

Farm2WIC Toolkit

Connecting Farmers, Market Managers,
Local WIC Agencies & Partners with Families
for Vibrant Markets and Healthy Communities



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Welcome to the 2018 Farm2WIC Toolkit!

California WIC Association and the California State WIC Program have designed this toolkit to help you benefit from **Farm2WIC**, a campaign to connect farmers' markets with WIC, the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children.



When farms and families connect through Farm2WIC, everyone wins! **Farmers and market managers** enjoy a larger and more diverse customer base, increased revenues, greater community visibility, and the opportunity to help families in need. When WIC **families** can spend their Fruit and Vegetable Checks at farmers' markets, they enjoy shopping in a family-friendly environment, buying the freshest produce possible, and supporting local growers. **Local WIC agencies** expand their outreach to families and improve participation and outcomes. **Partner organizations** reap the benefits of collaborating with WIC and farmers' markets.

Besides providing background on WIC and participating families, this Toolkit was created to help you:

- ▶ Recognize the many ways WIC benefits farmers, markets, WIC agencies and customers
- ▶ Become a WIC-authorized farmer or market manager, if applicable
- ▶ Develop best practices to cultivate WIC customers and expand outreach strategies
- ▶ Access additional resources that may be useful

If you have additional questions about Farm2WIC or using this Toolkit, please do not hesitate to give us a call. Have a great season and we look forward to seeing you out at the market.



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What is WIC?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is one of the most cost-effective federal nutrition assistance programs, serving families since 1974. WIC aims to improve access to nutritious foods for low-income pregnant women, new parents, and young children (birth to age five). California WIC



participants receive monthly checks or vouchers for purchasing specific, WIC-approved foods, which provide important nutrients that participants otherwise may lack. By 2020, EBT cards will replace these checks.

While this “nutrition prescription” is a core WIC benefit, participants also receive nutrition & parenting education, breastfeeding support & supplies, and referrals to other social and health resources in their communities. WIC aims to lower the risk of poor birth outcomes, while improving the health of participants during critical times of growth and development.

WIC serves over a million participants in California every month. Nearly 60% of all infants born in California are eligible for WIC benefits, and over 75% of eligible individuals participate. Eligible families are those with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, or \$46,435/year for a family of four in 2018-19. Additionally, applicants must be individually determined to be at “nutrition risk” by a health professional.

WIC participants support the local economy through their food purchases. WIC also works with farmers markets to help increase participant access to fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

The next four pages provide more information about WIC overall (from US Department of Agriculture) and how the program benefits California specifically.





United States Department of Agriculture



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



Since 1974
The Foundation of
Healthy Families

What is WIC? WIC was established as a permanent program in 1974 to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk. This mission is carried out by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, nutrition education (including breastfeeding promotion and support), and referrals to health and other social services. Find out more:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-wic-glance>

Where is WIC available?

The program is available in all 50 States, 34 Indian Tribal Organizations, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. While funded through grants from the Federal Government, WIC is administered by 90 State agencies, with services provided at a variety of clinic locations including, but not limited to, county health departments, hospitals, schools, and Indian Health Service facilities. To find the WIC offices serving your area go to:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts>

What food benefits do WIC participants receive?

The foods provided through the WIC Program are designed to supplement participants' diets with specific nutrients. WIC authorized foods include infant cereal, baby foods, iron-fortified adult cereal, fruits and vegetables, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, soy-based beverages, tofu, peanut butter, dried and canned beans/peas, canned fish, whole wheat bread and other whole-grain options. For infants of women who do not fully breastfeed, WIC provides iron-fortified infant formula. Spe-

cial infant formulas and medical foods may also be provided if medically indicated. Learn more about food benefits here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-food-packages>

Program benefits include more than food.

WIC benefits are not limited only to food. Participants have access to a number of resources, including health screening, nutrition and breastfeeding counseling, immunization screening and referral, substance abuse referral, and more. Find out more:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-benefits-and-services>

Am I eligible?

Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who meet certain requirements are eligible. These requirements include income eligibility and State residency. Additionally, the applicant must be individually determined to be at "nutrition risk" by a health professional or a trained health official. To find out if you might be income eligible for WIC benefits go to:

<http://wic.fns.usda.gov/wps/pages/start.jsf>



How WIC Helps

WIC supplemental foods have shown to provide wide ranging benefits. They include longer, safer pregnancies, with fewer premature births and infant deaths; improved dietary outcomes for infants and children; improved maternal health; and improved performance at school, among others. In addition to health benefits, WIC participants showed significant savings in healthcare costs when compared to non-participants. Learn more about how WIC helps:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-how-wic-helps>

What is “nutrition risk” and why is it important?

