



**Department of
Agriculture and Markets**

Rev 12/2017

FreshConnect Checks Program

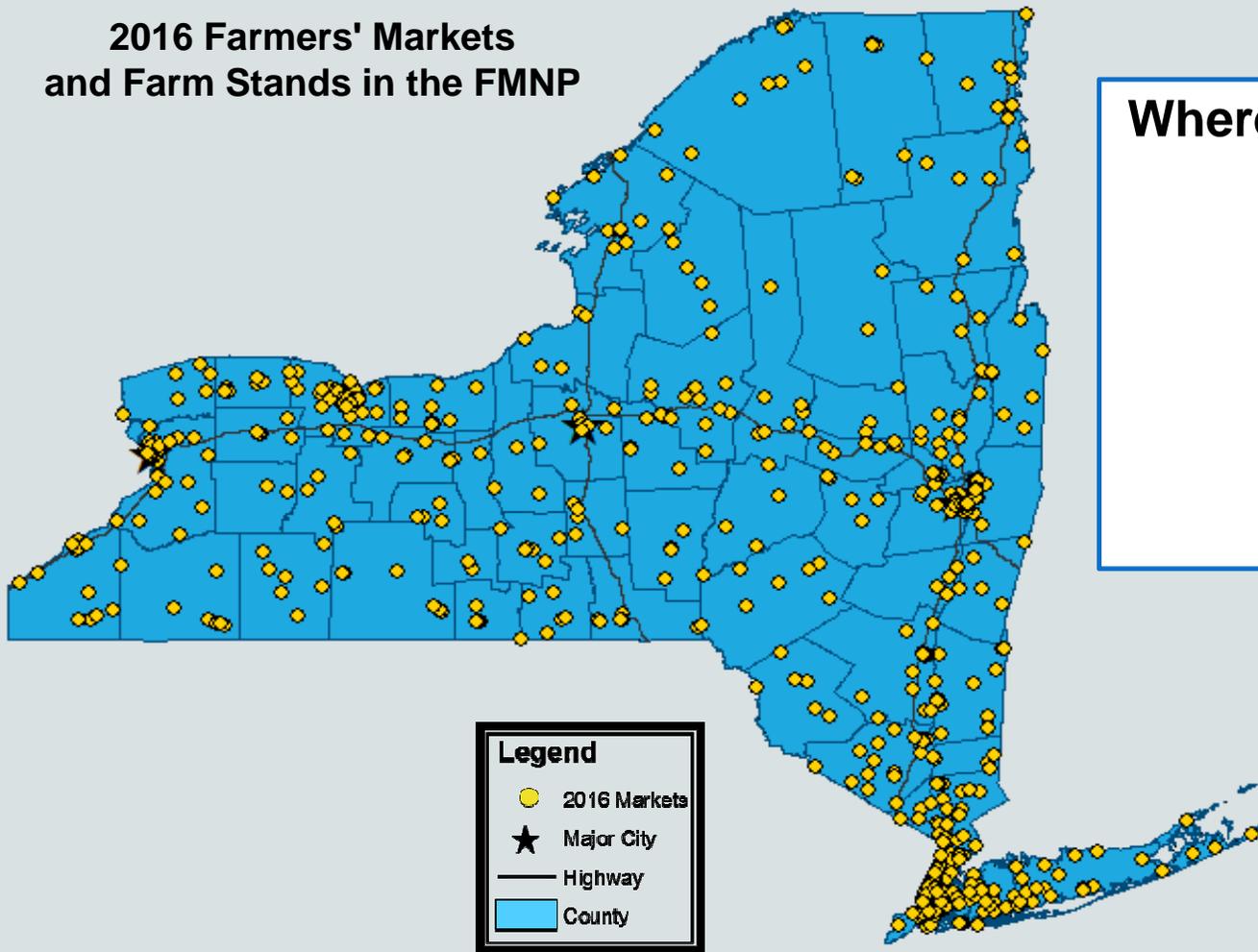
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
and
Veterans, Servicemembers and their Families

Information for Market Managers and Vendors

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.

