



Department of
Agriculture and Markets

Rev 12/2017

FreshConnect Checks Program

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
and
Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families

Information for Market Managers and Vendors

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FreshConnect Checks

What is the FreshConnect Checks Program?

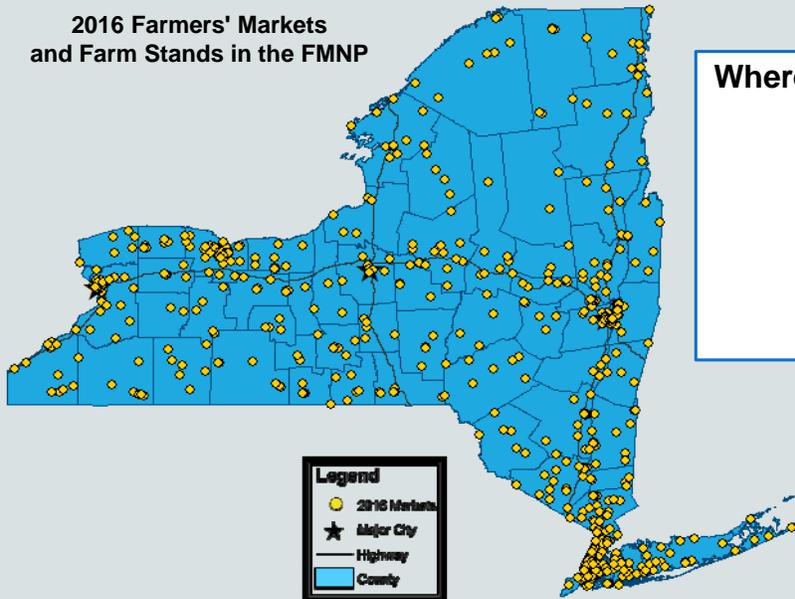
- Governor Cuomo launched the FreshConnect Program in 2011 to create new farmers' markets and support existing markets that provide outlets for fresh food in high need neighborhoods.
- FreshConnect aims to expand access to fresh food in underserved communities to improve the diets of individuals in those communities and foster economic development.
- The FreshConnect Checks Program (FCC) is a component of Governor Andrew Cuomo's FreshConnect Program. The program was designed to increase the purchasing power of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) consumers by 40 percent while supporting local farmers, farmers' markets and farm stands.
- In 2014 the FreshConnect Checks Program also became available to Veterans, Servicemembers, and their immediate family members at regional Division of Veterans' Affairs offices on a first come, first served basis to be used to purchase fresh foods at participating farmers markets and farm stands.



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FreshConnect Checks

2016 Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands in the FMNP



Where are FreshConnect Checks accepted?

- Farmers' Markets
- Farm Stands
- Mobile Markets
- New York State only



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FreshConnect Checks

Why participate in FreshConnect Checks Program?

- Additional revenue source for farmers or vendors
- Attract additional customers to the farmers' market or farm stand
- Expand access to fresh food in communities with farmers markets or farm stands
- Improve the diets of individuals in those communities
- Foster economic development
- Show appreciation to Veterans, Servicemembers and their immediate family members for their service to our country



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FreshConnect Checks

For whom are FreshConnect Checks?

- Farmers or Vendors who sell SNAP eligible food items at any farmers market or farm stand in New York State.
- Farmers' markets that enroll and participate in the NYS Wireless EBT Program.
- Farm stands and farmers markets where SNAP eligible food items are sold.
- Veterans, Servicemembers, and their immediate family members.
- Customers with SNAP benefits.



FreshConnect Checks

Who is eligible....

...to ACCEPT FreshConnect Checks?