Two major types of nutrition risk are recognized for WIC eligibility: medically-based risks such as anemia, underweight, history of pregnancy complications, or poor pregnancy outcomes; and dietary risks, such as inappropriate nutrition/feeding practices or failure to meet the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Women, infants, and children at nutrition risk have much greater risk of experiencing health problems. Learn more about nutrition risk:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-eligibility-requirements>

I’m eligible, what do I do next?

Those who are interested in applying for benefits should contact their State agency to request information on where to schedule an appointment. Applicants will be advised on what to bring to the appointment in order to verify eligibility. Contact your State agency here:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/contacts/>

EBT makes it easier to use food benefits.

In most WIC State agencies, participants receive paper checks or vouchers to purchase food, while a few distribute food through centralized warehouses or deliver the foods to participants’ homes. However, all WIC State agencies have been mandated to implement WIC electronic benefit transfer (EBT) statewide by October 1, 2020. EBT uses a magnetic stripe or smart card, similar to a credit card, that participants use in the check-out lane to redeem their food benefits. EBT provides a safer, easier, and more efficient grocery experience and provides greater flexibility in the way WIC participants can shop. Find out more and check if your State supports EBT:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-electronic-benefits-transfer-ebt>

Focus on breastfeeding.

Even though breast milk is the most nutritious and complete source of food for infants, nationally less than 30% of infants are breastfed at 1 year of age. A major goal of the WIC Program is to improve the nutritional status of infants; therefore, WIC mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their infants, unless medically contraindicated. Pregnant women and new WIC mothers are provided breastfeeding educational materials and support through counseling and guidance. Explore the benefits of breastfeeding and find helpful resources here:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/breastfeeding-promotion-and-support-wic>

WIC Facts

- If you participate in another assistance program you may be automatically income-eligible for WIC.
- Breastfeeding mothers are eligible to participate in WIC longer than non-breastfeeding mothers.
- More than half of the infants in the U.S. participate in WIC.
- WIC participants support the local economy through their purchases.
- WIC works with farmers markets to help increase participant access to provide fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. Find out more here:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/wic-farmers-market-nutrition-program-fmnp>

Where can I learn more?

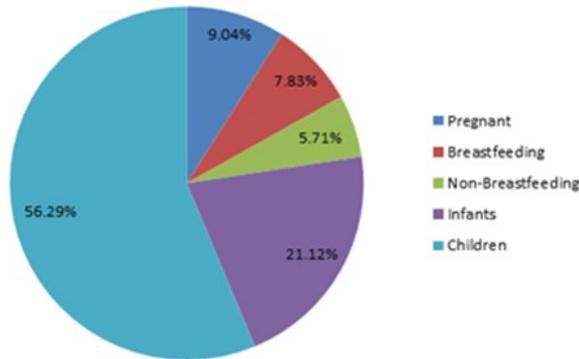
Information on FNS programs is available at

www.fns.usda.gov/fns/



California WIC Program: WIC Works!

California WIC Population by Category FFY 2015-2016



58.6% of all infants born in California in 2013 were certified by WIC in their first year!

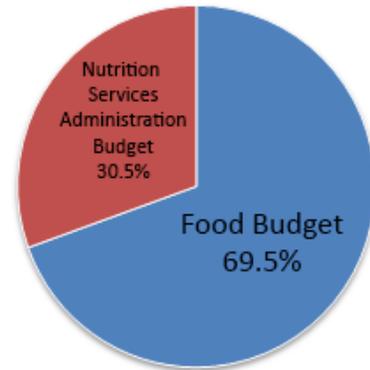
76.1% of eligible individuals participate in the California WIC Program, surpassing the national average by 16 percentage points. (2013)

Supporting California Farmers

WIC participants are able to use their WIC checks at authorized grocery stores and farmer’s markets throughout the year to buy fresh fruits and vegetables—for California WIC participants, produce often happens to be grown locally! In August 2016, California WIC participants purchased over \$7.5 million in fruits and vegetables, ensuring that their children have healthy nutritious produce, and supporting California farmers at the same time.



