

2003 FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS ON THE IMPACT ON FARMERS, MARKETS AND SENIOR PARTICIPANTS

Part 1: Narrative Summary

Four surveys were conducted at the end of the 2003 Farmers Market Nutrition Program year¹:

- Farmers who participated in the program
- Managers of authorized farmers markets
- Seniors who spent farmers market checks at the markets
- Seniors who received deliveries at home or nutrition sites

The survey results indicate the Senior and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNPs) were tremendously successful at accomplishing the program goals of increasing farm sales and the consumption of fruits and vegetables. Equally important, the hundreds of comments received indicate the programs were extremely popular with farmers, market managers, and seniors, as well as with the local organizations that administer the Senior Program.

- 98% of farmers, markets, and seniors who participated want to participate again
- 81% of farmers increased sales
- 45% of farmers plan to increase production
- 94% of seniors ate more fruits and vegetables during the season
- 86% of seniors plan to eat more fruits and vegetables all year round
- 79% of market managers believe the programs increased market sales
- 76% of market managers believe the programs increased foot traffic.

Many seniors went to a farmers market for the first time, tried new fruits and vegetables, spent cash at the markets in addition to their coupons, brought family to the markets, and learned new ways to cook and safely store produce. In their comments, the seniors expressed overwhelming gratitude for the program, many because it supplemented their meager food budgets and enabled them to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, which they normally can't afford.

This quote from a local project report clearly shows the need for food assistance programs like the FMNP:

We delivered [senior farmers market] checks to Okanogan County and found the need there to be haunting. People attending the meeting swarmed the table in fear they would not get checks. We had blind people trying to sign eligibility forms and disabled persons that could not make it to the table that came to the site. We tried to assure people that their needs would be met and worked through the participants as quickly as possible.

A letter from a recipient shows what the program can mean to a low-income senior:

I just wanted to write a few lines and thank you for the senior farmers market checks that you gave to me while you were here in Omak. I am not accustomed to asking for, or accepting anything I

¹ WIC participants were not surveyed this year but have been in the past.

have not earned, but I must tell you that these checks have been a God send. I used my last one today. I have been able to enjoy a variety of fruits and vegetables that I never would have without the checks.

My parents (and I) went through the great depression and I learned to make do with what I have - however small that may be. I could have survived with no assistance, but I am sure I am healthier because of your help. Thank you so much!

Here are some representative comments from farmers and market managers:

I think this program is the best tax dollars spent. It gets the people to the best quality produce, at the lowest prices, with the knowledge that this is where the money is going. It supports small family farms and it supports and creates community... It's the best Health Insurance you can give anybody. It should be everywhere Fresh Local produce is being sold and only local within the state.

The senior check program was one of my highlights of the year at the farmers market. I met lots of new people and expanded my customer base. The seniors were so enthusiastic about the chance to try varieties of vegetables they don't see in the store. I think it got them more interested in eating fresh food. It also gave them a reason to get out and interact with the rest of the community. I hope the newspapers cover this program. It is one of the best things our state has ever done! You definitely have my vote to keep this program going and growing!

We would like to see this program expand to all areas. Many seniors are on a fixed income and their income drops as they retire. This leaves them unable to purchase nutritional foods, adding to a decline in their health. The WIC program is a positive step to combatting hunger in seniors and families with young children.

In a year of phenomenal growth, the SFMNP was a contributing factor in expanding our customer base. Overall, a very positive experience.

I really like it and the seniors are often among the staunchest supporters of our market.

We all felt good about the seniors learning to eat new veggies. We would definitely participate again.

My biggest comment is that the program is too small, doesn't impact enough people.

Please take time to read more of the comments in Part 3, starting on page 6.