- **Farmers and vendors**
 - at a farmers market or farm stand in New York State
 - must sell eligible food items
 - no application required

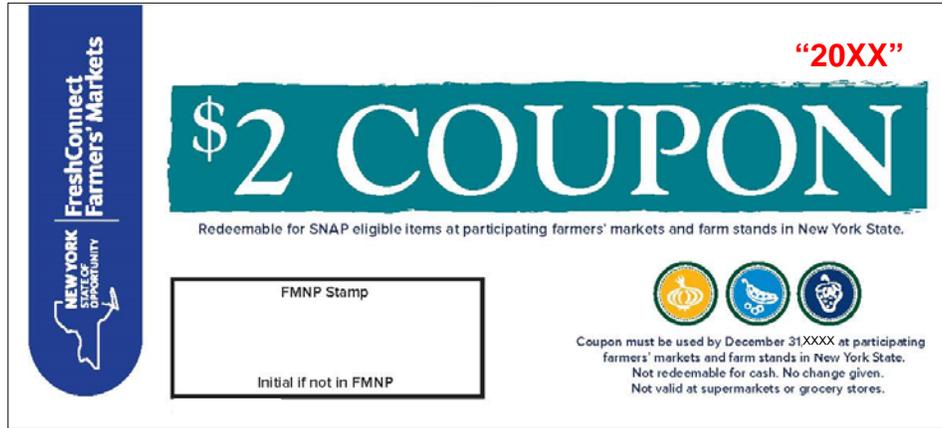
...to ISSUE FreshConnect Checks ?

- **Markets**
 - who participate in the NYS Wireless EBT Program
 - who request FCC annually
- **Veterans' Service Providers**
 - to Veterans, Servicemembers and their families



FreshConnect Checks

The FreshConnect Check



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FreshConnect Checks

FreshConnect Check Sign



- Farmers and Vendors should hang this sign at their stalls during market hours.
- Laminated sign
- Available for any farm or vendor selling SNAP eligible foods at farmers markets or farm stands in New York State
- Identifies the farm or vendor participating in the FreshConnect Check Program



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FreshConnect Checks

Eligible Food Items

The Farmer may only accept FreshConnect Checks for SNAP eligible food items. This includes, but is not limited to:



- Eggs
- Pasta
- Honey
- Maple Syrup
- Dairy Products
- Baked Goods, Breads, Cereals
- Produce: Fruits, Vegetables, Mushrooms, etc.
- Meats, Fish & Poultry
- Coffee (whole bean or ground)
- Seeds and Plants that will produce food

Not Fresh Brewed!

Complete list: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items



FreshConnect Checks

Ineligible Food Items

FreshConnect Checks are for SNAP eligible food items only. They may NOT be used for any other product at the market. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Beer, Wine & Liquor
- Cigarettes & Tobacco
- Brewed coffee/tea (for consumption at the market)
- Pet Foods
- Soaps & Lotions
- Vitamins & Medicines
- Hot Foods (for consumption at the market)
- Other Prepared Foods (for consumption at the market)
- Seeds or Plants that do not produce food (i.e. decorative plants and flowers)
- Crafts



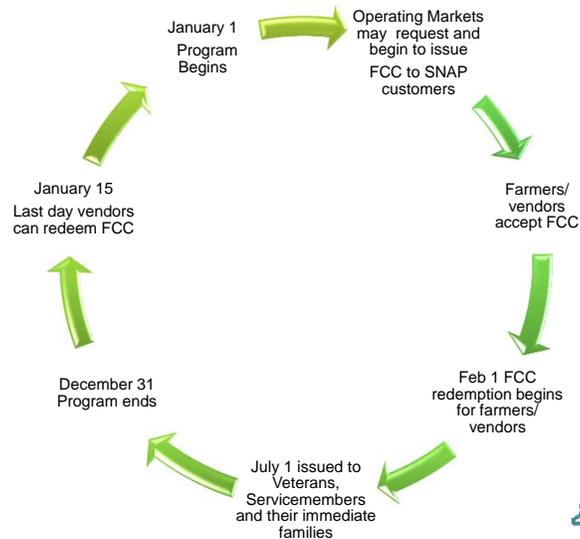
See USDA list of SNAP eligible foods.