California WIC Program Budget Breakdown FY 2015-2016



WIC provides supplemental nutritious foods through local retail food outlets to low-income families, and services which include nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and help finding health care and community services.



eWIC (WIC EBT & MIS)

California WIC is making steady progress to replace paper food checks with electronic cards in an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system. The computer-based data system is also being replaced with a new EBT-ready Management Information System (MIS). The two systems will be replaced concurrently and the project is known as eWIC. Piloting will begin in 2019 and statewide rollout completed by April 2020. California WIC has also recently rolled out a new mobile-friendly website where participants can see upcoming appointments and their authorized food items, and much more!
<https://m.wic.ca.gov/>

3120 Freeboard Dr. #101 | West Sacramento, CA 95691
P: 916.572.0700 | F: 916.572.0760 | www.calwic.org

WIC and Military Families

There are WIC offices on most military bases, including those overseas, because many military families fall within the low-income guidelines. In California, there are 13 WIC clinics located on or near military bases. WIC checks can also be used at commissaries – in August 2016, WIC checks spent at commissaries amounted to \$171,224 spent by 4,029 WIC participants. All twenty-four active commissaries redeemed WIC checks during the same time period. Many WIC clinics are also located in health centers, next to Head Start locations, or are co-located with other important family services.

Local Retail Grocers

The WIC food package provides a healthy bag of groceries for young families including milk, cheese, cereal, bread, eggs, beans, fruits and vegetables, tofu, juice and more. WIC checks are redeemed monthly at local grocers and supplement families' food budget. In August 2016, California WIC participants purchased \$1.168 million in groceries.



WIC Breastfeeding Support in California

Breastfeeding support is a large part of the WIC services. While over 90% of California women start to breastfeed, various challenges make it difficult to continue to breastfeed. Working with community partners including hospitals, community clinics and employers, WIC employs multiple strategies to support breastfeeding initiation and duration. The state Maternal Child and Adolescent Division works closely with WIC to utilize state and federal data to better understand disparities and target support.

3120 Freeboard Dr. #101 | West Sacramento, CA 95691
P: 916.572.0700 | F: 916.572.0760 | www.calwic.org

WIC at Farmers' Markets

Farm2WIC Benefits Farmers, Markets, Families, Partner Organizations and Communities

When farms and families connect through Farm2WIC, everyone wins!

Farmers enjoy a larger and more diverse customer base, increased revenues, and the opportunity to help families in need.

Market managers often recognize the way a more diverse customer base increases market visibility and patronage. What's more, surrounding businesses often benefit from the increased economic activity near markets.

Families spending their WIC checks at farmers' markets enjoy shopping in a family-friendly environment, buying the freshest produce possible, and supporting local growers. And when parents bring their children to the market, as they often do, they teach by example about the value of fresh, local food.

Families often get more produce using their WIC benefits at the farmers' market compared to the grocery store. Since produce is rarely pre-packaged at markets, farmers can help customers adjust the amount of produce to match the full value of each WIC check.

Local WIC agencies continually seek ways to recruit, retain, and reengage eligible families who would benefit from WIC. Promoting farmers' markets as a viable shopping option and a strong relationship with local markets can help local agencies encourage participation.

Partner organizations focused on increasing food security and family health – such as CalFresh, Market Match, and Medi-Cal – find that working with WIC benefits their programs and participants even more. Combining

“We know that vegetables don't get any fresher, and that children need good, fresh food! This is another way to get our produce out to families.”

– Dorothy Figueroa, Always Fresh Farm, Yuba City

“It expands our customer base and we have the opportunity to educate more consumers about good food that is good for you.”

– Deborah Chamberlain, Wong Farms, Riverside County

“Every \$11 check spent locally turns into \$66 for the local economy.”

– Jenny Flack, Galleria at Tyler Market Manager, Riverside

“Some people try a food for the first time using WIC checks. Farmers' market is a good place to try healthier options.”

– Kumiko Rosenfeld, Sky Valley Dates, Coachella Valley

“I was surprised how many of our WIC participants had never been to a farmers' market.”

– Maryann Miernicki, American Red Cross WIC

resources and expertise, organizations with common goals can reach their audiences with higher-quality and impactful outreach and educational campaigns.

In many **communities**, farmers' markets are social events, not just a place to buy food. They can provide a way to learn about social services and cultural happenings. Families who feel a part of their community are more likely to feel supported and resilient in the face of challenges. This, in turn, helps create a more vibrant and healthy community.

Two Programs Support WIC Benefit Redemption at Farmers' Markets

Given WIC's focus on nutrition, promoting fruit and vegetable consumption is an important component. Congress supports two main programs to improve WIC participants' access to fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers markets:

- 1) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (**FMNP**), for WIC as well as Seniors, begun in the 1990's
- 2) WIC Cash Value Voucher (CVV), called Fruit & Vegetable Check (**FVC**) in California, introduced during the 2009 WIC Food Package update

FMNP is administered through a Federal/State partnership in which the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service provides grants to State agencies. The goal of FMNP is to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables through farmers' markets to WIC families and seniors, and to expand the awareness, use of, and sales at farmers' markets. Although the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) operates the Senior FMNP, the California Department of Public Health/WIC Division (CDPH/WIC) authorizes the markets and farmers to accept both WIC and Senior FMNP checks.

