



NYS FreshConnect Checks Program VENDOR RULES AND PROCEDURES 2025

Purpose: FreshConnect aims to expand access to fresh food in underserved communities to improve the diets of individuals in those communities and foster economic development. The FreshConnect Checks Program (FCC) was designed to increase the purchasing power of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) customers while supporting local farmers, farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets in New York State. In 2014, FreshConnect Checks expanded to include Checks to Veterans, Servicemembers, and their immediate families through the Department of Veterans' Services and participating local county Veterans offices. In 2023, the Fresh2You Initiative was introduced, doubling SNAP benefits at farmers' markets to further support New Yorkers facing food insecurity.

Training: Training for vendors is strongly recommended. The online pre-recorded webinar can be found here: agriculture.ny.gov/programtraining. Submitting the survey at the end of the webinar is proof of training. Markets without at least one trained staff member will not be provided with coupons.

Definitions may be found in Appendix A.

A. Coupons & How they are Distributed to Customers:

1. FreshConnect Checks (FCC) are \$2 coupons issued to SNAP customers and Veteran communities.
2. Farmers' markets that operate a central SNAP EBT token program are eligible locations to distribute FCC to SNAP customers January – December.
3. NYS Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) and Veteran Service Agencies (VSAs) distribute coupons May – November through participating locations.

B. Eligibility for Vendors:

1. Vendors must sell SNAP-eligible foods at a New York State farmers' market or farm stand location, as defined in Appendix A.
2. At a farmers' market, vendors must be registered with the market and operating a stall or table in the defined market area during market hours.
 - a. Vendors may not accept coupons outside of market hours or a market's defined area.

C. Accepting Coupons:

1. Accepting FCC is encouraged and voluntary. There is no vendor enrollment process to participate.
2. Eligible vendors may accept coupons at any farmers' market or farm stand located in New York State and where they sell SNAP eligible foods.
3. Vendors may accept FCC:
 - a. for any SNAP-eligible food item (see Appendix A).
 - b. with other payment types, including SNAP, coupon programs, cash, etc.
 - c. until close of business December 31 of each coupon's year.
 - d. at an eligible farmers' market or their own eligible farm stand.
4. Vendors may not
 - a. give change or exchange FCC for any other currency or tender.
 - b. accept coupons beyond their expiration date.
 - c. accept coupons outside of a farmers' market's hours or its defined area.
 - d. accept coupons at any retail or wholesale grocery stores, bodegas, or similar locations.
5. Training through Department's webinar is strongly recommended. The webinar is on the Department's website at agriculture.ny.gov/programtraining.
6. Vendors that elect to participate should train and read the current FCC Vendor Rules and Procedures (this document) before accepting coupons.

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D. Redeeming the Accepted Coupons:

1. New for 2025, there will be the option for vendors to use a mobile app to scan coupons for reimbursement.
 - a. Vendors and market operators must sign up to enroll for the mobile app at forms.office.com/g/J9Jjcvhd8a and take a training.
2. Coupons for reimbursement may be submitted by mobile app or by mail starting February 1, 2025.
 - b. Submissions must be postmarked or scanned in no later than January 15, 2026.
 - i. If this is a date the post office is closed, submissions must be sent before that date.
 - c. Coupons are mailed to a new location starting in 2025:
RPS Processing, 99 Eastlake Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850
3. Reimbursement instructions are on the back of each coupon as a reference.
4. Markets may offer to redeem coupons on behalf of vendors as an option and not a requirement.
5. Coupons must be marked or 'canceled' before submitting for redemption.
 - a. Vendors who are enrolled in the FMNP must use their FMNP stamp.
 - b. Vendors not participating in the FMNP must sign or initial the coupon.
 - c. Unmarked coupons may not be paid.
6. Vendor may choose payment as direct deposit or check.
 - a. Checks will be mailed to the contact on the Redemption Form and may take up to four weeks for the vendor to receive.

Contact Information:

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets:
Farmers' Market Team

Email: farmersmarkets@agriculture.ny.gov
Phone: (518) 457-7076 x. 1

For more program information, visit agriculture.ny.gov/farmersmarkets.



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APPENDIX A. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this FreshConnect Checks Program, the below terms are defined as follows:

Farmers' Market: any building, structure, or place used or intended to be used by two or more producers for the direct sale of various farm and food products from producers to consumers.

Farm Stand: any building, structure, or place used or intended to be used by a) one sole producer or b) a non-profit acting on behalf of one or more producers for the direct sale of various farm and food products from producers to consumers; May include operations also known as "mobile markets" or "farm markets" which are primarily supporting producers of farm and food product.

Producer: any person or persons who grow, produce, or cause to be grown or produced any farm or food products.

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – the food benefit program of the USDA and administered by NYS OTDA.

SNAP eligible foods: Edible food items permitted for purchase using SNAP benefits. These include, but are not limited to: Fruits, vegetables, beef, fish, poultry, milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, honey, maple syrup, seeds and plants that produce food, apple cider, juice, bread, pasta, etc.

A more complete list and explanation can be found online: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/food-determinations-eligible-foods>.

SNAP ineligible foods. Items not permitted to be purchased with SNAP benefits. These include but are not limited to: Alcohol, Hot or Prepared foods that are "ready-to-eat"; seeds or plants that do not produce food, vitamins, supplements, pet food, cigarettes, etc. A more complete list and explanation can be found online: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/food-determinations-eligible-foods>.

Vendor: any person(s), or business selling at a farmers' market or farm stand for the purposes of selling items to the public consumer.