2016 Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands in the FMNP



Where are FreshConnect Checks accepted?

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

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

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.

Who is eligible....

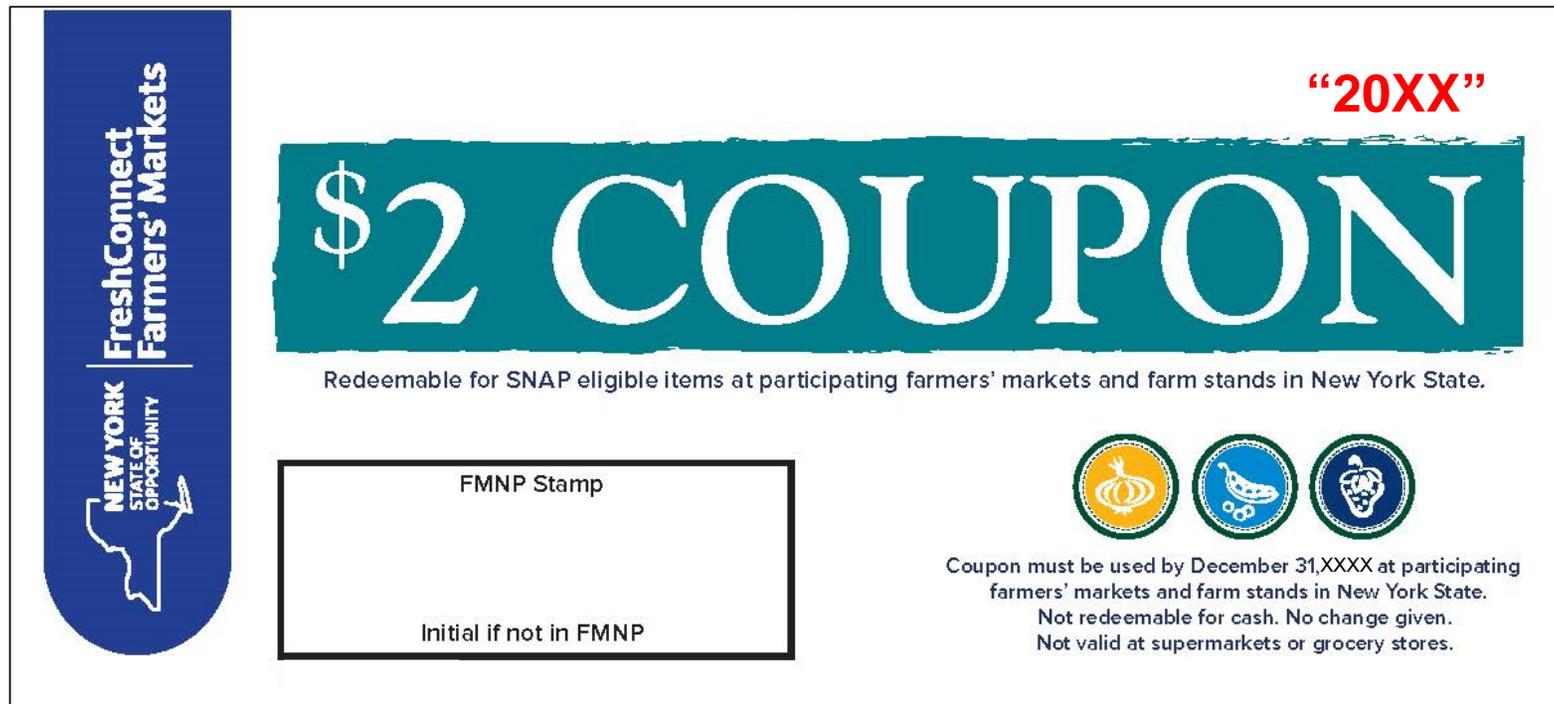
...to ACCEPT FreshConnect Checks?

- **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

The FreshConnect Check



**FreshConnect
Farmers' Markets**

**NEW YORK
STATE OF
OPPORTUNITY**

\$2 COUPON "20XX"

Redeemable for SNAP eligible items at participating farmers' markets and farm stands in New York State.