"Partnering with PHFE WIC at the markets last summer was one of our most successful outreach efforts ever!"

—Los Angeles County DPSS CalFresh Outreach Team

"More people will understand how much better their health becomes and how fresh and good everything tastes!"

—James L. Moreno, JM Citrus, Riverside



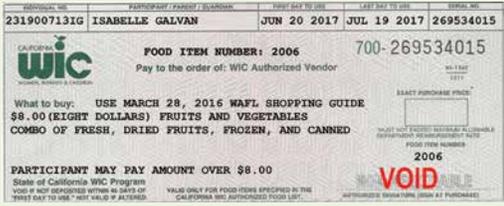
FVC is part of the WIC food benefit package distributed to every WIC participant each month of the year. Checks are usually for larger amounts (\$4, \$8 or \$11 per person) than FMNP (\$5). The California WIC Program requires a separate training and authorization process for farmers and markets to accept FVC. New federal rules allow market managers to streamline the transaction process for WIC FVCs for authorized farmers.

While only about one in six WIC families receives FMNP checks each summer, every WIC participant over nine months of age receives FVC benefits every month. Thus, farmers and markets that accept checks from **both programs** clearly reap the largest rewards.

“We need to feed all people, and acceptance of WIC checks helps everyone enjoy the freshest and most nutritious food available.”

– Diana Gomez Nieves, Mike Howard Farms, Woodland

COMPARING FMNP AND FVC PROGRAMS

Program	FMNP = WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program*	FVC = Fruit & Vegetable Check
Timing	Seasonal: issued once a year between May 1 and September 30 for use between May 1 and November 30	Year-round: issued monthly for use within 30 days
Distribution	Not all California WIC local agencies participate, and only one sixth of California WIC families receive FMNP	All 83 California WIC local agencies issue these benefits to all eligible WIC participants
Benefit value	\$20/year/family	\$4, \$8, or \$11/person/month
Foods allowed	Fresh fruits, vegetables, & cut herbs	Fresh fruits & vegetables
Where to use checks	Only at WIC-authorized Certified Farmers’ Markets	At retail grocers and FVC/FMNP WIC-authorized Certified Farmers’ Markets
Processing	Farmer enters WIC-authorized ID number on checks and deposits them by December 15	Farmer, market manager, or retailer verifies valid dates, writes exact purchase amount and verifies signature with WIC ID folder; enters check data online through VWIX system; and deposits them within two weeks of “last day to use”
Check color & sample	Purple 	Green 

* There is also a Senior FMNP featuring blue checks. CDPH/WIC authorizes markets to accept these checks, but the program is administered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. For more information, contact your local Area Agency on Aging, call CDFA at (916) 657-3231, or visit www.cdffa.ca.gov/go/sfmnp.

Benefits of Accepting Both Types of WIC Checks

Both FMNP and FVC have enormous potential to generate long-lasting and consistent benefits for consumers and farmers.

- ▶ FMNP often helps bring new customers to farmers markets and educate them about the benefits of shopping at such markets.
- ▶ The FVC structure—benefits issued every month, rather than once a year—can help encourage those new customers to shop at farmers markets on a regular basis.
- ▶ This assures consistent access to fresh produce and education about nutrition and farmers markets.

In 2017, more than one million California WIC participants redeemed over 10.5 million FVCs, totaling nearly \$77.2 million. While only about \$115,000 (less than one percent) of those benefits were redeemed at farmers' markets, it's a tremendous revenue source compared to the small and seasonal FMNP, which serves about 90,000 families with over \$1.5 million in total benefits each year. Both are important resources for farmers and families.

Becoming a WIC-authorized Farmer/Market

Are you a farmer wanting to sell more of the fruits and vegetables you grow? Become authorized to accept both FMNP and FVC!

Getting authorized to accept the year-round FVC is a separate process from the seasonal FMNP. But it's easy, especially if you're already accepting FMNP checks. Plus, as we've already described, FVCs provide a lot of additional benefits: higher check values, year-round use, monthly issuance by every local WIC agency, and the option to be processed by a market manager instead of each farmer.

Free training is offered by the CDPH/WIC Division Farmers' Market Team and takes just a few hours. Authorization is good for about three years, and it's simple to renew.

New applicants for FMNP or FVC must register and attend:

- ▶ In-person, interactive training offered regionally each year, or
- ▶ a webinar training

Re-authorizing applicants:

- ▶ FMNP re-authorization training requirement can be met by reading the Quick Training Guidelines or the WIC NewsBeet newsletter.
- ▶ FVC/FMNP re-authorization requires participation in an interactive training via webinar, in person, or over the phone.

