

Accepting Food Assistance Benefits at Farmers' Markets

SNAP / Food Assistance Benefits



As of Oct. 1, 2008, [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP) is the new name for the federal *Food Stamp Program*. The new name reflects the changes FNS made to meet the needs of clients, including a focus on nutrition and an increase in benefit amounts. SNAP is the federal name for the program. Ohio has changed the name to the Food Assistance Program.

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)

Any retailer that would like to accept food assistance benefits (EBT) must be licensed to participate in this program. Today, the only form of food assistance benefit issuance is the EBT—Electronic Benefits Transfer card. EBT allows the retailer to accept food assistance payments for food using the EBT card--a kind of debit card. Ohio's EBT Card is known as the Ohio Direction Card.



EBT Enrollment

1) Farmers' Market Only - the FNS-252 Application is only required for the Farmers' Market to become a certified Food Assistance retailer.

2) Farmers' Market with Multiple Vendors - the FNS-252 Application is required for the Farmers' Market to become a certified Food Assistance retailer.

The Farmers' Market may also choose to sell tokens/scrip (coupons) at the market. This allows food assistance customers to use the tokens/scrip throughout the Farmers' Market to purchase eligible food assistance items. Farmers will then redeem their tokens/scrip through the Farmers' Market for payment.

The Ohio EBT Farmers' Market Demonstration Project application is available at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ofam/pdf/EnrollEBTFarmersMkt.pdf>. Check out the website for more information at <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ofam/pdf/EBTFarmerMarket.pdf>.

EBT Demonstration Project Preparation

There are several components to establishing the EBT demonstration project at a Farmers' Market. The EBT demonstration project application takes you through the process to create your personalized project. Some of the key factors include:

- Establish a method to connect to EBT (phone, power, wireless equipment)
- Select Point of Sale (POS) Terminal (TPP or EBT Only)
- Create a Farmers' Market Bank Account
- Maintain staff for EBT transactions / selling tokens/scrip
- Choose tokens or scrip issuance method
- Develop advertising / market signs
- Establish system to redeem tokens/scrip, paying vendors, and preparing reports.
- Create vendor agreements
- Develop surveys
- Funds / Grants

FNS 252 – Application to Accept Food Assistance Benefits



Interested applicants can apply on-line at www.fns.usda.gov/snap or call 1-877-823-4369. Information is also available about Farmers Markets on the website.

Ohio applications should be mailed to:
FNS-USDA
1124 Rickard Road, Suite B1
Springfield, IL 62704-1800

Requirements

1) Meet the basic eligibility requirements (refer to Retail Store Eligibility Requirements);

To be eligible to accept food assistance benefits, a store must sell food for home preparation and consumption and meet at least one of the criteria below:

(A) Offer for sale at least three different varieties of food in each of the following four staple food groups, with perishable foods (*fresh, refrigerated, or frozen*) in at least two categories, on a daily basis:

- Bread & Grains
- Dairy
- Fruits & Vegetables
- Meat, Poultry, Fish

OR

(B) At least 50 percent of the total sales (e.g., food, non-food, services, etc.) at your store must be from the sale of eligible staple food (a basic dietary item – i.e. bread, fruits, and vegetables).

2) Completely fill out the application form; and

3) Provide the required documentation (refer to Application Checklist).

Ohio EBT Farmers' Market Demonstration Project

<http://ifs.ohio.gov/ofam/pdf/EBTFarmerMarket.pdf>

Include a coverletter with FNS-252 application stating you are applying for the Ohio EBT Farmers' Market Demonstration Project.

FNS-252 Application - Helpful Hints

- Ownership – Farmers Market, no owner. If you have established a privately help corporation or LLC or some other form of ownership, no problem. Call the FNS Columbus Field Office if you have questions and they will help walk you thru the application.

Columbus Field Office
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
614-469-6864
614-469-6849 fax

- Be sure to answer all questions on the application. Again, call Columbus if you have questions.
- The owner(s) or market master will have to submit a photo identification and verification of the social security number. They also have to submit one business license. Some markets state they aren't sure what to submit or that they have no licenses. Some markets sell taxables, so they have a vendors permit. Anything you have will be accepted and FNS will contact you if they have questions. If you advertise or have a website and provide that additional information, it will be helpful in reviewing the application.
- FNS is required to process applications within 45 days from receipt. The farmers' market application is a little different and may require a visit from FNS. It is very helpful to provide FNS information to collaborate you are operating a farmers market (i.e., a valid license or web site).
- Submit application at least 30 days prior to your opening date and first sale.