



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

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USDA Announces Request for Proposals for the Farmers Market Promotion Program

The US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today released funding guidelines for the new Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP). The program will make grants on a competitive basis to farmers market councils, farm coops, non-profit groups, and others involved in direct marketing from producers to consumers. The FMPP is designed to increase the profitability of small and mid-sized farms, improve consumer access to quality food, and support local food systems by developing, improving or expanding domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, internet sales, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (SAC) formulated and promoted the FMPP during consideration of the 2002 Farm Bill. The program was championed in the farm bill by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA). The FMPP was not funded until FY 2006 when Congress appropriated \$1 million for the program after much encouragement from sustainable agriculture, local food, and direct marketing advocates, with leadership from SAC. Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) led the bipartisan effort to secure first-time funding.

"Direct producer-to-consumer marketing ventures have become an important part of the farming operation for many producers, particularly small and mid-sized fruit, vegetable and livestock farms," according to Margaret Huelsman, Executive Director of SAC. "Providing small and mid-size family farms with viable opportunities to direct market their products to the consumer has become vital to the survival of these operations because farmers can receive a higher return for their goods by eliminating the middle men," added Huelsman.

Farmers markets and similar operations have made it easier for consumers to find a fresh and steady supply of organic or sustainably-produced food. The public has responded positively to these opportunities to buy directly from farmers. Demand for farmers' markets has grown tremendously in recent years, with the number of markets growing 63% from 1994 to 2000 according to USDA.

Funding through FMPP will be available to agriculture cooperatives, local governments, nonprofit corporations (many farmer's market associations are non-profit entities), public benefit corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmer's market authorities, and tribal governments. The limit for each proposal will be \$75,000.

Instructions on how to apply for a grant can be found in the March 15 issue of the *Federal Register* and in the FMPP guidelines on the AMS website at www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/FMPP/FMPPInfo.htm. Applications and proposals must be sent to AMS no later than close of business on May 1.

Requests for information and finished proposal should be sent to:
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