For more information, visit www.wicfarmers.ca.gov or call the California WIC Program Farmers' Market Team at 916-928-8513.

"Today, I made \$700 from WIC farmers market checks –and \$30 from non-WIC customers. I couldn't afford to come to this market if it wasn't for WIC."

– San Diego farmer

"WIC participants shopping at the farmers' market support local farmers to continue doing what they love: growing their produce and feeding the community."

– Lupita Murillo, Everyone's Harvest, Salinas

Tips for Success: Farmers & Market Managers

Cultivating WIC Customers

Like all families, WIC participants might feel there are barriers to shopping at farmers' markets, such as inconvenient location, lack of transportation, or markets' limited hours. Another issue for some WIC shoppers might be that FVC benefits are issued in relatively high amounts (\$8-\$11) and participants must use the entire amount of a check at one market stand. Anything you do to make the shopping experience more WIC-user-friendly can help you gain new customers, many of whom will continue shopping long after they are participating in WIC!

"I had never been to a Farmers Market until I received my WIC FMNP checks several years ago. I'm not on WIC anymore but I still come every week. I have a successful business preparing healthy meals for others!"

– Market customer, San Diego

Here are tips and best practices that market managers and farmers can do to reduce some of these barriers and encourage WIC families to shop at Certified Farmers' Markets at least some of the time. If you're viewing this online, click on the blue links throughout this section for details about materials and organizations. All are listed in the Resources section.

IN THE COMMUNITY:

Get to know your WIC local agency! There are 83 WIC local agencies and over 600 WIC sites serving every community in California. If you're not already best friends with your local WIC staff, be sure to introduce yourself.

- ▶ How to find them? Search for a nearby clinic by city or zip on the **WIC mobile website**, or phone the local agency director using **CWA's list**.
- ▶ Who to talk with? Ask for the farmers' market coordinator, local vendor liaison, or someone who works with the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.
- ▶ What to say? Ask the WIC staff to promote farmers' markets with participants in WIC nutrition education classes. Invite them to consider distributing seasonal FMNP checks at your market. Ask if they have volunteers or participant 'champions' who could serve as market tour guides for new WIC customers. Would they be able to provide nutrition education or food demonstrations at the market? Brainstorm with them!
- ▶ How to stay connected? If their agency and your market use social media, "like" each other's pages. Provide information they can post about your market and offer to post their information to achieve cross-promotion.



Get the word out! So often we hear stories of people not knowing about a market or that they can shop there with their WIC checks. Use multiple channels to communicate and promote this opportunity.

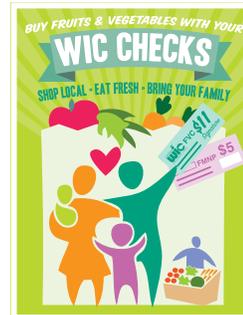
- ▶ Farmer & Market websites
- ▶ Farmer & Market social media

- ▶ Photo-centric social media, such as Pinterest or Instagram – post seasonal recipes, photos of families shopping at market (with their permission), produce now in season, photos of WIC and CalFresh banners and booths
- ▶ Newsletters, email or print

AT MARKET:

Help WIC shoppers locate authorized vendors:

- ▶ Set out **sandwich boards** at market entrance points.
- ▶ Hang the **Farm2WIC banner** at the market manager's booth or another prominent location.
- ▶ Offer customers **postcards** at authorized vendor booths.
- ▶ Display booth signs, both those required by FMNP and FVC but also **others that match** the banner and postcards.



Train your staff:

- ▶ Make sure everyone who works at your farmstall knows how to recognize the WIC folders and assist new customers.
- ▶ Watch the dates! Check that your staff knows how to process both kinds of WIC checks efficiently.
- ▶ Role play a variety of situations, such as different check amounts or what to tell the customer when there is missing information or documents.
- ▶ Help your staff feel confident when interacting with customers using WIC checks.



- ▶ If you have any questions or need help, don't be afraid to contact the State WIC Program's Farmers' Market team at WICFMNP@cdph.ca.gov or 916-928-8513, or your local WIC agency's Farmers' Market coordinator.

Educate your customers:

- ▶ Distribute kid-friendly food preparation ideas - try the ones from [UC Cooperative Extension](#).
- ▶ Hand out cookbooks, such as the ones CWA developed with [Nutrition Matters](#).
- ▶ Provide safe food handling tips, like those from [Produce for Better Health](#).
- ▶ Host cooking demonstrations using less-familiar (but still WIC-eligible) produce in season.

