



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT FOR AGING AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

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From: Matthew Wasikiewicz
DARS Farm Market Fresh Coordinator
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Dear *Farm Market Fresh* Farmer:

As you prepare for the farmers market season, the *Farm Market Fresh* team would like to welcome you back as an Authorized Farmer with the *Farm Market Fresh* program, Virginia's Senior and WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (S/FMNP)!

Last season you completed the 2023 Farmer Application and Agreement, which continues through the 2024 market season. Therefore, you do not need to re-apply this year. Rather, **please return the Authorized Farmer Renewal Form to DARS by April 1, 2024**, to allow time for processing before the program begins on June 1, 2024.

Starting in 2024, Authorized Farmers who operate Roadside or Farm Stands that meet the following criteria, may be able to accept *Farm Market Fresh* (S/FMNP) vouchers at their Roadside Stand as well as farmers market locations. Your Roadside Stand:

1. Must have set hours of operation (set days of the week & hours open to the public);
2. Must be staffed during all operating hours;
3. Must function in addition to at least one farmers' market.

If your Roadside Stand meets the criteria above, please list the details on the Authorized Farmer Renewal Form. You must receive written confirmation of approval before collecting S/FMNP vouchers at this location. This policy change has been made to increase accessibility to produce for program participants, and to increase opportunities for farmers to accept *Farm Market Fresh* funds.

The Farmer Handbook provides you with all the information you need to successfully participate in this program, such as program rules, voucher processing procedures, and program policies; including policy changes. **Please carefully read the whole Handbook** to insure you are up to date on how this program will differ from previous years.

Especially note the following highlights:

- Page 7, the lists of **Eligible and Ineligible foods**. Not all farm products are considered eligible foods.
- Page 8, the **Self-Grown** requirement. *Farm Market Fresh* authorizes Farmers who grow and sell their own produce.
- Page 12, new **Voucher Processing** methods for farmers.
- Page 14-15, the **Locations** where you may accept the checks.
- Page 15, the **New Roadside Stand Policy**, effective in 2024.
- Page 16-19, the **Violations and Sanctions** for *Farm Market Fresh* rules and guidelines.

Interactive training on *Farm Market Fresh* rules and procedures was previously only required for first-year farmers. However, this year **all participating farmers must attend** due to changes in the check processing procedures, intended to simplify the banking process for farmers. **Training and Information Sessions will occur on the 3rd Monday of each month** from either 3-4pm or 5:30-6:30pm (on alternating months).

- March 18 (5:30 – 6:30pm)
- April 15 (3:00 – 4:00pm)
- May 20 (5:30 – 6:30pm)
- June 17 (3:00 – 4:00pm)
- July 15 (5:30 – 6:30pm)

Please visit FarmMarketFresh.org for the virtual training registration link. Farmers who need assistance attending a Training & Information Session, please call Matthew, the Farm Market Fresh Coordinator, at (804) 774-9067.

You will be mailed a copy of the fully signed Authorized Farmer Renewal form with your 2024 signs, ID stamp if needed, and ink refill if needed. You are **not** allowed to accept any *Farm Market Fresh* checks until you receive your authorized Renewal Form, signs, and the other materials **or** prior to the start-up of the program on June 1, 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact the *Farm Market Fresh* Coordinator at 804-774-9067, or sfmnp@dars.virginia.gov

You may also visit the *Farm Market Fresh* website at farmmarketfresh.org to get more information or to access a digital copy of the application, agreement, or Handbook.

Thank you for your support of ***Farm Market Fresh***. We hope to work with you to provide fresh, locally grown produce to Virginia's citizens.

Sincerely,

Matthew Wasikiewicz
Farm Market Fresh Coordinator