

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program



Executive Summary

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to participants of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and aims to expand the awareness, use of, and sales of farmers' markets. FMNPs currently operate in 40 states and Washington, D.C. Missouri participates in the Seniors FMNP program, but does not participate in the WIC FMNP program. [SB 525](#) would change the Missouri Seniors FMNP (MoSFMNP) to Missouri FMNP and expand eligibility to low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children under 5 years of age who are at nutritional risk to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers.

Highlights

- **Approximately 13% of Missourians earn below the federal poverty line.** Poverty disproportionately affects women and ethnic minorities.
- **Food insecurity** (low accessibility and affordability to purchase food) **affects approximately 15% of Missourians.**
- **Authorized FMNP farmers increase their revenue through accessibility and affordability.** Additionally, FMNPs may reduce costs associated with energy use, food transportation, and increase entrepreneurial skills and opportunities.
- **WIC FMNP participants increase fruit and vegetable consumption in addition to saving costs compared to shopping at grocery stores.**

Limitations

- The vouchers are intended to increase fruit and vegetable consumption; vouchers are not to purchase items such as processed or baked goods from farmer's markets. This may be inconsistently enforced throughout the state.
- The funds provided do not cover administrative costs to the state. There are no available reports indicating how participating in the WIC FMNP program could increase the cost of existing supplemental assistance programs.

Research Background

Poverty in Missouri

Approximately 13% of Missourians earn below the federal poverty line, the minimum level of income needed to purchase life necessities; 5.7% of Missourians earn less than 50% of the federal poverty line.¹ For a family of four, a gross income of \$26,200 would be considered in poverty.¹ Poverty disproportionately affects women and ethnic minorities.¹ In 2018, 14.3% of women had incomes below the poverty line compared to 11.0% of men.¹ Twenty-six percent of the African American population is living in poverty compared to 11% of the White population.¹ Furthermore, 39.1% of African American children live in poverty compared to 13.9% of White

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children.¹ Children living in poverty experience hunger, poor health outcomes, instability, and are more likely to experience low academic achievement, obesity, behavioral problems, and social and emotional development difficulties.² These difficulties have lasting, lifetime effects that are tracked into adulthood.²

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program: Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Women participants of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) who are pregnant or have children under the age of five are automatically eligible for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). These individuals earn less than 130% of the poverty line, which is \$16,588 per year for one adult. For the average family of four, this is \$34,060.¹ Additionally, households that earn less than 185% of the poverty level may also be eligible for WIC benefits.³ Data from 2019 reports 106,733 women and children received WIC assistance in Missouri.¹ WIC voucher allowances are dependent upon the woman (pregnant, post-partum, breastfeeding, not breastfeeding), the number of children, and their needs. In 2017, the average monetary assistance Missouri WIC participants received each month was \$34.36.⁴

Food insecurity (low accessibility and affordability to purchase foods) affects approximately 15% of Missourians; consequently, this can negatively impact dietary patterns.⁵ The purpose of supplemental nutrition assistance programs is to improve the diets of low-income households by increasing food access and food purchasing ability. However, differential access to nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables, is related to poor diet quality for individuals of socio-economic disparities; this is due to cost and neighborhood food environments. Easy access to high-calorie and readily available processed foods and beverages is a major contributing factor to the development of obesity and chronic diseases when compared to high income households.^{6,7}

Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP)

The FMNP was created to provide fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to WIC participants, and to expand the awareness, use of, and sales at farmers' markets. The goals for the program include 1) increase farmer market accessibility in poverty-stricken areas and 2) create new customers who can access farmers' markets. In short, the FMNP is administered by cash grants through a federal and state partnership; food costs are 100% covered by the federal government whereas administrative costs are covered by the state. FMNPs currently operate in 40 states (including AR, IA, IL, KY, NE, TN) and Washington, D.C.⁸ In order to sell produce as a part of this program, farmers need to apply and be approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).⁹ In 2017, 16,815 farmers, 3,312 farmers' markets and 2,367 roadside stands were authorized in the U.S. to accept FMNP vouchers and resulted in about \$17 million in revenue to farmers.¹⁰ Additional farmer-level impacts include a reduction in energy costs associated with food transportation and increased entrepreneurial skills and opportunities.¹¹ However, an unintended challenge for participating farmers may be enforcing the intent to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and to not permit purchases of items such as processed or baked goods. This may be inconsistently enforced throughout the state.

Survey data indicate that FMNP encourages participants to shop at farmer’s markets, increases fruit and vegetable consumption, and saves money relative to shopping at grocery stores. The Wisconsin FMNP program reported approximately 60% of WIC participants who received their first FMNP checks went to a farmer’s market for the first time in 2007. This suggests the creation of new customers for farmers’ markets.¹² Survey data in North Carolina indicate similar voucher use (66%) with 88% of survey respondents indicating that shopping at farmers’ markets increased their fruit and vegetable consumption.¹³ Additionally, use of farmers’ markets resulted in 17% savings when compared to purchasing produce at grocery stores.¹⁴ However, accessibility to farmers’ markets may be an issue and vouchers may go unused if markets are too far away (such as in food deserts) from participants that would use this program.