Partner with your local Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) staff or CalFresh/SNAP-Ed Program for many of the above activities and resources.

Broaden their benefits:

- ▶ Invite WIC agencies to distribute FMNP checks at markets; families often will use their FVC benefits, also.
- ▶ Invite your local social services department to enroll families in CalFresh and Medi-Cal at the market.
- ▶ Participate in public benefit matching and incentive programs where available, such as [Market Match](#).

Set up for success:

- ▶ Clearly price items for sale.
- ▶ Group produce in amounts easy for WIC customers to choose quickly, such as loosely-bound \$2 bags of green beans or \$4 baskets of tomatoes.
- ▶ Display fresh cut herbs in distinct areas.
- ▶ Supply cashiers with pens (for signatures) and educational materials (see Resources).





AFTER MARKET:

Process and deposit WIC checks as soon as possible.



- ▶ Watch the dates! You only have two weeks from the “last day to use” to process and deposit FVC checks.
- ▶ Arrange FVC checks in order of earliest expiration date to ensure timely processing.
- ▶ Always check the number of physical checks you have in hand against the number you entered in VWIX.
- ▶ Print or save electronically VWIX reports.
- ▶ FMNP checks can be deposited until December 15, but why wait to get reimbursed?

Work with your local bank or credit union to reduce or avoid check processing fees:

- ▶ Try smaller community banks or credit unions.
- ▶ Use the letter addressed to banks – available at www.wicfarmers.ca.gov – to help explain the community benefits the bank would be supporting by waiving check processing fees.
- ▶ Approach the small business manager. Ask if opening a small business account would reduce fees charged.
- ▶ Make a personal request to the branch manager.
- ▶ Ask if they would waive fees with a higher volume of checks.



Tips for Success: Local WIC Agencies

Expanding Shopping Options

Like all families, WIC participants might feel there are barriers to shopping at farmers' markets, such as inconvenient location, lack of transportation, or markets' limited hours. Anything you do to make the shopping experience more WIC-user-friendly can help recruit, retain, and/or reengage WIC participants and boost FMNP and FVC redemption rates.

Below are tips and best practices that local WIC agency staff can do to reduce some of these barriers and encourage WIC families to explore the option of shopping at Certified Farmers' Markets. If you're viewing this online, click on the blue links throughout this section for details about materials and organizations. Also, or in print, see the Resources section.

BEFORE MARKET

Get to know your local market(s)! There are over 480 certified farmers' markets in California who are already authorized to accept FMNP checks, and at least 260 of them also accept FVC. If you're not already best friends with your local market manager, be sure to introduce yourself.



▶ How to find them?

- **Check the list** or call the State WIC Farmers' Market Team to verify that your local market is authorized.
- Run WIX/Raptor reports by zip code to help decide how to focus your efforts on markets located near where participants live.

▶ Who to talk with?

- Ask for the market manager or a board member, usually a farmer who sells at the market.
- See if you can attend their board or vendor meetings as the season ramps up.

▶ What to say?

- Inquire whether they accept both FMNP and FVC, and if not, educate them about getting authorized.
- Offer to answer technical and any other questions about accepting WIC benefits.
- Ask them how you can help make the experience of selling to WIC shoppers as easy and seamless as possible.
- Propose how WIC could distribute FMNP checks at the market on select days, perhaps in tandem with CalFresh.
- Explore whether they have volunteers willing to serve as tour guides to new WIC customers.
- Would they be able to team up with you and other partners to provide food demonstrations at the market?
- Brainstorm with them!

▶ How to stay connected?

- If their market and your agency use social media, “like” each other’s pages.
- Provide information they can post about shopping with WIC checks at your market and offer to post their market updates to achieve cross-promotion.

Collaborate with other WIC agencies and community partners who serve families shopping at the same farmers’ markets.



In the San Diego region, Leah’s Pantry (creators of EatFresh.org) worked with the International Rescue Committee, United Women for East Africa Support Team, and UC San Diego Center for Community Health to produce *Around the World at the Farmers’ Market*, a recipe collection in English and Arabic that was distributed to WIC participants and others at market. SNAP Education programs and Cooking Matters are other possible partners.

Get the word out! So often we hear stories of people not knowing about a market or that they can shop there with their WIC checks. Use multiple channels to communicate and promote this opportunity:

- ▶ WIC nutrition education classes
- ▶ Posters in waiting areas
- ▶ Refrigerator magnets to help families locate their closest market.
- ▶ Phone & text message reminders before market day
- ▶ Local agency website
- ▶ Local agency social media
- ▶ Photo-centric social media, such as Pinterest or Instagram – post seasonal recipes, photos of families shopping at market (with their permission), produce now in season, WIC and CalFresh banners and/or staff at market booths
- ▶ Newsletters, email or print





Among WIC participants surveyed by American Red Cross WIC in San Diego county, 80% already using FMNP checks did not know that they could use their regular WIC fruit/vegetable check (FVC) at a farmers' market. When told they could, 67% said they would use their FVC at a farmers' market.