Part 2: Responses to Selected Questions on the Impact of the FMNPs

Farmers (221 responses, 50% response rate)

1. Does participating in the program(s) increase your sales? yes 81%
2. Do WIC/Senior customers continue to shop at the market, even without checks?
yes 41%
not sure 49%
3. Did the WIC/Senior FMNPs change your farming or marketing practices in any of the following ways?
 - I became more active in the organization or operation of a farmers market 26%
 - I am increasing my fruit and/or vegetable production 45%
 - I am growing a wider variety of fruits/veg to sell at farmers markets 40%
 - I increased the number of hours and/or days that I sell at farmers markets 25%
 - I changed my display signs to make it easier to identify food types or prices 44%
 - I am doing more nutrition education with farmers market customers 36%
(e.g., recipes, product samples, advice on how to select, store or prepare fresh produce)
 - I increased the acreage I am cultivating. 18%
 - I hired more employees. 9%
4. Would you recommend these programs to other farmers in your area? yes 89%
5. Would you like to see these programs expand? yes 73%
not sure 21%

Market Managers (32 responses, almost 100% response rate—some managers manage multiple markets)

1. Do you believe the SFMNP increased your market foot traffic? 76%
2. Do you believe the SFMNP increased overall market sales? 79%
3. Does your market want to participate in the SFMNP in 2004? 100%

SFMNP Check Recipients (449 responses, 18% response rate)

1. Because of the Senior Farmers Market Program, I or my family...
 - went to a farmers market for the first time 54%
 - ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual 94%
 - plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round 86%
 - learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables 54%
 - will continue to shop at farmers markets, even without coupons to spend 76%
 - learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables 52%
 - bought a fresh fruit or vegetable that I had never tried before 66%

2. While you were at the farmers market, did you spend any money in addition to your Farmers Market Checks?

| | |
|--|---------|
| | yes 74% |
|--|---------|

3. How did the quality of fruits and vegetables at the farmers market compare to their quality at your regular grocery store?

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| | better 79% |
| | about the same 20% |
| | worse 0% |

4. After you spent all of your farmers market checks, did you go back to shop at the market?

| | |
|--|---------|
| | yes 61% |
|--|---------|

5. Did you receive any educational materials about fruits and vegetables, such as a newsletter, recipes, tips on storing and cooking?

| | |
|--|---------|
| | yes 51% |
| If yes, was the information useful to you? | yes 89% |
| Did you learn anything new? | yes 82% |
| Did you use any of the recipes? | yes 73% |

6. Would you like to participate in this program again?

| | |
|--|---------|
| | yes 99% |
|--|---------|

Delivery Recipients (270)

1. Because of the Senior Farmers Market Program, I or my family...

| | |
|---|-----|
| ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual | 89% |
| plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round | 80% |
| learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables | 71% |
| learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables | 64% |
| ate a fresh fruit or vegetable that I had never tried before | 72% |

2. How did the quality of fruits and vegetables you received compare to their quality at your regular grocery store?

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| | better 56% |
| | about the same 44% |
| | worse 2% |

3. When deliveries stopped, did you eat fewer fruits and vegetables?

| | |
|--|---------|
| | yes 74% |
|--|---------|

4. If yes, is it because (check all that apply)...

| | |
|---|-----|
| fruits and vegetables are too expensive | 75% |
| the fruits and vegetables at stores near me are poor quality so I don't buy | 21% |
| there are no stores near me that sell fresh fruits and vegetables | 12% |
| I don't think I need them | 7% |

5. Did you receive any educational materials about fruits and vegetables, such as a newsletter, recipes, tips on storing and cooking?

If yes, was the information useful to you? yes 91%

Did you learn anything new? yes 84%

Did you use any of the recipes? yes 70%

6. Would you like to participate in this program again? yes 97%

Part 3: Selected Comments From Survey Respondents

Farmer Comments

I think this program is the best tax dollars spent. It gets the people to the best quality produce, at the lowest prices, with the knowledge that this is where the money is going. It supports small family farms and it supports and creates community... It's the best Health Insurance you can give anybody. It should be everywhere Fresh Local produce is being sold and only local within the state.

Expansion would mean additional business for us.

This is a great program!! Seniors should have access to good, healthy, organic and sustainably raised, local produce. They talk to friends and relatives and bring more people to the market.

We would like to see this program expand to all areas. Many seniors are on a fixed income and their income drops as they retire. This leaves them unable to purchase nutritional foods, adding to a decline in their health. The WIC program is a positive step to combatting hunger in seniors and families with young children.

I love the program. I don't like the constantly wondering if the program is going to be cut! We battle the legislature every year in order to keep this program. It just doesn't seem fair in light of all the money that is given away for other programs.

