



# KANSAS

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## **Kansans reap healthy rewards through Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**

Low-income Kansans and growers across the state are reaping the benefits of good health through the Kansas Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (KSFMNP) – this year with a high-tech twist.

Traditional farmers' markets in Lawrence and Wichita are testing the use of wireless point of sale devices for transactions using Vision cards (food or cash assistance benefits) as well as debit and credit cards. Recipients, including those in the KSFMNP program, can use food stamp electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards at the farmers' market information booth to get \$1 tokens that can only be used to buy eligible food items. Recipients using their cash assistance account receive \$5 tokens that can be spent at the vendors' tables like cash, and any item can be purchased.

The project began July 22 at the Downtown Lawrence Farmers' Market, 824 New Hampshire. Hours are 7 to 11 a.m. Saturdays. The market also operates from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1020 Vermont.

In Wichita, the project will begin Aug. 5. The Wichita markets operate from 7 a.m. to noon Saturdays and 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays North 21<sup>st</sup> and Ridge Road and from 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays at 8141 East 21<sup>st</sup> Street.

Bringing the farmers' markets into the state's network of EBT retailers allows people who rely on food assistance to connect with nutritional fresh foods from local producers and expand the revenues at the markets through the use of other plastic currency options.

"We hope the use of EBT equipment will encourage Kansans to take advantage of locally grown fruit and produce," said KDOA Acting Secretary Kathy Greenlee. "Improving nutritional options is an important element in fighting chronic disease and illness, especially among our seniors."

The program for seniors, now in its fourth year, has expanded to operate through September in Atchison, Bourbon, Cloud, Dickinson, Douglas, Finney, Graham, Harvey, Johnson, Leavenworth,

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Lyon, Marion, McPherson, Reno, Republic, Riley, Saline, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Wyandotte counties. More than 180 farmers are participating in the program this year.

A grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to the Kansas Department on Aging (KDOA), as well as a small appropriation of State Funds, allows approximately 7,000 low-income Kansans over the age of 60 to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs at farmers markets and roadside stands in 20 counties. Qualifying home-bound seniors in Douglas, Graham, Riley and Wyandotte counties receive three \$10 bundles of fresh produce.

Under the traditional program, local food aid agencies distribute \$30 “checks” to participants at least 60 years of age with a household income below 130 percent of the poverty level if they are a customer of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) or Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). They must be below 100 percent of the federal poverty income guidelines if they receive services through the Older Americans Act (OAA) Congregate Nutrition Program.

Kansas is one of 46 states and tribal organizations to receive SFMNP grants. The USDA estimates the grants serve more than 800,000 low-income seniors across the nation. The Kansas program is a joint initiative involving both public and private partners, including six state agencies including the Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Commerce, Health and Environment and Social and Rehabilitation Services. Others partners in the project are K-State Research and Extension, the Kansas Rural Center, the Kansas Fruit Growers Association, Kansas Vegetable Growers Association and the Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council.

The 2006 Electronic Benefits Transfer Demonstration Project is funded in part by the Kansas Rural Center, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Kansas Department on Aging and Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Partners also include the Kansas Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Environment and the Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Service.

For more information, contact Tamara Tiemann, KDOA nutrition and community services manager, at 785-296-6445 or visit the KDOA website at [www.agingkansas.org](http://www.agingkansas.org).