



Montana WIC Program Farm Direct Enrolling Farmers

Montana is one of two states in our Region with a program which allows the use of the Fruit & Vegetable Benefit with authorized Farmers. We are excited about the opportunity this provides for our program participants as well as the Farmers in our state. Farm Direct encourages WIC participants to purchase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables statewide - whether they are in Missoula and shop with an authorized Farmer within a Farmers' Market, are in Glasgow and shop at an authorized Farmers' roadside stand, or pick cherries at an authorized Farmers' Flathead Valley farm. No matter where your Agency is located, the Farm Direct Program can work for you.

The Farm Direct Program combines the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program with the WIC Program in a way that authorizes individual Farmers to accept both WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program Benefits (FMNP) and WIC Fruit & Vegetable Benefits (FVB) with a single Agreement. If your Local Agency has a current Farmers' Market Nutrition Program contract with the state, the FMNP benefits will be distributed in the same manner as previous years. Please note - a Local Agency does not have to have a Farmers' Market Nutrition Program contract to participate in Farm Direct – any Local Agency can participate and here is a look at how it can benefit your community.

- WIC participants will be able to redeem both the FMNP benefits and the FVB's with authorized Farmers. They will have a wonderful array of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables to choose from to feed their families, which may help reduce some of the barriers to a healthy diet that many low income families experience.
- Participating in the Farm Direct Program provides Farmers with additional sales opportunities, promotes the production of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, and helps support the local economy.

Who Qualifies for the Farm Direct Program?

A farmer must meet and maintain the following selection criteria and be prepared to follow WIC benefit redemption procedures. These are detailed in the Farm Direct Handbook and a brief outline of the selection criteria are listed below.

1. Attend Face-to-Face training for the first year of the agreement and annual training for every subsequent year of the three year Agreement.
2. Self grow 60 % of the produce offered for sale.
3. Farmers are not allowed to operate another farmer's booth/stall/stand or booth space.
4. Sell only locally grown, eligible fresh fruits & vegetables to WIC participants as listed on the Farm Direct Eligible Food List in exchange for WIC benefits.
5. No conflict of interest exists.
6. Positive compliance history is maintained.

What are the steps to enroll a farmer in the Farm Direct Program?

1. If a farmer is interested in becoming authorized and they **meet the selection criteria**, provide them with copies of **the Farm Direct Eligible Food List and Handbook for review**. Once their questions have been answered, have **them complete and sign the application**. Once the application is complete, review it to be sure everything is filled in, signed and that they meet the basic set of requirements.
 - Please take a look at the three definitions on the application that help farmers figure out if they might qualify for the Farm Direct Program. If a farmers feels they meet these requirements, they are to initial in the box provided.
 - **Farmer** - Farmer means an individual authorized by DPHHS to sell locally grown, eligible fruits and vegetables to Montana WIC participants at farmers' market and/or roadside stands. No wholesalers.



Montana WIC Program Farm Direct Enrolling Farmers

- **Eligible Foods** - Fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables as listed on the Farm Direct Food List.
 - **Locally Grown** - Produce grown only within Montana borders, or counties adjacent to Montana borders where the farmer is selling the produce.
 - Once a Farmer has Farm Direct Authorization, they may sell their eligible produce at any location within the state. They may have multiple stands, stalls or booths in different locations, as long as they meet the produce requirements and have their sign posted.
2. If they meet the requirements outlined on the Application, **conduct the training**, using the Log Form, Farm Direct Handbook and Initial Training Agenda to guide you. Have the Farmer complete and **sign the Initial Training Documentation Form**.
 3. Once training is complete, **the farmer needs to read and sign the Agreement**. Farmers may not accept WIC benefits until their Agreement is fully executed – meaning it has been signed by DPHHS and the authorized farmer has received their Farm Direct stamp and packet from the State Office.
 4. **Please send the signed Application, Initial Training Documentation and Agreement to the State Office for processing**. The documents are reviewed and processed or reviewed and denied. The Farmer whose Application and Agreement have been denied, will receive a letter stating such. The Farmer whose Application and Agreement have been approved, will be submitted to DPHHS for authorized signatures. Incomplete documents will result in a delay in the authorization process.
 5. **Once the agreement process is complete, the State WIC Office will send the Farmer copies** of the signed documents, their Farm Direct stamp, signs, and a Training Guide so they can refresh their own memories and train their staff, Benefit Redemption Guides and more Food Lists. Each Authorized Farmer's information will be put into M-SPIRIT and a **Farm Direct Authorized Farmer Location List will be made available through the Montana WIC Program newsletter**.

Federal Requirements state that at least 10% of all authorized Farmers be monitored each year. Monitoring will be conducted by the Local Agency which has signed the farmer up for the program and the State Office will notify each Agency as to which farmers need to be monitored.

Each spring, before the market season begins, each authorized Farm Direct Farmer is required to participate in annual training, which will be conducted by the Agency which enrolled the farmer. Supporting documentation will be sent to each Agency so training can be conducted. Upon completion, all signed training documentation will be sent to the State Office for processing. Farmers not participating in annual training will be in violation of their Agreement and they will be terminated from the Farm Direct Program.

Please contact the State Office if you have questions or you are interested in authorizing farmers in your area for the Farm Direct Program.