

Accepting Food Stamps and Other Forms of Public Assistance

The [Food and Nutrition Service](#) (FNS) of the USDA increases food security and reduces hunger by providing children, seniors and low-income people with increased access to food and nutrition education. Farmers and farmers' markets can participate in FNS programs in three ways.

The most widespread of these programs is the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, which provides supplemental assistance to eligible families with young children. WIC program information can be found by beginning at the [FNS homepage](#) and then clicking on WIC/Farmers Markets and then on Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs. State agencies authorize farmers and farmers' markets to accept WIC coupons. The Florida state contact is Carl Penn (850) 487-4322. A list of all state contacts can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/menu/contacts/farm/farm.HTM>

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program also includes the relatively new Senior Nutrition Pilot Program. Like the WIC program, the Seniors program is administered through state agencies. For more information contact Holly Greuling (850) 414-2337.

Finally, a few farmers' markets have participated in a pilot program to accept food stamp benefit with the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system. Currently, 80% of food stamp benefits are issued via EBT. To get an update on EBT and farmers' markets, begin at the FNS homepage, and click on the EBT heading under Food Stamps and then on EBT & Farmers' Markets.

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