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items



FreshConnect Checks

The Big Picture



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FreshConnect Checks

How does it work? for Farmers or Vendors

- No application required to accept checks as payment.
- Free to participate.
- May accept FreshConnect Checks for SNAP eligible food items at **any** farmers' markets and/or farm stand in New York.
- Redemption of FCC is through mail-in process by January 15.
- Address for redemption is on the back of the FreshConnect Check
- Use a redemption form when mailing FCC.
- Reimbursement check will be mailed back to contact and address on redemption form.

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FreshConnect Checks

How does it work? At Farmers' Markets

Eligibility:

- No application.
- Free to participate.
- Must operate in New York State
- Must be participating in the NYS Wireless EBT Program (wooden tokens) to issue FCC.

Redemption:

- Market may choose to manage redemption process for vendors.
 - Market must reimburse vendors in timely manner.
- Mail-in FCC to be received no later than January 15
- Use a redemption form when mailing FCC.
- Reimbursement check will be mailed back to contact and address on redemption form.

Operations:

- Must request FCC from Department each year.
- Must follow issuance instructions (if applicable)
- Should be aware of program rules
- Should instruct vendors and farmers of rules
- Program rules are found online at: www.agriculture.ny.gov

Promotion:

- All markets enrolled in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) will be mailed signage for farmers and vendors to hang at their stalls, regardless if market runs the EBT program and issues FCC.



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FreshConnect Checks

How does it work? At Farm Stands

Eligibility:

- No application.
- Free to participate.
- Must operate in New York State
- Must sell SNAP eligible food items
- May not issue FCC at this time

Redemption:

- Mail-in FCC to be received no later than January 15
- Address for redemption is on the back of the FCC.
- Use a redemption form when mailing FCC. Available online.
- Reimbursement check will be mailed back to contact and address on redemption form.

Operations:

- Must follow program rules
- Should instruct farm stand staff in the rules
- Program rules are found online at: www.agriculture.ny.gov

Promotion:

- All markets enrolled in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) will be mailed signage for farmers and vendors to hang at their stalls, regardless if market runs the EBT program and issues FCC.



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FreshConnect Checks

Operating a FreshConnect Check Program at a Farmers Market



Step 1: Request & Receive

Step 2: Issue

Step 3: Record Keeping



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FreshConnect Checks

Step 1a: Request FreshConnect Checks

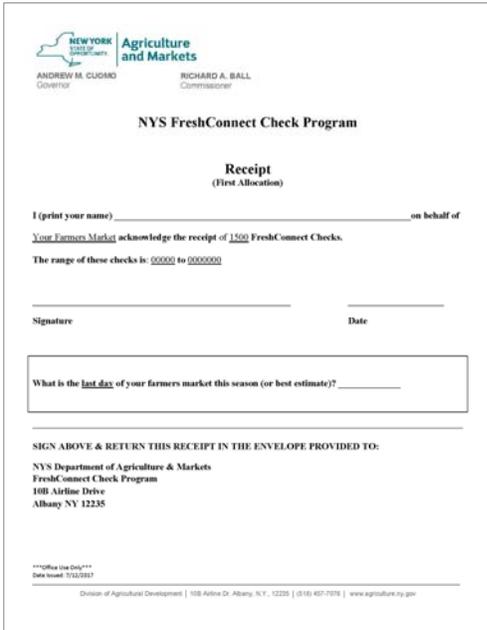
Market Managers:

- Email the Department with request for FreshConnect Checks to issue
- Must include in the email:
 - Previous year's SNAP sales
 - Shipping address, **no PO BOX**
 - Information about any other point-of-sale SNAP incentive program running at the market
 - Example: CNY Health Bucks; NYC Health Bucks



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FreshConnect Checks





 ANDREW M. CUOMO Governor RICHARD A. BALL Commissioner

NYS FreshConnect Check Program

Receipt
(First Allocation)

I (print your name) _____ on behalf of _____

Your Farmer Market acknowledge the receipt of 1500 FreshConnect Checks.

