

Farmers Market Workgroup

Minutes

March 13, 2014

1. **Discussion of proposed Florida legislation.** Sharon Yeago, of the Farmers Market Coalition, shared the draft legislation with this group. There were two bills: HB535 and SB552. HB535 would 'require' operators of farmers markets, community farmers markets, flea markets and other open air markets selling fresh produce to allow authorized Food & Nutrition Service groups, associations, and third party organization to operate EBT systems in such markets. There were several concerns to the draft legislation, which appeared to be on a fast track. Attempts at setting up a meeting with the Representative who sponsored the bill was unsuccessful. Farmers markets are not regulated in Florida so no one is sure what is driving this proposal. It is not illegal for a 3rd party organization from operating EBT today. If passed, this proposal would be effective July 1st.

A question from Michigan questioned whether a 3rd party organization would be allowed to run EBT for a market. Rogelio Carrasco from FNS indicated that it would be permissible. He noted that several umbrella agencies operated EBT for markets today.

2. **Update on MarketLink** – Rogelio provided an update. It appeared that none of the NAFMNP staff were on the call. Rogelio noted that the second month of MarketLink operations had completed. The number of farmers markets are increasing weekly. FNS is ensuring that communication is taking place, as they are conducting phone calls with regional reps. Training materials and brochures are being provided by NAFMNP. There was quite a bit of discussion on the enrollment process and status.
 - a. Jen O'Brien, FMC asked that statistics from NAFMNP be shared with group. Rogelio noted that quarterly reports are required.
 - b. Kristin Krokowski, WI Farmers Market Assoc., had heard that 420 farmers went through MarketLink, but only about 10% had been approved. There was a concern whether there was a backlog or were they denied and referred to another merchant provider/state. We will need to wait until the quarterly report is released from FNS.
 - c. Rebecca Landis, Oregon, expressed a concern that she couldn't locate the full terms and conditions of the merchant provider on the MarketLink website. After the meeting, FMC located the terms and sent the link to participants.
 - d. Use of FY12 farmers' market funds – FNS indicated that they wanted to encourage states to spend the FY 12 with MarketLink if they didn't have an existing contract or legal arrangement with their EBT contractor or other merchant provider. As the FY 12 funds expire Sept. 30th of this year, it would be best to use those funds before using the FY 13 funds allocated for NAFMNP's use.
 - i. This statement caused a concern for Merchant Source, who also bid on the original contract that NAFMNP won. The point being that in the FNS RFP there

was no statement indicating that the 'contractor' would have access to FY 12 funds for the project. This action appeared to be different than the original intent described in the RFP. (See FNS email dated 3-28-14 for additional information).

- e. Tom Ryan, Nebraska SNAP – Tom reported that their state recently held 5 training sessions last week. About 60 people attended. About half of those signed up for the World Pay solution. Nebraska believes that the large attendance was due to the ability of being able to process credit/debit cards and that Dept. of AG reached out to alert the farmers/markets of the opportunity. He stressed the importance of leveraging staff and involving your state department of agriculture.
- f. Monthly Fees – If you're using MarketLink, there will be fees every month of the year. This is represented by the \$120 annual fee.
- g. Mark Byron, SFMNP – He suggested that people not use tokens for SFMNP EBT because of program complexities.
- h. Karen Kinney, WA – Has FNS issued any policy memo yet on language in the Farm Bill relating to Food and Security? (Section 4102) Rogelio indicated that it could be another three weeks or so before is issued.
- i. Jan Walters – Is MarketLink referring farmers/markets that have been denied for a 'free' device to other merchant providers? It is not clear what MarketLink's policies are, as they were not on the call. Jan suggested that MarketLink make referrals to those companies that are listed on FNS' farmer market section of their website. There are about 4 or 5 companies listed.
- j. Someone from Utah indicated that they calculated the cost of the World Pay plan over three years was an estimated \$2100. If not eligible for a free device, those farmers/markets need to be notified of other options available in the marketplace, which could be less than \$2100.