Missouri Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program

Currently, Missouri participates in the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (MoSFMNP), a separate federal program which provides vouchers to low-income seniors to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. Vouchers must be used to purchase Missouri-grown produce from Missouri Farmers’ Markets. Eligible low-income seniors (60 years and older) receive ten \$5 vouchers or \$50 dollars, annually. MoSFMNP operates in 45 counties; these markets are found in counties with varying demographics which range between low and high food security (**figure 1a**) and a variable number of WIC participants (**figure 1b**).⁵ This includes at least 185 authorized farmers dispersed around 56 farmers’ markets around the state (**supplemental table 1**).¹⁵

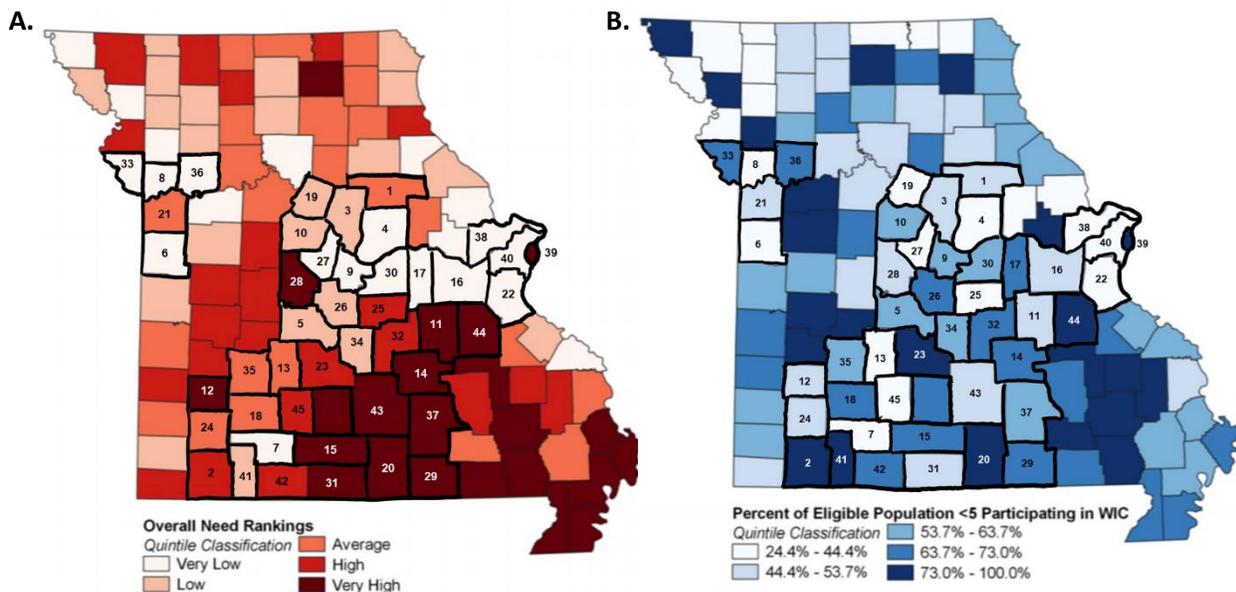


Figure 1. Overall level of (A) food insecurity and (B) percent of eligible infant and children participating in WIC by county. Numbered counties indicate participation in MoSFMNP program. Additional information can be found in supplemental table 1. Figures modified from 2019 Food Insecurity Report.⁵

Supplemental Table 1. Farmers' markets with authorized farmers in each MoSFMNP county.

Location	County	Farmers' Markets (#)	Authorized Farmers (#)	Location	County	Farmers' Markets (#)	Authorized Farmers (#)
1	Audrain	1	2	24	Lawrence	1	6
2	Barry			25	Maries		
3	Boone	2	29	26	Miller		
4	Callaway	1	1	27	Moniteau		
5	Camden			28	Morgan		
6	Cass	4	5	29	Oregon	1	7
7	Christian	3	17	30	Osage		
8	Clay	2	5	31	Ozark		
9	Cole	2	9	32	Phelps		
10	Cooper			33	Platte	1	3
11	Crawford			34	Pulaski		
12	Dade			35	Polk	2	7
13	Dallas	1	4	36	Ray	2	2
14	Dent	1	2	37	Shannon		
15	Douglas	1	2	38	St. Charles	1	6
16	Franklin	3	4	39	St. Louis City	1	1
17	Gasconade			40	St. Louis County	3	2
18	Greene	5	35	41	Stone		
19	Howard			42	Taney	2	5
20	Howell	2	23	43	Texas		
21	Jackson	6	22	44	Washington	1	6
22	Jefferson	3	6	45	Webster	3	10
23	Laclede	1	2		TOTAL	56	185

Note. List of participating counties, farmers' markets, and authorized farmers was provided by the Missouri Department of Agriculture.¹⁵ Not all participating counties had listed information about the number of farmers' markets and authorized farmers within the county. Vouchers must be used to purchase Missouri-grown produce from Missouri Farmers' Markets.

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