

Fund The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Deadline: Friday, March 29th

Dear Colleague:

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides **1.7 million** low-income women and children each year with locally grown, nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables through farmers' markets in **48 State agencies, U.S. Territories and Federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations**. Please join us in urging the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to preserve funding to WIC FMNP by maintaining the current funding level of \$18.5 million. This program is a Federal/State partnership, and requires participating states to match 30 percent of federal funds.

In addition to serving as a crucial source of nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income women and children, WIC FMNP supports local farmers whose products are bought through the program. In a single year, WIC FMNP generates **\$17 million** in revenue for **17,926** farmers, **3,390** farmers markets, and **2,894** roadside stands. The revenue generated through WIC FMNP supports jobs and makes it possible for farmers to sell their produce at specific farmers' markets at which they would otherwise not be able – helping to break through food deserts and help underserved communities.

The letter below urges the Chairman and Ranking Member to preserve this vital program that helps particularly vulnerable populations access healthy food by retaining its current funding level for FY20.

Please contact David Kimelman (david.kimelman@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Espaillat or Emma Mehrabi (Emma.Mehrabi@mail.house.gov) with Congresswoman Lee if you have any questions or would like to be added to the letter.

Sincerely,

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

(Read Sign On Letter below)

The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry,

We write to express our strong support for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and to ask that, as you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, you retain the \$18.5 million funding level from Fiscal Year 2019. WIC FMNP is a critical program that encourages healthy eating in low income families while helping to improve the prosperity of independent, American farmers. Each year the program brings together 1.7 million WIC recipients with over 17,000 farmers.

When the WIC FMNP program was created in 1992, it was the first Federal program of its kind, with the intent of making fresh fruits and vegetables available to low income shoppers. Today, the need for the program remains as research shows that all Americans, particularly those with low incomes, need more fruits and vegetables in their diets. In FY 2016, the program provided an estimated 67 million servings of fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables to low income pregnant women and children that to which they may not have otherwise had access. For recipients, WIC FMNP establishes healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime.

In addition to the nutritional benefits for recipients, the WIC FMNP program also provides increased economic value to local farmers. In FY 2016, the Program resulted in \$17 million in additional revenue to America's hard-working farmers. In many cases, the program is a difference maker for farmers and farmers markets. For example, in 2018 farmers at the 51 Greenmarkets operated by GrowNYC in New York City redeemed \$2.56 million in FMNP checks. Thirteen of the 51 markets are so heavily reliant on the income farmers make from WIC FMNP that they would be forced to close without the program. In Washington state, farmers report that without WIC FMNP, 300 jobs would be lost.

Beyond the direct impacts on farmers and recipients, the WIC FMNP program also has a sizable impact on rural agricultural economies, stimulating economic activity and creating jobs, as well as fighting food deserts and supporting underserved communities. Government spending on food assistance programs stimulates additional fiscal activity better than any other form of spending. When that food assistance is spent directly on independent family farms, the economic impact is further multiplied as that money flows through the regional agricultural economy.

For these reasons, we reiterate our strong support for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and urge members of the House Appropriations Committee to continue robustly funding the program at levels consistent with recent years.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress