



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wolf Administration Reminds Farmers Markets of Grant Opportunity to Expand SNAP Usage, Increase Availability of Fresh, Locally Grown and Sourced Produce

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration today reminded farmers markets and farmers of a grant opportunity providing free wireless point-of-sale equipment for farmers markets and direct-marketing farmers who would like to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits but do not have the technology to do so. Devices are available at no cost from a grant awarded to the Department of Human Services from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support access to fresh, healthy foods for SNAP recipients while supporting Pennsylvania's agricultural economy.

"Expanding opportunities for farmers and farmers market vendors to offer fresh, healthy food to SNAP recipients is necessary to ensure that all Pennsylvanians are able to maintain a healthy, nutritious diet while supporting Pennsylvania's rich agriculture community," said Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller. "As Pennsylvania navigates the public health crisis, this grant allows farmers markets and farmers who sell their products directly to expand their customer base and provide more options for SNAP recipients across the commonwealth."

Pennsylvania received a grant in 2019 from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to expand use of SNAP at farmers markets around the commonwealth. To receive the equipment, interested farmers market vendors must apply to be an authorized SNAP retailer [through FNS](#). Once authorized to accept SNAP, vendors can contact Pennsylvania's electronic benefit transfer (EBT) provider Conduent at 1-888-736-6328 to request free wireless EBT processing equipment. These grants also cover set-up costs and one year of SNAP transaction fees.

SNAP helps more than 1.8 million Pennsylvanians, including about 700,000 children, about 690,000 people with disabilities, and about 300,000 older adults, expand purchasing power to ensure their household has enough food to avoid going hungry. Inadequate food and chronic nutrient deficiencies have profound effects on a person's life and health, including increased risks for chronic diseases, higher chances of hospitalization, poorer overall health, and increased health care costs. Children who have enough to eat go on to have higher graduation rates, increased adult earnings, and improved health outcomes in their adult life. Older adults who are enrolled in SNAP are healthier, hospitalized less and are less likely to go to a nursing home. As the nation

faces the COVID-19 pandemic, access to essential needs like food is more important than ever to help keep people healthy and mitigate co-occurring health risks.

SNAP also supports the Pennsylvania economy, with more than 10,000 authorized retailers participating in SNAP across Pennsylvania. These retailers processed approximately \$2.6 billion in SNAP benefits in 2018 according to the United States Department of Agriculture. These funds directly support Pennsylvania's food retailers and farmers growing and producing agricultural products.

"This is an opportunity for farmers to reach a new market, during a time when preexisting markets have been so volatile, and put nutritious foods into the hands of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable," said Department of Agriculture Secretary Redding. "I encourage all farmers market operators and farmers selling direct to consumers to apply to be a SNAP retailer to create a new revenue stream and give Pennsylvanians in need more options to find fresh, local food."

The Department of Agriculture has provided [guidance to Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets](#) to allow operations to continue with minimal risk for employees and customers. To further expand market opportunities, farms can open on-farm stands to sell raw produce, eggs, or shelf-stable packaged foods such as jams, jellies, or baked goods without acquiring additional food safety licenses.

DHS is continuing to process applications for SNAP throughout the public health crisis. All applications are reviewed for expedited service which can be issued in five days for eligible applicants. Pennsylvanians can apply for SNAP online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

Visit pa.gov for a ["Responding to COVID-19" guide](#) or the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

Guidance to DHS providers related to COVID-19 is available [here](#). Guidance to the agriculture industry for continuing operations during COVID-19 can be found at agriculture.pa.gov/covid-19.