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National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs to Provide Funding to Avoid Shutdown of Novo Dia Group and Prevent Disruption in SNAP Processing

The National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs is stepping in to stave off shutdown in SNAP processing at farmers markets across the country

Alexandria, VA (July 19, 2018) – The National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) is providing Novo Dia Group operational funding for an additional 30 days so that stakeholder states will not experience any disruption in processing federal nutrition electronic benefits including SNAP.

NAFMNP is a non-profit organization founded in 1992, with the mission of supporting producers who sell at farmers markets and increasing farmers market sales. This is accomplished through the support of federal nutrition benefits programs, provision of technical assistance, and programs aimed at improving the mechanisms for accepting all federal nutrition benefits, which encompass a variety of tender types. NAFMNP is the nation's only organization that links States, the District of Columbia, Indian Tribal Organizations, Territories, local fruit and vegetable growers, and low-income families and seniors – all those who have a stake in USDA's Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs and share this mission.

NAFMNP represents 45,000 farmers and 8,000 farmers markets across the country, and the announcement that Novo Dia Group (NDG) decided to close their processing platform used for SNAP, credit and debit would directly affect many of these stakeholders. This potential shutdown of service could translate to lost sales in the millions of dollars processed through farmers markets. The NAFMNP Board of Directors has thus decided to provide short-term emergency support to avoid any disruption in service.

Diane Eggert of the Farmers Market Federation of New York stated, "New York State was an early adopter of Novo Dia's Mobile Market Plus. We believe that using smartphone technology is an efficient and affordable option to bring our state's farmers markets and direct marketing farmers into the SNAP program. It has been instrumental in providing access to fresh healthy foods for countless SNAP beneficiaries throughout the state. The Farmers Market Federation of NY is very grateful to NAFMNP for taking the steps to ensure Mobile Market Plus is viable for another 30

days, giving us time to provide a long term, workable solution to keeping our markets and farmers active in the SNAP program”

NAFMNP is intimately familiar with the challenges of the technology of federal benefits at farmers markets – the nonprofit was awarded the first USDA contract to develop mobile services for processing via farmers markets. This project began in 2013 and was known as MarketLink – with the long-term goal of developing technology that can adapt and provide a means to accept all federal nutrition benefit programs. This also includes incentive programs such as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program, or FINI; member states are utilizing NDG technology to process payments for these multi-million programs.

“MarketLink and the NDG technology has meant additional thousands of dollars in sales for our farmers and markets in Maryland,” notes Amy Crone, Executive Director at the Maryland Farmers Market Association. “We are thankful that NAFMNP can step in to avoid this crisis, which would have meant likely revenue losses in excess of \$330,000 for our farmers and markets. MDFMA will continue to work with stakeholders in Maryland and across the country to solidify a long-term solution to avoid any such disaster in the future.”

The MobileMarket+ Select application developed by NDG was a cornerstone of MarketLink, and NAFMNP still believes that this platform has the potential to be a successful solution since it is the only one with the ability to accept all tender types, works on 4G networks, and is a mobile device solution that works for farmers markets and farmers. Since the inception of the MarketLink program, more than \$40 million in sales (SNAP, credit & debit) has been processed through the NDG app via farmers markets and accepted by small farmers.

“We are extremely grateful to NAFMNP for their continued support. This will not only avoid any immediate disruption of service, but also allows additional time to explore avenues for a long-term sustainable solution,” says Josh Wiles, President of Novo Dia Group, Inc.

Such a mobile device solution is paramount for small farmers and markets; and a public-private partnership is needed to ensure that small vendors have access to such processing capabilities, as there is no business case for larger companies to develop one.

“MarketLink was a visionary program that was intended to provide one solution for farmers and markets, and it was a successful effort that increased sales nationwide at farmers markets and put more money in the pockets of small farmers. NAFMNP is committed to working with USDA Food Nutrition Service and stakeholders across the country to develop the next iteration of benefits’ acceptance at farmers markets so that small farmers and farmers markets are not left out by the federal government,” commented Phil Blalock, Executive Director for NAFMNP.

NAFMNP looks forward to continuing to seek a long-term resolution of these challenges in conjunction with USDA – one that needs to include a mobile solution that is capable of processing ALL nutrition program tender types (eWIC, matching funding such as FINI, & future eFMNP in addition to SNAP) – as this is key to the future of a viable way for farmers markets to be able to accept federal nutrition benefits programs as authorized retailers.