The senior check program was one of my highlights of the year at the farmers market. I met lots of new people and expanded my customer base. The seniors were so enthusiastic about the chance to try varieties of vegetables they don't see in the store. I think it got them more interested in eating fresh food. It also gave them a reason to get out and interact with the rest of the community. The program this year was much easier for me and the seniors than last years when they had to sign each check. I hope the newspapers cover this program. It is one of the best things our state has ever done! You definitely have my vote to keep this program going and growing!

Need to add more markets, like Tacoma and Proctor markets in Tacoma. How do I get signed up to use these programs at my farm stand in Tacoma?

It's great to give back to seniors a little support because they have given much in their life span - Inflation of food-medical & medicines hit them the hardest.

A government program that works!! yes, let's expand it!

Increased nutrition awareness equals increased organic farming equals win/win for everyone!

These programs benefit all who participate- the farmer gets more business- the public is educated, seniors and other get high quality produce that is good for them.

It allows low income people to come and get healthy foods at their local farmers market.

I have spoken with many people who make healthier food choices when they shop at the farmer's market. People often try new vegetables as well, and form better eating habits when the checks are specifically for fruits and vegetables. This is an excellent program. It provides opportunities for people to better their diets and the diets of their children. It also supports local agriculture, which is invaluable to the local economy.

While the program provides a little extra sales revenue for me, I particularly like that it helps mothers, children and seniors eat more fruits and vegetables than they might otherwise consume.

The more checks the more I make and the better product those people receive.

There are so many people in our area who could use a little extra help, who may not get much in the way of fresh fruits and veggies otherwise.

Everyone needs to eat fresh fruits and veggies more and farmers markets provide locally grown produce with higher quality and better prices than grocers.

It is a purely beneficial program. Customers are not buying candy, chips, cakes etc. Local needy people are learning to use healthy food and local farmers are benefiting.

The customer are so appreciative of access to fresh food. My sales increased a lot.

What happened was that the people using the checks found they had more food for their checks. After a couple sales our volume of fruit took off. We sold approximately these times as much as when we didn't do this. We also made the prices so that a \$2.00 check bought this amount of fruit or vegetables.

The need is there & it increases my customer base.

I would like these programs expand, because many farmers markets open around may and there's no WIC checks support show up at that time of the year.

I think that this program helps less fortunate families and seniors have a better diet of fruits and vegetables that they might live better and be healthier people.

The prices of fresh fruit and vegetables are getting too high. I can't afford to buy them myself.

I previously participated in WIC at another farmer's market and would like to see my current market be able to be part of the WUC program to provide fresh fruits and veggies to low income children and mothers.

They only had senior WIC on the Skokomish reservation here in Mason County. It needs to be more widespread!

I would like the program to include Tonasket and Oroville. We have so many seniors and low income families in our area who could use the benefit from it.

Makes most sense of any low-income supportive programs.

Just want to stress that it's important for the young and old to have healthy fresh produce.

Market Manager Comments

Please relate any feedback you received from seniors using the checks:

They wished they had more to spend!

GREAT appreciation from our senior customers about having this option available in Oak Harbor.

The consensus is that both seniors and growers were happy with the results of our participation in the program.

That it was about time the seniors got a break. Seniors have nutritional needs to.

The few who picked them up were extremely appreciative and expressed tremendous gratitude for the program.

Very positive comments about the opportunity to buy fresh from the farmer. Many seniors also enjoyed reminiscing about gardens they grew.

Seniors loved it. Only concern was being able to get vegetables on time when there was a run on certain ones, like tomatoes. Some have trouble walking quickly enough to beat the crowds.

Those who participated were very pleased and gave them a reason to come to the market more frequently.

Seniors seem to enjoy the farmers market experience very much. Think this may be a benefit in addition to the nutritional concept.

Seniors loved it, they only had concerns that they could not sprint to the stalls to get their

vegetables before everybody else did.

Please share your thoughts overall about the SFMNP:

In a year of phenomenal growth, the SFMNP was a contributing factor in expanding our customer base. Overall, a very positive experience.

I really like it and the seniors are often among the staunchest supporters of our market.

We all felt good about the seniors learning to eat new veggies. We would definitely participate again.

My biggest comment is that the program is too small, doesn't impact enough people.

Make the program bigger.

My growers were very happy to be able to improve the opportunity of seniors to get fresh fruits and vegetables. We saw more seniors and ones who had not been to the market before. It was a very positive program for us. We would very much like to be part of the WIC program.

