



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## **More Seniors Now Eligible for Free Produce from Local Farmers' Markets**

Catharine Young

July 2, 2015

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*Program Sponsored by Senator Young Supports Better Health, Local Farmers*

ALBANY - Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) announced today that funding included in this year's state budget will provide free farm-fresh fruits and vegetables from area farmers' markets to seniors in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany and Livingston Counties.

As a way to boost nutrition and healthy eating, while also strengthening the bottom lines of New York farmers, the state Legislature appropriated \$2 million to support the Farm-to-Seniors initiative. The program provides coupon booklets, consisting of five \$4 checks that can be redeemed for the purchase of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets and farm stands across the state. The funding expands the reach for the already successful Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Senator Young, who serves on the Senate's Agriculture Committee, helped sponsor the initiative earlier this year as part of the Senate's "Grown in New York" program. The funding allows 110,000 low-income seniors to access the Senior Farmers' Market Nutritional Program statewide. The total value of the coupons in the 57th Senate District is more than \$63,460.

"Studies show that only one in three seniors are regularly buying and eating fresh, quality produce, like that available from our local farmers. Our seniors have done so much for us, and they continue to contribute in so many ways. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutritional Program provides a way for them to continue living full, rich, and healthy lives," said Senator Young.

"With many seniors living on fixed budgets, the program allows them to avoid choosing between healthy eating and balancing their checkbooks. Plus, seniors have the added benefit of knowing that they are supporting local farm families and playing a vital role in our region's economy," Senator Young continued.

Coupon booklets will be made available through each county's Offices for the Aging. The coupons can be redeemed for purchases at most of the local farmers' markets in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany and Livingston Counties. The program is open to eligible seniors who are 60 years old or older, with monthly incomes of \$1,800 or less for an individual, or \$2,426 or less for a couple.

Information on farmers' markets in each county, including times and dates can be found at: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/ap/communityfarmersmarkets.asp>.

The Senate's "Grown in New York" program was a multi-dimensional program aimed at connecting consumers and local farmers. In addition to the expansion of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, it also included initiatives to bring more local foods into area schools and funding to begin a revolving loan program that allows eligible beginning farmers to access start-up capital for the purchase of land and basic farm equipment.

As part of this year's legislative session, Senator Young also sponsored [legislation](#), which passed in both houses, that will establish an Urban and Regional Farmers' Market Facilities Construction Program to help with the planning and development of urban and regional farmers' market facilities. These new facilities will allow consumers to purchase fresh produce and items directly from farmers who may otherwise lack access to a particular market within a city.