



Food and
Nutrition
Service

May 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Request for WIC Flexibility in Response to COVID-19

1320
Braddock
Place
Alexandria,
VA
22314

TO: Tim English
Regional Administrator
Midwest Regional Office

This letter is in response to the May 6, 2020 correspondence from Illinois FMNP requesting program flexibility in the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) as a result of significant impacts to providing eligible foods to recipients due to COVID-19.

Illinois FMNP requested a waiver of the requirement that their agreements with authorized farmers, roadside stands, and/or farmers' markets not exceed three years, as outlined at 7 CFR 248.10(b)(7). Pursuant to the authority granted in section 2204(a)(1) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) approves this waiver request through **September 30, 2020**.

This waiver allows Illinois FMNP to extend currently expiring agreements with authorized farmers, roadside stands, and/or farmers' markets by one year. As a result of office closures and/or stay-at-home orders, staff have been working remotely and have not been able to receive farmer applications or review and process reauthorizations. Approval of this extension will prevent the loss of significant numbers of farmers authorized to accept FMNP coupons this season while ensuring State agencies maintain Program integrity through reauthorization in advance of next year's season. To the extent possible, State agencies are encouraged to begin work on the reauthorization process as feasible to reduce workload burden next year. This waiver is only applicable to regulations at:

- 7 CFR 248.10(b)(7) which requires that agreements with authorized farmers, roadside stands, and/or farmers' markets not exceed three years.

The waiver authority at section 2204(b) of P.L. 116-127 requires the State agency to submit a report which includes a summary of the use of this waiver and a description of whether the waiver resulted in improved services to women, infants, and children. The State agency shall provide the Regional Office with this report no later than one year after the date of approval.

USDA FNS appreciates Illinois FMNP's commitment to addressing the operational challenges impeding the delivery of FMNP benefits to women, infants, and children in need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Widor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'W'.

SARAH WIDOR
Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division