



NEWS RELEASE

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Department Launching Electronic Farmers Market Nutrition Program in 2024 *Vendor, Healthy Together, also working with Maryland Market Money*

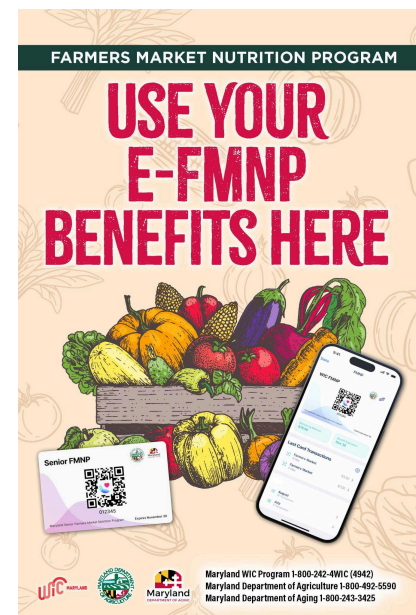
ANNAPOLIS, MD (May 17, 2024) – The Maryland Department of Agriculture has announced a partnership with *Healthy Together*, a technology company providing Software as a Service (SaaS) for governments and state agencies, to launch its electronic Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for the 2024 season. The program works with the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Aging to provide participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and to older adults with limited resources an annual benefit that connects participants directly to farmers at farmers markets and farm stands.

“The ability for farmers and those receiving federal food benefits to more easily access their funds on smart-phones and tablets will make this program more user-friendly in the end,” said Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks. “We’re excited to offer a better way for these groups to access fresh, local produce.”

FMNP-authorized farmers who sell fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets and farm stands across the state will move from a paper check-based system to *Healthy Together’s* app that can be downloaded onto iOS and Android devices to process payments electronically. Farmers will be able to use their phone or tablet to scan a QR code for payment either from the participant’s web browser on their mobile device or on a card with a QR code imprinted on it. The mobile application will continue to work when connectivity is limited or when the app is offline.

“Thank you to the Department of Agriculture and *Healthy Together* for thinking outside the box on ways to make the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program more relevant in today’s digital society,” said Maryland Department of Aging Secretary Carmel Roques. “Being able to use the *Healthy Together* app to obtain fresh, seasonal, and locally grown produce increases access to nutritious food options for older adults with limited resources and, at the same time, supports community agriculture across the state.”

Additionally, the Maryland Market Money (MMM) program, will also partner with *Healthy Together* by introducing *Healthy Together’s* Market Match Solution to the MMM Program. MMM, a statewide food access program of the department and administered by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, offers a financial match incentive for federal nutrition benefits, including FMNP, spent at participating farmers markets and direct marketing farms. These incentives can be spent on any food items eligible for purchase with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP,



formerly Food Stamps) at any participating MMM access point. The incentives help to increase customers' food budgets for purchasing fresh, healthy, local foods while also directly supporting local growers and producers.

The *Healthy Together* platform will streamline the purchasing and matching process for farmers and shoppers participating in FMNP. They will pilot the distribution of MMM incentives at select MMM access points through the *Healthy Together* app, enabling seamless benefits and incentive redemption for eligible shoppers while offering a comprehensive platform for farmers to accept and be reimbursed quickly for benefits and incentives as payment.

"This exciting update from the Maryland Department of Agriculture and *Healthy Together* is another example of Maryland looking for innovative ways to serve residents who need assistance," said Maryland Department of Health Secretary Dr. Laura Herrera Scott. "The Department of Health is committed to working with its partners to ensure this transition is smooth and leads to greater access to nutritious, locally-grown foods."

The department will collaborate with *Healthy Together* to offer virtual training and resources on the new FMNP payment process. During the training, authorized farmers will learn how to download the application, create an account, process payments, and add other users. To ensure the transition to electronic goes as smoothly as possible, **the program start date will be July 1st. MDA will be offering virtual training of the electronic FMNP every Monday in June at 12pm and 6pm and every Tuesday in June at 9am.** Please [use this link to register](#) for the training and we will send you the [Zoom link](#) and a calendar invite. The department will work with the Department of Health, local WIC Agencies, Area Agencies on Aging, and farmers markets to train as many people as possible on using the new system.

For questions, please reach out to Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coordinator Sara Servin at sara.servin@maryland.gov or MMM & Food Access Programs Manager, Heather Hulsey hhulsey@smadc.com

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