

# **2008 WIC and Senior Oregon's Farm Direct Nutrition Programs FARMER GUIDE**

Oregon's Farm Direct Nutrition Programs support local farmers' markets and farmers as well as families with young children (currently participating in WIC) and low-income seniors. WIC families and seniors in these programs receive checks to use directly with local farmers who grow fruits and vegetables. The Oregon program name highlights the role of local farmers in the success of these programs.

## **Farmer Qualifications**

In order to qualify, you signed a statement on your Farm Direct application that declares you are a farmer (see definition below) who grows, cultivates or harvests fresh fruits, vegetables or cut herbs in Oregon or a bordering county to sell at a farmers' market or farm stand. (Farm Direct farmer definition: a farmer is defined as a person who owns, leases, rents or sharecrops land to grow, cultivate or harvest crops on that land.)

## **Signage**

Your FDNP agreement requires that you post the yellow "2008 Farm Direct Checks Welcome Here" sign in a visible location wherever you plan to accept these checks.

You may not display signs from past years. Signs will be supplied by the Department of Human Services. If you need additional signs, please call 971/673-0040 and ask for the Farm Direct contact.

## **Checks**

Seniors use yellow \$3.00 checks and WIC clients use lavender-colored \$2.00 checks that you will cash or deposit directly into your own bank account. See the enclosed sample of both checks.

Senior Farm Direct recipients may have a family member or caregiver shop with their checks on their behalf.

## **No Change Allowed**

**No change may be given** for Farm Direct checks.

## **Acceptance of Checks**

Authorized farmers may begin accepting checks from both WIC and Senior program participants on **June 1, 2008**. You may accept checks for both programs through **October 31, 2008**. Authorized farmers must cash or deposit all redeemed checks by **November 30, 2008**. You will not be paid for checks you attempt to cash or deposit after November 30.

## Farmer Rules

All participating farmers must comply with program regulations as outlined in Oregon Administrative Rules 333-052-0020 through 333-052-0130.

## Reimbursement of Checks

Only farmers authorized to participate in the Farm Direct Nutrition Programs may cash or deposit Farm Direct checks using an account at a local bank or credit union:

1. Stamp your unique 4-digit Farmer ID number in the box on the front of each check, and endorse each Farm Direct check as you would any other check.
2. Bundle all your Farm Direct checks together and handle them as a separate transaction at the bank. If you are depositing checks, fill out a separate deposit slip for your Farm Direct checks versus your other checks.

We recommend that you let your bank or credit union know that you will be depositing/cashing Farm Direct checks. Refer to the enclosed "Frequently Asked Questions for Banks and Credit Unions" sheet if necessary.

## Important Reimbursement Reminders

- If you receive a check that is torn you may use scotch tape to repair the tear, but do not tape over the computer-encoded line at the bottom of the check or the dollar amount on the check.
- Farm Direct checks that appear to be altered will be returned unpaid to the authorized farmer. (For example, a check with a "1" written in front of the "2" in \$2.00.)
- **For each Farm Direct check you forget to stamp with your Farmer ID number, the value of the check will be taken out of your bank account AND each check will be returned to you just like a bounced check. However, you do have one opportunity, per check, to stamp and re-deposit each check that is returned to you for this reason.**
- Do NOT hand write your Farmer ID number! Our banking system does not accept handwriting and will return checks unpaid that are not stamped with a valid 4-digit Farmer ID number.
- **Please make sure your stamp is clear and dark enough to be read!** The banking world now uses images or copies of checks rather than the checks themselves. If our banking system cannot read your four-digit Farmer ID number your check(s) will be returned unpaid. Please make sure your stamp is clean, and replace or re-ink your stamp when necessary. Refer to page 4 for more information on stamp replacement and ink refills.

## Farmer-Friendly Banks and Credit Unions

The State is working with local banks/credit unions to waive or reduce normal account transaction fees for farmers who have accounts with them. A list of "farmer friendly" financial institutions, as of May 1, 2008, is enclosed. For updates throughout the Farm Direct season, please check the Oregon Department of Agriculture website at [http://oregon.gov/ODA/ADMD/farm\\_direct.shtml](http://oregon.gov/ODA/ADMD/farm_direct.shtml).

## Eligible Foods

Farm Direct checks may be used to buy **fresh fruit, vegetables and cut herbs** which are grown in Oregon or bordering counties: Southern Washington, Northern California and Western Idaho. The goals of the programs are to support the sale of Oregon's farm crops and increase the consumption of fresh fruit, vegetables and culinary herbs among WIC families and seniors in Oregon. Eligible foods being purchased with Farm Direct checks may not be processed or prepared beyond their natural state except for usual harvesting and cleaning processes.

## Ineligible Foods

Produce items purchased from wholesale distributors, including any imported tropical fruits such as bananas, pineapples and oranges, are **not eligible**. Other ineligible items as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) include:

- Processed foods - milk, honey, jam, dried fruit or herbs, baked goods, cider, cheese;
- Non-produce foods - eggs, raw nuts and seeds, fish, meats;
- Non-food agricultural items - potted plants, seeds, cut flowers; and
- Non-food items - crafts, jewelry.

Note: USDA has defined the eligible foods. If there are certain items that you would like to have included in future programs, please include your recommendations on the survey the State will send at the end of the season.

## Comments/Complaints

Market vendors may obtain a Farm Direct Nutrition Program Comment Form from the market manager to provide feedback on the WIC and Senior programs. Farmers may also call the appropriate Farm Direct Nutrition Program contact (see below) with any complaints regarding program participation, including complaints of discrimination based on race, color, religious preference, age, disability, or sex.

## Who to call for additional information?

Questions	Contact	Phone
Farmer participation questions	Oregon Department of Agriculture	(503) 872-6600
WIC and farmers' market participation	Farm Direct Contact	(971) 673-0040
Senior eligibility and check distribution questions	Seniors & People with Disabilities	Toll-free 1-866-299-3562

## **Stamp Replacement and Ink Refill**

Please keep your four-digit Farmer ID stamp in a safe area! You are responsible for stamp replacements and/or ink re-fills. The original order was placed with CCI Enterprises in Milwaukie. They can be reached at 503/652-9036. Or you may choose to order through your own supplier. The following specifications guarantee readability by our banking system:

- OCR-B Font
- Template size = 9/16 inch x 1 1/2 inches
- Font size = 40
- Make sure your 4-digit number starts with a "0".  
For example, **0123**