Glenn County WIC prints local WIC-authorized market information on labels (Avery 5263) and attaches these to colorful and eye-catching magnets. When offered at the clinic reception window, participants often reach for them and ask about farmers' markets before staff even have a chance to bring it up!



Train your staff, who are trusted ambassadors for WIC and can be the best sources of information for families. Resources linked below can be found at <http://calwic.org/focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic>.

- ▶ Use the **Staff Info Sheet** to provide them with background information and talking points to use during one-to-one contacts with participants.
- ▶ Make sure they have enough **Participant Flyers** on hand to distribute to families.

Educate participants about the option of shopping with WIC checks at farmers' markets, using the materials found on [CWA's Farm2WIC webpage](#) as a start.

- ▶ Distribute flyers with general and local market information
- ▶ Share cookbooks and recipes
- ▶ Provide food selection, handling and storage information
- ▶ Create a video to show in WIC clinic waiting areas, such as the one described at right.
- ▶ Incorporate Farm2WIC in nutrition education classes
- ▶ Host food demonstrations in clinic, at special events, or at the market



Using Videos: American Red Cross WIC created a video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5yF8ZksfN8> to show in WIC clinic waiting areas with voiceovers in English, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese and Somali planned. It will also be linked on their website and included in

group, individual, and online nutrition education contacts this summer. They plan to make another video to explain how to use WIC checks at farmers' markets in multiple languages, to show to customers on iPads when staff or volunteers at the markets don't speak a customer's language.



AT MARKET

Issue FMNP checks at the market: It's convenient for many families and can increase FMNP and FVC redemption rates, making it well worth the additional effort to schedule and train staff or recruit volunteers.



American Red Cross WIC noticed a steady decline in their FMNP redemption rates, from over 55% in 2012 to 36% in 2015, while rates were increasing elsewhere in California. To reverse this trend, they began issuing FMNP checks at select markets instead of at the WIC clinics. They also renewed their efforts to educate participants about FMNP and FVC use at markets, using video, text messages, education classes, and social media. FMNP redemption rates jumped to 80% in 2016 and 84% in 2018. Not only did families get more fresh produce, their WIC benefits infused over \$45,000 more revenue into local farmers' markets.



Partner with your local social services department to promote WIC, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal at the same time.



Public Health Foundation Enterprises (PHFE) WIC staff and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) CalFresh Outreach team engaged in a new effort last summer at 16 local farmers' markets. WIC distributed FMNP checks and promoted FVC use, DPSS enrolled eligible families in CalFresh and Medi-Cal, and customers participated in Market Match. WIC families were grateful to have increased purchasing power at farmer's markets, while the underutilized programs achieved four shared goals: to encourage healthy eating, increase fruit and vegetable enjoyment, support local growers, and ultimately reduce food insecurity. PHFE WIC has seen FMNP redemption rates climb from a low of 43% in 2011 to an astounding 91% in 2017, their fourth year of issuing checks at the market. Rates have stayed well above 85% each of those years. The 2017 collaboration was one of DPSS' most successful outreach efforts ever, as they helped families complete 785 CalFresh and 57 Medi-Cal applications.

Recruit tour guides: Consider how students or other volunteers could serve as similar companions or lead group tours.



In rural Trinity County, WIC participant ‘champions’ experienced with farmers’ market shopping serve as one-to-one market guides for new WIC customers.

Offer a nutrition education option at the market: Use games and other interactive education to help families learn how to purchase, prepare, and safely store farm-fresh produce.



In San Diego, Farmers’ Market Bingo encourages parents and children to have fun while going throughout the market to find fruits and vegetables of different sizes and colors and to talk with farmers.



AFTER MARKET

Offer incentives: Community partners such as SNAP/Champions for Change or a local business may donate items you can offer to families who shop with their WIC benefits at the market.



E-Center WIC in Lake County gets small prizes donated, then offers them to families who return to clinic with their FMNP booklet stubs.

Survey families, WIC staff, and market personnel about their Farm2WIC experiences, then use the results to improve your efforts next season.