FMNP Stamp

Initial if not in FMNP

Coupon must be used by December 31, XXXX at participating farmers' markets and farm stands in New York State.
Not redeemable for cash. No change given.
Not valid at supermarkets or grocery stores.

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

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



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:

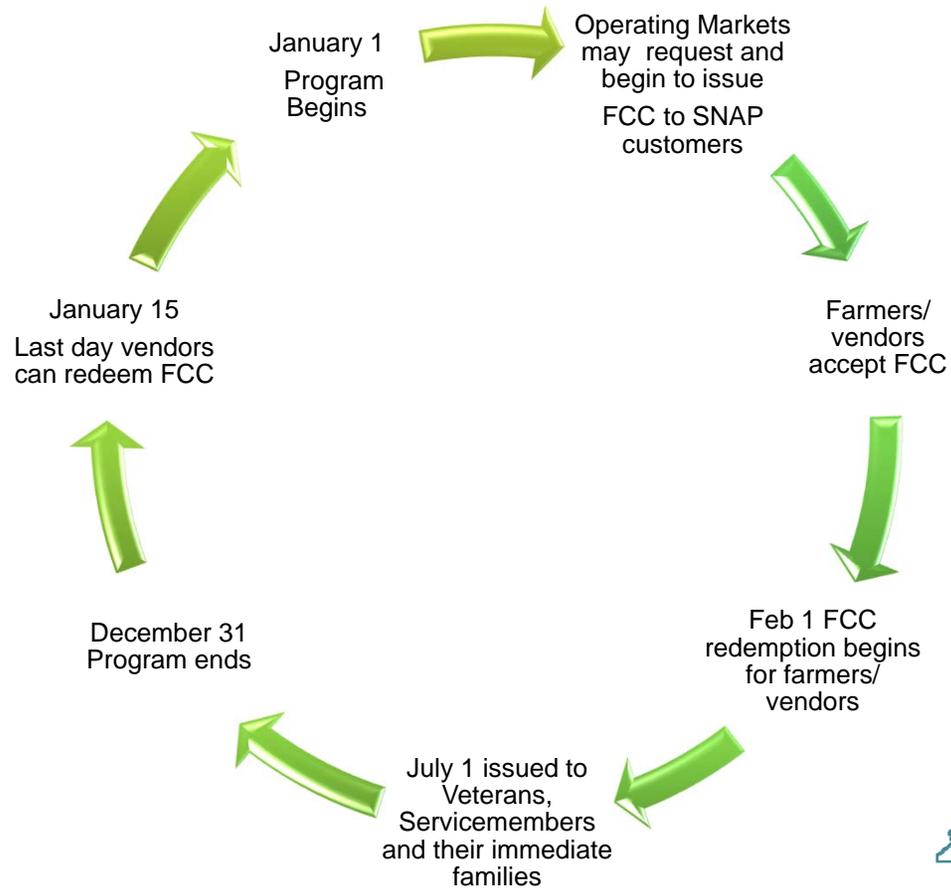
- Beer, Wine & Liquor
- Cigarettes & Tobacco
- Brewed coffee/tea (for consumption at the market)
- Pet Foods
- Soaps & Lotions
- Vitamins & Medicines
- Hot Foods (for consumption at the market)
- Other Prepared Foods (for consumption at the market)
- Seeds or Plants that do not produce food (i.e. decorative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



See USDA list of SNAP eligible foods.

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

The Big Picture



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.

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.

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.

