



Media Release

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February 11 sign-up event allows farmer's markets to join federal food program and accept electronic benefits transfer cards

Farmer's markets and direct marketing farmers across Arkansas have a grant opportunity to increase their customer base and sales through a first come, first serve grant from the Arkansas Department of Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The grant will allow these vendors to accept electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, at their locations.

To help speed up the approval process to accept EBT, representatives of the USDA will be in Little Rock for a "Sign-Up" day from 1 to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, February 11, 2015, for these Arkansas farmers to get a SNAP retailer number in just one day instead of the usual 45-60 days. The sign up event will be held in the main auditorium of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University in Little Rock.

Grant money is available to these businesses in Arkansas to purchase the point-of-sale (POS) equipment needed for them to accept the EBT cards used in SNAP. These funds are for farmer's markets and direct marketing farmers who are not currently participating in SNAP. Those vendors interested in applying for the grant must first be approved to accept SNAP EBT payments. The grant covers the cost of a POS device, start-up fees, and the monthly connectivity fee for one year, up to \$1000 per Farmer or Market. A link to the Request for Applications can be found on the DHS website at: <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/Pages/procurement.aspx>

There are approximately 259 farmer's markets in Arkansas; however only about 30 currently accept EBT cards. The cards allow a purchaser to use their SNAP benefits to buy fresh fruits, vegetables, and food producing plants and seeds at a market or from a farmer.

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The ability of markets and farmers to accept SNAP benefits is a win-win opportunity for both these businesses and SNAP recipients.

- SNAP recipients get increased access to healthier and fresher foods;
- farmers and markets increase their customer base, and thus, their sales; and
- Participation encourages consumption of locally-grown food.

“We would like to see every farmer’s market and direct-marketing farmer in Arkansas accept SNAP benefits. It is a good way for SNAP recipients to eat fresh, locally-grown food and provide a boost in income to these businesses all over the state,” said Michele Rodgers, DHS SNAP Outreach Manager.

Documentation to bring to Sign-Up Day:

- Working Email Address- one that is checked at least once a week
- A copy of, or we can scan a driver’s license or other valid government identification
- A copy of, or we can scan a social security card for the person/s who will be listed on the SNAP-Authorized-Retailer application
- A copy of, or we can scan a copy of a business license if you have one, if you do not have a business License this will not apply to you
- A bank account number where you will receive the electronic payments from sales made
- A cancelled check from the same account if you use checks.

Those who are interested in the program but who cannot attend the Sign up day, can apply on the USDA website, [Learn About SNAP Benefits at Farmers' Markets | Food and Nutrition Service](#), and follow Step One “to get licensed by FNS”.

For more information about the grant opportunity please visit any of these web sites or call Michele Rodgers with the Arkansas Department of Human Services at 501- 682-8288 for more information.

[Arkansas Department of Human Services](#)
[University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service](#)
[Arkansas Agriculture Department](#)