest	22	5		
Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council	15	5		
Jefferson	93	5		
Portage	65	5		
**Sauk	42	5		
Taylor	25	5		
Wood	70	5		
Subtotal	373	5	27.61	30.84
Total	1,351		100.01	99.99

* Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2006 which provides Metropolitan status codes for participant counties with the following values:

Category 1: Most of the population resides in the center city of an MSA

Category 2: Most of the population resides outside the center city of an MSA but inside the county containing the center city

Category 3: Most of the population is inside a suburban county of the MSA

Category 5: Not in an MSA

MSA: Metropolitan Statistical Area. A MSA must have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more persons

Center City: The largest city within the MSA

** Dane and Sauk Counties were grouped in incorrect category types at point of survey distribution which resulted in discrepancies in the attempt to match BRFSS percentages.

Table 2.

Is this the first year you received Farmers' Market coupons?	Percent
No	64.91%
Yes	33.23%
Did not answer	1.85%

Table 3.

Because of the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program I or my family...	Yes	No	Not sure	Did not answer
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Went to the farmers' market for the first time (all respondents)	35.68	60.40	1.48	2.44
Went to the farmers' market for the first time (respondents who answered "yes" in table 2)	61.02	35.41	2.00	1.56
Ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual.	72.39	19.17	6.88	1.55
Plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round.	86.16	5.33	7.48	1.04
Learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables.	54.70	36.12	7.03	2.15
Will continue to shop at farmers' markets, even without Farmers' Market coupons to spend there.	77.79	6.88	13.99	1.33
Learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables to keep them from spoiling.	50.41	39.82	7.99	1.78
Bought a fresh fruit or vegetable that I had never tried before.	47.15	47.89	3.40	1.55

Table 4.

Did you spend money in addition to Farmers' Market coupons?	Percent
Yes	57.66
No	34.34
Did not go to farmers' market yet	7.55
Did not answer	0.44

Table 5.

How did the quality of fruits and vegetables at the farmers' market compare to their quality at your grocery store?	Percent
Better	62.25
About the same	29.98
Did not go to farmers' market yet	6.51
Did not answer	0.52
Worse	0.74

Table 6.

After you spent all of your farmer's market coupons, did you go back to shop at the market?	Percent
Yes	51.44
Not applicable (still have coupons left)	17.32
No	30.87
Did not answer	0.37

Farmer Survey

Table 7.

Was this your first year taking part in the WIC/Senior FMNP?	Percent
No	85.64
Yes	14.36

Table 8.

Does participating in the FMNP increase your farmers' market sales?	Percent
Yes	79.49
Not Sure	15.90
No	4.10
Did not answer	0.51

Table 9.

Do FMNP customers continue to shop at the market, even without the drafts?	Percent
Yes	48.21
Not Sure	43.08
No	8.21
Did not answer	0.51

Table 10.

Did the FMNP change your farming or marketing practices in any of the following ways?	Yes (%)
I became more active in the organization or operation of farmers' markets.	26.67
I am increasing my fruit and/or vegetable production.	35.90
I am growing a wider variety of fruits and/or vegetables to sell at farmers' markets.	46.15
I increased the number of hours and/or days that I sell at farmers' markets.	25.13
I changed my display signs to make it easier to identify food types or prices.	35.38
I am doing more nutrition education with farmers' market customers (e.g. recipes, product samples, advice on how to select, store or prepare fresh produce.	33.85

Table 11.

Would you recommend the FMNP to other farmers in your area?	Percent
Yes	89.74
Not Sure	7.18
No	2.56
Did not answer	0.51