Operating a FreshConnect Check Program at a Farmers Market



Step 1: Request & Receive

Step 2: Issue

Step 3: Record Keeping

Step 1a: Request FreshConnect Checks

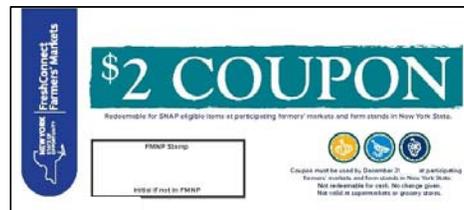
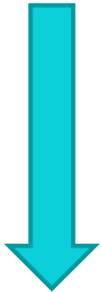
Market Managers:

- 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



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



Not Operating a FreshConnect Check Program at a farmers market or farm stand

- FreshConnect Checks are circulating year round.
 - Farmers Markets and Farm Stands may still experience an interaction with a FreshConnect Check, even if they do not issue them.
 - Customers may save FreshConnect Checks from a previous SNAP transaction from another farmers market or,
 - Customers may be a Veteran, Servicemember or an immediate Family member and have been issued FreshConnect Checks from a regional Veterans Affairs location.
- Farmers and Vendors may accept these FreshConnect Checks for SNAP eligible food items at **any** farmers' markets and/or farm stand in New York.
- Information about redemption is on the back of the FreshConnect Check.
- Redemption forms are available online and also included in the FMNP Market Authorization Packages

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

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.

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

The image shows a \$2 FreshConnect Coupon. The coupon is white with a green header that says "\$2 COUPON". Below the header, it says "Redeemable for SNAP eligible items at participating farmers' markets and farm stands in New York State." There are three circular icons representing different types of produce: a carrot, a tomato, and a bunch of grapes. Below the icons, it says "Coupon must be used by December 31, 2018, at participating farmers' markets and farm stands in New York State. Not redeemable for cash. No change given. Not valid at supermarkets or grocery stores." There is a box labeled "FMNP Stamp" and another box labeled "Initial if not in FMNP".

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | FreshConnect Farmers' Markets

COUPON REDEMPTION:
Farmers can redeem coupons by mailing to:
Farmers Market Federation of New York
Attn: New York FreshConnect Checks
117 Highbridge Street, Suite U3
Fayetteville, NY 13066

Coupons must be received by the Farmers Market Federation by January 15, 2018.

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>



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.

The Customer Perspective



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

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

The screenshot shows the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets website. The header includes the state logo and the text "NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Agriculture and Markets". A navigation menu on the left lists various categories such as "Consumer Information", "Agricultural Promotion and Protection", "How Do I?", "Regulation", "Agency Divisions", "Contact Us", and "State Fair". The main content area is titled "FreshConnect Checks Program" and includes a "Find a Farmers' Market" button and a "List of Farmers' Markets" link. A note at the bottom states "Please note: Menu Items have been re-arranged." and lists "Ineligible food items include, but are not limited to: Seeds/Plants (which produce food)".

- 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"

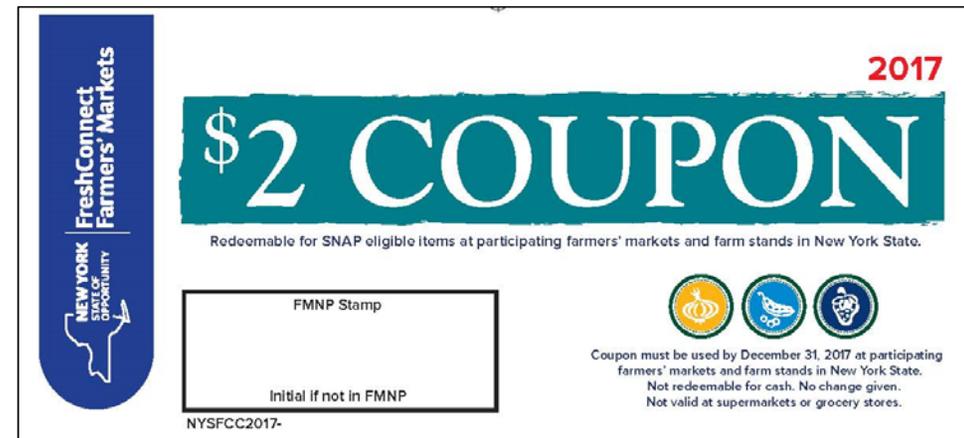
Customer Perspective: Where to get FreshConnect Checks - Veteran's Offices

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.

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



Program Contact Information

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