The range of these checks is: 00000 to 0000000

Signature _____ Date _____

What is the last day of your farmers market this season (or best estimate)? _____

SIGN ABOVE & RETURN THIS RECEIPT IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO:

NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
 FreshConnect Check Program
 108 Airline Drive
 Albany NY 12235

Office Use Only
 Date Issued: 11/15/2017
 Division of Agricultural Development | 108 Airline Dr. Albany, N.Y. 12226 | (518) 457-7070 | www.agriculture.ny.gov

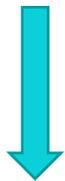
Step 1b: Receiving FreshConnect Checks

Upon receipt of FreshConnect Checks:

- Familiarize with the rules for managers and vendors
- Inventory the FreshConnect Checks
- Manger must sign and return the FCC Receipt
- Keep the coupons secure like cash to avoid theft or loss



FreshConnect Checks



Step 2: Issuing FreshConnect Checks

- At participating farmers' markets, for every \$5 of SNAP benefits a customer exchanges for wooded tokens, the manager may issue a \$2 FreshConnect Check
 - \$10 in tokens = 2 FreshConnect Checks
 - \$20 in tokens = 4 FreshConnect Checks
 - \$50 in tokens = 10 FreshConnect Checks

****No limit required****
- Be sure to instruct customer in the use of the FreshConnect Check



FreshConnect Checks



Promoting the FreshConnect Checks Program

- Laminated sign
- Identifies the farm or vendor participating in the FreshConnect Check Program
- Available for any farm or vendor selling SNAP eligible foods at farmers markets or farm stands in New York State
- In 2018, sign is distributed to all markets participating in the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program for managers to give to their vendors



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FreshConnect Checks

Accepting FreshConnect Checks -Transaction Awareness

Farmers and Vendors:

- Can accept between January 1 and December 31
- Must accept for SNAP eligible foods only
- Should accept current year FreshConnect Check; If expired, it might not get reimbursed
- Cannot give cash change for FreshConnect Checks
 - If the transaction includes both cash and FreshConnect Checks, customers may receive change for the cash portion only
- Treat FreshConnect Checks like cash! Secure them to avoid loss or theft
- Can accept two or more FreshConnect Checks as payment for eligible foods.



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FreshConnect Checks

Redeeming FreshConnect Checks

- Instructions are on the back of each check
- Submit the FCC with the Redemption Form to the Farmers Market Federation of New York
 - All farmers in FMNP will receive a redemption form in the authorization package
 - All markets in FMNP will receive a redemption form in the authorization package
- Forms can be found online for download: www.agriculture.ny.gov
- If the farmer participates in the FMNP they can stamp the FCC with FMNP stamp
- If the vendor does not participate in the FMNP they can initial each FCC in the box



FreshConnect Checks

Redeeming FreshConnect Checks – the Redemption Form

Coupon Program Redemption Form

Farmer Name: _____
 Make Check payable to: _____
 Mailing Address: _____
 Phone: _____ Date: _____
 For confirmation of receipt, provide email address: _____
 FMNP Farmer Number: _____

Redemptions:

Coupon Type	Number of Coupons	(\$) Value
Farmers Market Health Bucks (NYC)	_____	_____
Fresh Connect Checks	_____	_____
CNY Health Bucks	_____	_____
JSY Health Bucks	_____	_____
Total coupons	_____	_____

FreshConnect Check Redemption Form

Stamp the face of each coupon with your current FMNP endorsement stamp. If you are not an FMNP authorized farmer, initial in the box. We recommend you send in redemptions monthly.

To guarantee reimbursement, final redemptions must be postmarked no later than:
Due Date: January 15, 2018

Complete this redemption form and mail with your stamped coupons to:
 Farmers' Market Federation of New York
 117 Highbridge St, Suite U3
 Fayetteville, NY 13066

<https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/freshConnectPrgm.html>



FreshConnect Checks

Violations to Highlight

Customers may not:

- Request cash or other currency for FreshConnect Checks.
- Use an FreshConnect Check for ineligible food items.
- Shop at supermarkets or grocery stores with FreshConnect Checks.
- Use an FreshConnect Check after December 31 of the year it was issued.

