



## Farmers Markets and Summer Meal Programs

Every summer, schools and nonprofit sponsors of USDA's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option look for creative ways to serve nutritious meals and engage children and teens through fun, enriching activities. Meanwhile, local harvests in many regions are at their peak, and farmers markets are flourishing with the season's bounty and bustling with activity. Concentrated foot traffic around local foods along with existing events and activities make farmers markets ideal partners in helping kids and teens stay active and nourished while school is out.

### Opportunities for Partnership

Here are three mutually beneficial ways that farmers markets and Summer Meal Programs can work together.

- **A Feeding Site**

An SFSP "site" is the location where meals are served, and where kids and teens eat and enjoy any activities offered by the sponsoring organization, which oversees the meal sites. Setting up a feeding site at a farmers market can provide a safe place for children to congregate, increase foot traffic to the market, provide access to a variety of seasonal ingredients, connect children with the sources of their food, and raise community awareness about Summer Meal Programs.

Setting up a feeding site at a farmers market also allows sponsors to leverage existing activities that are associated with the market, giving kids an enjoyable experience in addition to a healthy meal, and removing the burden of coordinating activities from scratch.

- **A Place to Find and Buy Local Products**

Sponsors can purchase products from the market for inclusion in Summer Meals, supporting local growers and sourcing seasonal items to improve the quality and appeal of meals. Sponsors can find local products through many sources: direct from a farm or through food hubs, distributors, or food service management



03/18/16



companies. But due to the lower volume often needed to meet SFSP needs, and the opportunity to meet and discuss needs face-to-face, farmers markets may be the perfect providers for Summer Meals. In turn, Summer Meal Programs can provide a reliable outlet for agricultural producers.

- **A Field Trip Location**

If becoming a feeding site is not an option, farmers markets can be a designated field trip location for Summer Meal Program sponsors in the area. Sponsors and farmers market operators can cross-check lists of hours of operation at the beginning of the summer, and choose one or several dates and times to bring children onsite and introduce them to all the market has to offer.

## Learn More

Whether providing locally sourced foods, fun activities, or a safe space for children and teens to congregate during the summer months, farmers markets, and Summer Meal Program sponsors can develop mutually beneficial partnerships to keep kids nourished and engaged while school is out. Find some additional tips and information through the following resources:

Visit the farm to summer section of USDA's farm to school website, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-summer>, and our farm to summer fact sheet, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/FactSheet\\_Farm\\_to\\_Summer.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/FactSheet_Farm_to_Summer.pdf), to find more guidance and resources on bringing the farm to your Summer Meal Program.

Locate farmers markets in your community with USDA's farmers market directory. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets>

Find more information on becoming an SFSP sponsor or site. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/how-become-sponsor>

Learn about the many ways sponsors can purchase local foods, through farmers markets or many other sources, in our *Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Program Guide*. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S\\_Procuring\\_Local\\_Foods\\_Child\\_Nutrition\\_Prog\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf)





## For Additional Information

Review these ideas and adopt the strategies that seem reasonable to you and compatible with your Program. For additional questions, sponsors and the general public should contact their State agency for help. State agencies should contact their Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office.

List of FNS Regional Offices: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-regional-offices>

List of State Agencies: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

*USDA and its recipient institutions share responsibility for compliance and oversight to ensure good stewardship of Federal funds.*

