

NEWS RELEASE

USDA AWARDS \$1 MILLION TO ALABAMA FARMERS MARKET PROGRAM

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WASHINGTON – The Alabama Farmers Market Authority (FMA) will receive \$1 million in USDA grants for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). USDA announced the grant earlier this week along with Don Wambles, administrator of the State of Alabama Farmers Market Authority in Montgomery.

The SFMNP is a competitive grant program. Alabama's application was scored against all recipients and awards were made accordingly. "We are pleased with the announcement that our grant request was fully funded and is the fourth largest award among all recipients," said Wambles. "Our award will allow us to expand the SFMNP to all 67 counties one year ahead of our initial goal," added Wambles.

The Alabama SFMNP provides low-income seniors with cash benefits, in the form of coupons, for use during the 2004 harvest season. These coupons are used to purchase fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs only at farmers markets and farm stands certified by the FMA and can only be accepted by farmers who have been certified to participate in the program. Any Alabama farmer wishing to participate in the program should contact the FMA.

Eligible SFMNP recipients will meet both of the following criteria:

AGE – must be 60 years of age or older, *and*

INCOME LEVEL – Annual household gross income must fall at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines. Total annual income for the household must not exceed:

Household of 1	-	\$17,224	(\$1,435.00 Monthly)
Household of 2	-	\$23,107	(\$1,926.00 Monthly)
Household of 3	-	\$29,156	(\$2,430.00 Monthly)

The FMA has partnered with the Alabama Department of Public Health to administer the Womens, Infants and Children's Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) since 1999. This year the Health Department has turned over full administration of this program to the FMA. Unlike the SFMNP, the WIC FMNP is not a competitive grant program, but a state plan must be submitted to USDA for approval and requires a 30% state match to receive federal funds.

Wambles stated, "We have been notified that our state plan request of \$506,666 has been approved which is a base grant amount equal to last year's funding of \$239,850, and \$266,816 in expansion funds."

“Senior and WIC FMNP coupon purchases alone have generated in excess of \$3.9 million in income for 1,198 small farmers selling at 57 farmers’ markets and 136 farm stands in our state. Approximately \$2.5 million in cash sales have been received from the coupon recipients,” said Wambles.

For further information please contact the State of Alabama Farmers Market Authority at (334) 242-2618 or visit their website at www.fma.alabama.gov. or <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>