Resources

INFORMATION & ORGANIZATIONS



California WIC Program Farmers' Market Team

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

916-928-8513

WICFMNP@cdph.ca.gov

www.wicfarmers.ca.gov

California State WIC Program provides training and technical assistance for market managers and vendors accepting WIC benefits at Certified Farmers' Markets and local agencies distributing WIC benefits.

California WIC Association (CWA)

916-572-0700

msaddler@calwic.org

<http://calwic.org/focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic>

CWA's *Farm2WIC Online Toolkit* and Campaign provide information and materials to connect local WIC agencies and families with managers and growers at WIC-authorized Certified Farmers' Markets. Check there for sample website messages, social media posts, newsletter articles, and more.

CalFresh Outreach Unit

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

calfreshaccess@dss.ca.gov

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/CalFresh-Outreach>

Market Match, a program of Ecology Center

510-548-2220 ext.236

marketmatch@ecologycenter.org

<https://marketmatch.org/>

Market Match is California's healthy food incentive program, which matches customers' federal nutrition assistance benefits, like CalFresh and WIC, at farmers' markets. Check out their Farmers' Market Finder online tool, too: www.fmfinder.org

SNAP-Ed

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) build partnerships with all types of community organizations to teach people using or eligible for SNAP (CalFresh in California) about nutrition, making their food dollars stretch further, and how to be physically active.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-education-snap-ed>

California-specific resources, including community contacts and programs like **Leah's Pantry/EatFresh** <http://leahspantrysf.org/about-eatfresh/>, are linked at the **CDPH Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention (NEOP) Branch** website: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/NEOPB/Pages/SNAPEdResources.aspx>

UC Cooperative Extension

UCCE's Community Nutrition website offers research updates, consumer fact sheets, and other resources to assist health professionals in working with mothers, infants, and young children.

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/comnut/mothersyoungchildren/>

Cooking Matters

<https://cookingmatters.org/>

Cooking Matters helps families to shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget, as part of Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign, with recipes, tips and videos, and store tours in some areas.

MATERIALS for PROMOTION & EDUCATION From California WIC Association

CWA's promotional materials for the Farm2WIC Toolkit can be viewed at <http://calwic.org/focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic>. Anyone is welcome to download the graphic files and print materials locally. Also, feel free to use the CWA-designed Farm2WIC logo in your own promotional and educational materials. Contact CWA if you need other file formats.



Designed for farmers and market managers:

- ▶ **Postcard** (two-sided English/Spanish, 4x6") – see sample in binder pocket or view online
- ▶ **Booth signs** (English & Spanish versions, 8.5x11") – see samples in binder pocket or view online
- ▶ **Sandwich board** (two-sided English/Spanish, 2x3 feet) – view online
- ▶ **Vinyl banner** (combined English/Spanish, 2x5 feet) – view online

Designed for local WIC agencies:

- ▶ **Participant Flyers** (half-sheet; print English on one side, Spanish on the other) – see sample in binder pocket or view online
- ▶ **Info Sheet for WIC Staff**, talking points useful when chatting with interested families about this shopping option – see sample in binder pocket or view online
- ▶ **Market Locator Magnets** – see photo on page 18 and view online

From Other Sources

To help promote and educate about purchasing, storing, and preparing seasonal produce:

- ▶ Ten Facts about Fruits & Vegetables and Ten Safety Tips of Handling Fruits & Vegetables (from Produce for Better Health Foundation):
http://pbhfoundation.org/pdfs/pub_sec/st_coor/mar_tools/WIC_09/FACTS_TIPS1_FINAL.pdf
Spanish and English customizable versions available from CWA at:
<http://calwic.org/focus-areas/engaging-wic-families/farm2wic>
- ▶ Fruit & Vegetable Fact Sheets/Posters, plus What's In Season Now posters for three California counties, in English & Spanish (from UC Cooperative Extension): http://ucanr.edu/sites/comnut/mothersyoungchildren/Fact_Sheets/
- ▶ Farmers' Market Cookbooks, California edition (developed with Nutrition Matters) in English and Spanish: <http://calwic.org/storage/Farm2WIC/CACookbookFlyer.pdf>
- ▶ Farmers' market recipe cards (from the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control): <http://www.scdhec.gov/library/CR-009871.pdf>
- ▶ Seasonal Food Guide (from Grace Communications Foundation) produce seasonality by region/state plus information about each fruit or vegetable's history, nutrition, storage, food preparation, recipes, and more: <https://www.seasonalfoodguide.org/>
- ▶ Eating the Rainbow video featuring a City of Berkeley WIC nutritionist at the market: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Si6rnW0Mm0>
- ▶ California Farmers' Markets video from CDFA, including WIC and Senior FMNP and CalFresh EBT: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3kHcZjVHf8&t=28s>