Farmers may not:

- Redeem an FreshConnect Check for cash, or other currency, for customers or vendors.
- Accept an FreshConnect Check from customers for ineligible items.
- Accept an FreshConnect Check after December 31 of the year it was issued.



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FreshConnect Checks

The Customer Perspective



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FreshConnect Checks

How does it work? the Customer Perspective

SNAP customers:

- At participating farmers markets, SNAP participants shopping with their Electronic Benefit Transaction (EBT) card who purchase \$5.00 in wooden tokens will be given a \$2.00 FreshConnect Check. For each subsequent \$5.00 increment, they will be given an additional \$2.00 FreshConnect Check, while supplies are available.
- Can then shop with these FCC at the farmers market or farm stands

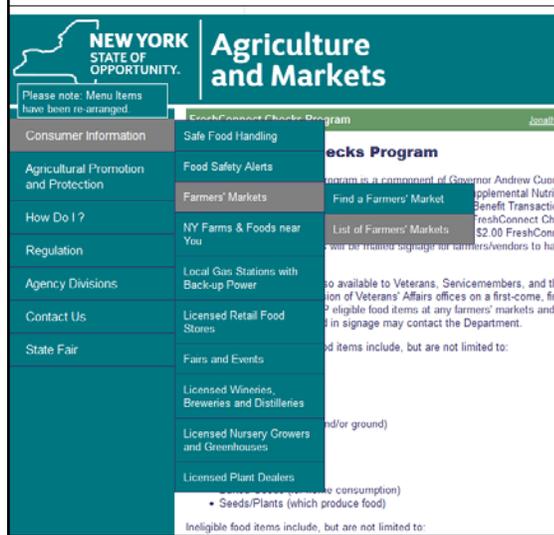
Veterans, Servicemembers, and their immediate family members:

- Receive FreshConnect Checks through the Division of Veterans' Affairs offices on a first-come, first-served basis, while supplies are available.
- Can then shop with these FCC at the farmers market or farm stands



FreshConnect Checks

Customer Perspective: Where to get FreshConnect Checks - Farmers' Markets



- Farmers markets in upstate New York that operate a central SNAP-EBT terminal have the option to participate in FreshConnect Checks Program.
- Customers can find out which markets participate by going to the Department's webpage www.agriculture.ny.gov or by contacting their local farmers market or farm stand.
- Under "Consumer information" you will find "Farmers Markets" and select "List of Farmers Markets".
- You can then select the county desired and review which markets are identified as "FCC Issued"



FreshConnect Checks

Customer Perspective: Where to get FreshConnect Checks - Veteran's Offices

Veterans, Servicemembers, and their immediate family members:

- Must visit their regional State Division of Veterans' Affairs office
- 27 regional offices
- Westchester Warren Suffolk Steuben Saratoga St. Lawrence Rensselaer Queens Otsego Orange Ontario Onondaga Niagara Monroe Kings Jefferson Genesee Essex Erie Dutchess Clinton Chemung Chautauqua Cattaraugus Broome Bronx Albany
- Contact the Department or Division of Veteran's Affairs for more information.

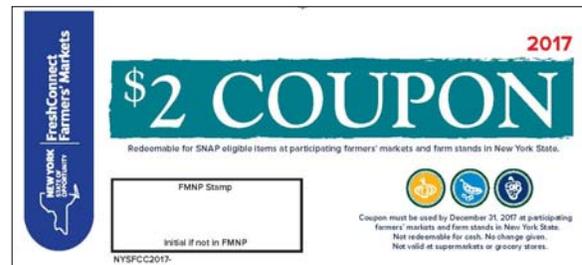


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FreshConnect Checks

FreshConnect Check Summary

- \$2 FreshConnect Checks (FCC)
- Issued at markets with NYS Wireless EBT
- For every \$5 SNAP in benefits spent, a \$2 FCC can be issued
- Issued at local participating Veterans Affairs offices for Veterans, Servicemembers and their immediate families
- Every farmer or vendor at a NYS farmers' market or farm stand is allowed to accept a FCC for SNAP eligible food items, even at markets where the checks are not being issued



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Program Contact Information

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NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs

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