



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

2,700 Local Seniors Now Eligible for Free Produce at Local Farmers Markets

PATTY RITCHIE June 11, 2015

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION**

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**

Promoting Better Health and Boosting Local Farmers Are Goals of Expanded Program

Senator Patty Ritchie today announced that funding she included in this year's state budget will provide free farm-fresh fruits and vegetables from area Farmers Markets to 2,700 seniors from Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties, as a way to boost nutrition and healthy eating, while at the same time helping to strengthen the bottom lines of New York farmers.

As part of her "Grown in New York" initiative, Senator Ritchie, chair of the Senate's Agriculture Committee, sought the new funding to expand the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which gives \$20 coupons to low-income seniors that can be redeemed at Farmers Markets across the state. The total value of the coupons in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties is more than \$53,000.

"We are all living longer, and good nutrition is important to a healthy lifestyle. But studies show that only one in three seniors are regularly buying and eating fresh, quality produce, like that which is grown by local farmers and available right now at area Farmers Markets," Senator Ritchie said.

“That’s why I worked this year to expand the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program so that more seniors, living on fixed budgets, won’t have to choose between healthy eating and balancing their checkbooks.

“And because of federal requirements that more than half of food purchased must be locally sourced from area farms, seniors can know that they are also helping to support local farm families and a vital part of our region’s economy,” Senator Ritchie said.

Coupon booklets will be made available over the next few weeks through local county Offices for the Aging. The coupons can be redeemed for purchases at most of the more than 28 local Farmers Markets in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties.

Senator Ritchie has published a full schedule of local markets on her website—[available by CLICKING HERE](#)—and distributed more than 60,000 printed copies, as part of her continuing effort to connect consumers and local farmers, and support the Northern and Central New York agriculture economy.

The new funding in this year’s budget allows 110,000 low-income seniors to access the Senior Farmers Market Nutritional Program statewide.

Eligible seniors can earn up to \$1,800 a month, or \$2,426 for a couple.

Senator Ritchie’s “Grown in New York” program is a sweeping initiative that aims to connect consumers and local farmers. In addition to the SFMNP expansion, it also included initiatives to bring more local foods into area schools, and funding to help farmers more easily access big city consumer markets downstate.

In Jefferson County, coupons will be distributed by the Office for the Aging beginning July 1, and are valid at all Farmers Markets in the county. For information, call (315) 785-3191.

In Oswego County, coupons also will be available July 1, and are valid at the Oswego, Fulton and Pulaski markets only. Additional markets may be added in coming weeks. For information, call: (315) 349-3484.

In St. Lawrence County, coupons will be available July 9 at the Star Lake senior picnic, and July 10 at the Morristown senior picnic. They are accepted at all markets. For information, call (315) 386-4730.