It's a great idea! Now the seniors from the retirement centers come in vans, get to shop, visit. It's a great social event for them.

It was a very positive experience for everyone, I want to see more of this kind of community-connection experience and also I like to see quality of life improved for seniors, and this program is very much a part of that.

Positive-- it brought a new demographic to the market. They weren't big spenders, but the diversity was noticed and appreciated by the community.

This program was great for our seniors and many of the other community members remarked on the positive values it has. It was also great for the vendors to hear the senior life experiences. Many of our seniors have had farming experiences in their past.

The program is great for both seniors and markets. I believe the SFMNP is an excellent idea. Unfortunately, our market did not receive any of the checks, due to a lack of infrastructure in the Stevens County area.

It was an overall positive thing. Non-senior customers thought it was a good thing, too.

It worked well for us. There are a lot of low income seniors in Clallam County who've reaped a world of benefits from the program. My theory is, if it's not broken, don't try to fix it.

The Senior program was greatly beneficial to the market and for farmer participants. My only complaint is that while we were very easily signed up for it and are highly eligible for it, it was not funded in our area. All of the money instead going to Vancouver. This was extremely disappointing to say the least. I sincerely hope that we won't be left out next year.

I liked the SFMNP and thought that it added to the vitality of Downtown Everett and Edmonds very much. We like playing a role in the community and SFMNP adds to that.

I think the program is very popular with the community and vendors also think the program is a very good one for seniors.

We did not benefit from it as there were no checks issued in our county. We do think it would be a viable program if there were dollars available in our area. We are adjacent to two senior housing sites. We had the seniors here who would qualify but were told they could only redeem their checks in Olympia!!

It was wonderful! Please work with the banks and educate them on accepting the vouchers from the farmers. The farmers were charged large fees and complained about cashing the checks.

Check Recipient Comments

These are only 34 out of 239 comments from seniors who used the Farmers Market checks. All but one or two comments were positive.

The program was good & help me a lot. I really appreciated it very much. Thanks

I hope you nice people will send me coupons or checks the year 2004. Thank you very much

It's a great program. It was very beneficial for us as our income \$564 for family Looking forward to participate in this program next spring. Thank you very much for this wonderful program

It was a great help to not only get food supplemented but get to buy healthy fruits & vegetables.

It's a very good advantage to have fresh fruit & vegies that I otherwise couldn't afford.

I get only a small amount of food stamps for my food. I was especially happy to get fresh food & could not have afforded without the farmers market checks. I hope your senior market program can be continued. The Tonasket farmers market did not have opportunity to take part in the senior market program. One farmer gave me some things. They are my neighbors & knew I needed what they could give me. Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

This program was so helpful to my husband & I. We had an extremely stressful economic year due to the fact that my unemployment ran out and our main source of income for about 3 months was my husband social security check of \$773. Our grocery budget was \$20 a week and we were able to augment that with food in our freezer and government surplus food. The farmers Market checks were something entirely different however. I had recently been diagnosed with diabetes and these checks gave me the opportunity to purchase the fresh fruits and vegetables to build up my health and that of my husband. I would like to know if nuts and garlic could be added to the list as healthful additions if the program is continued.

Thank you We were able to eat more fruits & vegetables. This program helped the Farmer's as well as us. Helping the farmers helped the state, the county & town.

It is a great program without which I would not be able to afford as much fresh foods. I do hope it will continue. Many of my low-income friends feel the same. Thank you so much

It was a God sent to me as I couldn't afford the stores prices.

Approve of this type program for helping low income persons.

The farmers market in Mansen does not take the coupons so had to go elsewhere to use them would be so much more convenient to be able to use them locally.

The check came in handy when you don't have money and when you don't have a car. This farmers market is a block from where I live, so I took my little basket off to the market I went. I want to thank you again for the checks.

I purchased fruit and vegetables for canning and winter storage.

Really appreciated it. Need more places to buy to participate couldn't get much fruit. Need fruit stands to be in program

It was great. I was not eating nearly enough fruits and veggies because I couldn't afford them. I feel healthier because of your help. Thanks so much

There were lovely peaches at the market. I purchased several boxes and canned them. I have been eating them 2 or 3 times a week. They taste wonderful. I wouldn't have gotten them without the coupons. Thanks

It is fantastic! Keep it up!

