



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEWS RELEASE

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Farmers Markets Can Meet the Need by Offering SNAP Benefits

EAST LANSING, MICH – With tough economic times still on the horizon, more farmers markets are reaching out to low-income families by offering Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) redemption at their markets. Four upcoming “Accepting SNAP Benefits at Michigan Farmers Markets” workshops from Feb. 26 to Mar. 19 will help more markets get on board.

As of Oct. 1, 2008, SNAP is the new name for the federal Food Stamp Program. SNAP helps low-income people and families buy the food they need for good health. Benefits are provided on an electronic Bridge Card which is used like an ATM card and accepted at most grocery stores and more and more farmers markets. Today, the program provides benefits for more than 31 million low-income people, more than 50% of whom are children.

According to the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), the SNAP participation rate increased more than 17% between September 2007 and September 2008 nationally – a clear indicator of current economic conditions. Last year in Michigan alone, 18 farmers markets accepted SNAP benefits for a redemption of more than \$87,000. This year, even more markets are hoping to step up to the plate.

“For 2009, we’re expecting more than 25 farmers markets around Michigan to participate in offering SNAP benefits to their customers,” said Dru Montri, Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) Manager. “We want that number to keep growing, so we’re encouraging more markets to learn about SNAP and how to reach out to those families who need fresh, local food most.”

Four half-day training sessions are taking place across the state to make that happen and educate farmers and farmers markets on participating in SNAP. The dates and locations for these workshops will be Thursday, February 26, 2009 from 1-4 pm at Eastern Market in Detroit; Wednesday, March 4, 2009 from 1-4 pm at the University Center in Gaylord; Tuesday, March 10, 2009 from 1-3 pm at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing, MI; and Thursday, March 19, 2009 from 1-4 pm at the MSUE Office in Kent County.

These sessions focus on everything that farmers and/or farmers markets need to do to accept SNAP benefits, including: completing the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) application to become an authorized retailer; preparing a proposal for the



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Department of Human Services; alternative redemption systems; acquiring a pint of sale device; record keeping; program promotion; community outreach; and fundraising.

Sessions are free, but registration is required to ensure that adequate resource materials are available for all participants. To register or get more information, visit www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu or contact Dru Montri at 517-432-3381 or dnmontri@msu.edu.

SNAP participating markets in 2008 included Allen Street in Lansing, Battle Creek, Downtown Bay City, Detroit Eastern Market, Flint, Fremont, Kalamazoo, Lansing City, Lapeer, Downtown Marquette, Downtown Saginaw, Sault Ste. Marie, South East Area in Grand Rapids, South Side Community Coalition in Lansing, Springfield, Sweetwater Local Foods Market in Muskegon, Downtown Ypsilanti and Ypsilanti Depot Town. Most of those markets are expected to apply again, and Ann Arbor and Birch Run farmers markets are already planning to accept SNAP in 2009.

Training sessions are funded by USDA Agricultural Marketing Services Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant and are sponsored by the Michigan Farmers Markets Food Assistance Partnership. Members of the Partnership include ACS Government Solutions, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Human Services, Michigan Farmers Market Association, Michigan Food Policy Council, USDA Food and Nutrition Services, Michigan State University, Downtown Saginaw Farmers Market and Detroit Eastern Market.

To learn more about MIFMA or SNAP benefits, visit www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu or www.fns.usda.gov/FSP.

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MIFMA was developed in 2006 to promote and grow farmers markets across the state and increase their visibility to both producers and consumers. This membership-based organization offers information, sharing and resources to farmers markets, farmers and vendors and friends of Michigan food and agriculture.

The MIFMA mission is to advance farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products and to place farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement, working to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support. To learn more, please visit www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu or call (517) 432-3381.