

Using the WIC Program: A Guide for Farmers' Market Masters, Vendors, and Roadside Stands



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The Women, Infants and Children Program, known as WIC, is a program that gives nutrition education and supplemental food to women, infants, and children who have nutritional needs and meet income guidelines. This program is designed to encourage farmers' markets and roadside stands to sell produce to WIC participants. It provides access to fruits and vegetables to supplement participants' diets as well as educates them about the selection and preparation of fresh produce through the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

All women, infants, and children who participate in the WIC Program are eligible to participate in the WIC Farmers' Market Program, but this program does not operate in every county. As of 2006, 37 counties participated in the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Participating counties can be found on the WIC Web site at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/programs/wic/farmers.htm> or in the *Farmers' Market Handbook* located at the State Department of Health office.

What Is the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program?

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was formed under the supervision of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The Indiana Department of Health operates the program for Hoosier WIC participants and is the source for all necessary applications.

Farmers' markets and farm stands are eligible to participate in this program. Farmers' markets that wish to participate in the WIC Program must follow a two-step

process. First, the market master fills out an application to register the entire market. Then, each individual vendor fills out a separate application to become a vendor that may accept WIC vouchers. Farm stands that wish to participate in the WIC Program must follow a different two-step process. First, a representative fills out an application to register the farm stand. Then the representative fills out a separate application to become a vendor that may accept WIC vouchers.

How Does a Farmers' Market Become Part of the Program?

A market master who wants to qualify his or her farmers' market must complete an "Application and Agreement" form for markets. The application process explains the federal regulations that each market master must enforce. The agreement is a requirement from the United States Department of Agriculture and a necessary step in having an authorized farmers' market. The application is currently a tri-annual process (every three years).

Once the State Department of Health receives the market's "Application and Agreement" form, the market master will hold several responsibilities, including:

- Providing the WIC office with the farmers' market by-laws
- Informing the market's vendors of their eligibility of participation
- Serving as a liaison between the vendors and the state and/or local WIC offices

- Attending a training session (see Training Process)
- Assisting with training new farmers in the FMNP program as needed.

When Is a Farmer Vendor Able to Accept WIC Checks?

Once the market master has completed the “Application and Agreement” form, the farm vendors from the market may become eligible. Each farmer vendor who wishes to participate needs to submit his or her own application, meet the criteria listed below, and receive a signed agreement from the Indiana WIC director. Once the guidelines are met, the vendor will be authorized to accept WIC FMNP checks. The application is valid for a three-year period and does not limit the number of farmer vendors who may receive authorization.

A vendor must meet a few criteria to be able to accept WIC vouchers, including the following.

- Qualify as an Indiana resident, or come from a county that borders Indiana.
- Grow or produce a majority of the produce offered within their market display.
- Complete the “Application and Agreement” form for farmers.
- Attend a training session (see Training Process).
- Distinguish between locally grown and non-locally grown products within his or her market display. Only locally grown can be sold to WIC participants.
- Post a WIC provided FMNP sign within the vendor’s booth area.

Training Process

The Indiana State Department of Health has created a *Farmers’ Market Handbook* to help market masters, vendors, and farm stands with information needed to accept WIC vouchers at farmers’ markets and roadside stands. Each market master and farm vendor must complete training to obtain the right to collect WIC vouchers as payment.

Training sessions are given face to face for new farmers and market masters in the program. This face-to-face

training can be given by a market master or by the State WIC FMNP Coordinator. The training will include information on WIC program operation, on how to redeem WIC checks, the process, and the deadlines, as well as a question and answer session.

It is the vendor’s responsibility to train anyone acting on his or her behalf. Once the vendor has been through the program, he or she may receive his or her training by reading the updated handbook, which is revised annually. Most questions on WIC are answered in the handbook by contacting the State WIC FMNP coordinator.

Upon completion of the training, farm vendors will receive an identification number stamp to be used for submitting checks for payment and a sign to identify their stall as WIC voucher approved. The farm vendor is not authorized to accept WIC checks until both items are in his or her possession.

Eligible and Ineligible Foods

Only fresh, unprocessed, locally grown produce may be purchased with FMNP checks. Eligible foods should be purchased for the purpose of fresh consumption and may not be processed or prepared beyond their natural state. Locally grown is defined as a product that was grown in Indiana or in a county bordering Indiana. The list of eligible fruits and vegetables is listed under WIC Eligible and Ineligible Produce. Unusual fruits, vegetables, or edible herbs not listed may be sold with the permission of the State FMNP Coordinator.

Conclusion

A market with vendors that can accept WIC vouchers will attract a new segment of customers. Both the market and the farmer vendors must apply to have their market become eligible. More details about the program can be found at the Indiana Department of Health’s Web site <<http://www.in.gov/isdh/index.html>>, under the Public Health Programs link, or by mail:

Indiana WIC Program
2 North Meridian Street
Section 2-J
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Appendix A: WIC Eligible and Ineligible Produce

<i>Eligible Fruits</i>	<i>Eligible Vegetables</i>		<i>Ineligible Products</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples • Apricots • Blackberries • Blueberries • Cantaloupe • Cherries • Elderberries • Gooseberries • Grapes • Honeydew • Melons • Nectarines • Peaches • Pears • Persimmons • Plums • Raspberries • Strawberries • Watermelon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asparagus • Bok Choi • Beans • Beets • Lima Beans • Broccoli • Brussels Sprouts • Cabbage • Carrots • Cauliflower • Celery • Collard Greens • Corn • Cucumbers • Onions • Eggplant • Garlic • Herbs (Edible) • Kale • Mushrooms • Kohlrabi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeks • Lettuce • Mustard Greens • Okra • Onions • Parsnips • Peas • Peppers • Potatoes • Pumpkins (edible) • Radishes • Rhubarb • Rutabagas • Scallions • Spinach • Sprouts • Squash • Tomatoes • Turnips • Yams/Sweet Potatoes • Watercress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruits and vegetables not locally grown • Processed foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jellies - Jams - Syrups - Popcorn - Juices - Cider - Baked goods • Dried beans • Flowers • Honey • Eggs • Ornamental corn • Miniature pumpkins • Gourds • Nuts • Plants • Meat

Notes

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for more information on the topics discussed in this publication and for other resources to help you decide whether to start a new agriculture- or food-related business.

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