We've always grown a garden (except the last 5 years) I'm now in a wheelchair and my wife can't do it alone. Se we've been suffering for lack of fresh vegetables. Thank you for restoring some of them to us. Old people on Social Security have a very very hard time making it. You sure helped-others just talk about it. Thank you

It was nice to see people going out to shop but also to visit and even had entertainment for us at the market.

I like the program of course having had access to a garden all my life. Now a Sr. in a Sr. housing apt. It really helps, especially the fresh farm produce is so fresh and a person can keep it longer. The in-store produce has to be harvested too early for the shipping process to really reach the taste of maturity.
Thank You

I hope this program is available next year it really helped me alot.

This program is a "God send" for those of us with low social security incomes. I am alone so I did not use all of the checks that were sent to me. Weeks ago I returned 10 of the checks so that others could use them before the season ended. I had forgotten about these last 2 checks. All of the vendors were so nice and everyone said they were happy to participate in this program. The produce was top quality and I was able to purchase enough produce for every day and not have to ration every apple, peach, tomato, string bean, etc. I hope this program will be available next year. Thanks for all you do for those of us on low incomes Many blessings for the holidays and the new year.

The checks certainly helped me and I do like vegetables but with limited income I don't usually buy as many fruits and vegetables and should eat. Thank You

I thoroughly appreciated the coupons as with diabetes and cancer I am supposed to eat a lot of fresh vegetables and fruits which I always have but on a limited income is very hard to afford at times now that I am no longer able to grow my own garden.

The program was wonderful. I live only 2 blocks from the farmers market, and this summer was my first time there. Your program was a great incentive. The vendors were very nice & helpful. I enjoyed the music. The produce was ripe and good. I was very impressed. Thank you I hope we can do it again in 2004

Thank you to those who gave the money for this.

I love the Farmer's Market. I've been going overtime I could since I found out there was one. Thank You so much for the checks they helped my grocery bill. Thanks again. They were very much appreciated.

The fruits and vegetables were fresh and delicious. I would like to participate again. After my checks were spent I stillwent and spent money to buy such fresh and delicious fruits & vegetables.

Your program was very helpful to me, and I thank you lots, for one thing I got to have more fresh fruit and vegetables then if I bought them from my monthly checks, and another important thing was I got out and met some very nice people and enjoyed the trip. As you see I'm unable to walk. I use an Electric power chair, so I don't get out as much as I used too, so I really enjoyed going to the Farmer's Market. May God Bless you each one as I do and thank you very much you are in my prayers.

We live about two blocks from the market and we go every Saturday morning, it's great fun. I will soon be 84 and in a retirement home part time. My husband does most of the cooking. Thank you for the help which has been very refreshing.

I have gone to the farmer's market(s) all my life. This one since it first started, it's good. I taught my wife a Seattle girl of 84 yrs. to like okra & fruits. Thanks to you folks and the people at the North Bend Senior Center for making the coupons available.

It's hard for me to get out to shop, especially in hot weather, but i was very happy with the things I'd bought. I can't carry things, but the Shelton farmers put things in my car cheerfully. They didn't act "weird" about the coupons, and were very nice overall. I'd never been there before--I went there as the Oly market is too big and crowded for me now. Thank you very much!

Delivery Recipient Comments

Great program.

Thank you! We looked forward to each delivery - It was wonderful

I really enjoyed all that was given to me. I thought the program went real well. I miss them when it came to and end. Looking forward to nest year. Thanks to all.

I enjoyed the program and eagerly anticipated each delivery delightful goodies, also quite pleased that the produce was all grown in Washington.

I think this is a wonderful program I look forward to it very grateful I wish it could continue longer.

Thank the public market for their great produce.

These were the best fruits and vegetables I've had since my mother's back yard garden.

It seemed the vegetables & fruits lasted longer than the ones I buy at the super market. Wish we could get them all winter long.

This program has been such a blessing & I use all my vegetables somehow. This program gets a A+ I love the fruits & berries, also please continue & teach other areas to do their program likewise.

Someone is doing a fine job.

Wonderful!

It was very good .

Appreciate all the extra work everyone did to get them to our home. Thank you

Thank you for this help. I'm berry grateful for this program. Is hard sometimes to buy this products in our short budget.

I liked the program and think it should continue.

Thank You! Tried veggies I had never heard it was exciting like Christmas I can't walk very good so don't do much exploring at store. Some too expensive.