



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Project FRESH Enhances Access to Local Produce for WIC Recipients and Senior Citizens

EAST LANSING, MICH – As the bounty of local food is becoming readily available, more people are getting access to fresh, local produce through Project FRESH this summer.

Project FRESH (Farm Resources Expanding and Supporting Health) is a program that makes fresh produce available to low-income, nutritionally-at-risk consumers and also supports Michigan farmers. It expands the awareness and use of farmers markets in addition to increasing sales at the markets. The Michigan Department of Community Health WIC Division, Michigan State University Extension and the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service jointly administer the program. Project FRESH receives federal funds, local funds, private grants and WIC program income from vendor fines.

Project FRESH operates from June 1 through October 31 each year. Coupon booklets are provided to participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables at authorized farmers markets and roadside stands. Specially printed coupon booklets are issued to WIC participants who reside in participating counties. Each participant receives ten \$2 coupons which may be used at the authorized markets and stands.

This summer, the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University is coordinating Michigan State University's role in nutrition education for Project FRESH recipients. Also assisting are Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) and the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) because of their close links to farmers and farmers markets in the state.

“This project will focus on enhancing the connections between farmers markets, Michigan State University Extension and local WIC offices in an overall effort to increase peer-to-peer networking as well as Project FRESH recognition and redemption,” said Susan Smalley, Director of the C.S. Mott Group. “In Michigan's current troubled economy, we want to help Project FRESH recipients redeem every coupon issued and use the food they receive to improve both nutrition and enjoyment of Michigan products.”

Main objectives of this project over the summer include: providing more extensive media visibility for Project FRESH, organizing and hosting regional meetings in five locations around Michigan to invite local sharing and collaboration within Project FRESH and



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related efforts, and offering special consultation and support to counties with relatively large numbers of coupon booklets distributed and relatively low redemption rates.

“Project FRESH is a great program, and we’re excited to be involved to raise awareness about its benefits and work towards greater redemption of coupons,” said Dru Montri, Association Manager of MIFMA.

For more information about Project FRESH, visit www.projectfresh.msu.edu. To learn more about MIFFS or MIFMA, visit www.miffs.org or www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu, or call (517) 432-0712.

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Founded in 1998, MIFFS is a statewide membership organization (501c3) whose purpose is to promote diverse efforts that foster and sustain food and farming systems that improve economic, ecological and social well-being. MIFFS has been effective at establishing successful partnerships among producers, markets and institutions that have created more profitable, environmentally friendly food systems in Michigan.

The organization’s vision is based on the premise that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan’s rural and urban communities. To learn more, please visit www.miffs.org or call (517) 432-0712.