10.5 Support Equitable Food Access and Local Farmers

15 Points | 30 Points | 45 Points | 60 Points | 75 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2025. The previous version of this action is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

To support local agriculture and farmers, and to ensure that all people have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences.

Complementary Actions:

- Provide Effective Community Communications
- Encourage an Equitable and Just Food System

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Host a farmers' market in your municipality, or in partnership with neighboring municipalities. **(15 points)**

   To earn points, the market must:

   - Meet the CT Department of Agriculture's definition of a Certified Farmers' Market; and
   - Be regularly occurring, with at least six market dates per year; and
   - Be supported by the hosting municipality or municipalities (support could include providing public space for the market, providing waste pick-up at the market, etc.); and
   - Be advertised by the hosting municipality or municipalities on a municipal website, newsletter, social media, or other regularly used form of communications.

   Submit: A brief description of how your municipality supports the farmers market (beyond promotion and advertising), the location of the farmers' market, a hyperlink or screenshot of promotion/outreach for the farmers' market on your municipality's website or other sample outreach material (such as a flyer or social media post), and the market calendar or schedule for the year in which your municipality is applying for certification. If you are applying for spring certification and do not have market dates for the upcoming year, you may submit market dates from the previous calendar year.

2. Directly or through community partnerships, encourage and support at least one farmers market to accept Farmer Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers and the Connecticut Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which is the payment method for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Such support could include applying to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for an entire farmers' market to be approved to accept EBT, if it is not practical for individual farmers to do so; helping vendors obtain electronic EBT card readers; or providing educational materials for vendors on processing for accepting EBT cards and FMNP vouchers. Promote these new payment methods through municipal communications (such as newsletters, social media, or email lists), the municipal website, social services offices or providers, senior centers, or other relevant channels and partners. **(15 points awarded for implementing acceptance of each FMNP and EBT, up to 30 points total for both)**

Submit: Documentation that a farmers market in your municipality accepts FMNP and/or SNAP/EBT payment in the year in which your municipality is applying for certification; names and locations of farmers markets included; an example of communications or promotion of these payment methods (such as a newsletter, social media post, flyer, etc.).

3. Improve the accessibility of farmers markets, making it easier for all populations, especially low-income residents, to reach the market and shop there. Improvements must have been implemented in the last three years. **(15 points per improvement, up to 30 points)**

   Examples of accessibility improvements include:

   - Providing shuttle bus service to the farmers' market
   - Ensuring the market space meets all ADA requirements
   - Introducing new wayfinding signage directing pedestrians to the farmers' market
   - Hosting pop-up markets at locations underserved by farmers markets

   Submit: A description of how your municipality improved accessibility of local farmers markets and relevant documentation, such as invoices for shuttle bus service to markets or photos of a pop-up market; dates when the improvements were completed.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

The local government public health department or district staff and social services department or staff should be involved in the implementation of this action, in partnership with community agencies. Partners might include community food nonprofits, local businesses (including farms), municipal economic development representatives, an agricultural commission or food systems team, farmers markets, emergency food providers, and senior centers.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- CT Department of Agriculture - Establishing a Farmers' Market in Connecticut
- CT Department of Agriculture - Farmers' Market Reference Guide
- CT Department of Agriculture - Farmers Market Information and FMNP Redemption Locations
- Connecticut Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Factsheet
- CT Department of Health and Human Services - Food Assistance - Farmers' Markets, Farms and Farm Stands
- Farmers Market Coalition - The Anti-Racist Farmers Market Toolkit
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - Farmer/Producer

- USDA Food and Nutrition Service - Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- USDA Food and Nutrition Service - Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- CT Department of Health and Human Services - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- University of Connecticut - The Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy
- CT Department of Agriculture - Farmers Markets
- CT Food System Alliance

Why This Matters

Increasing access to farmers' markets, for all populations, benefits both shoppers and farmers. Residents are able to purchase fresh, local food, while supporting local agriculture. Farmers' markets also serve as vibrant community spaces.

In fiscal year 2021, 371,600 Connecticut residents (10% of the state population) received SNAP benefits. Approximately half of the state's SNAP participants include families with children. Increasing options for where residents can spend their SNAP or FMNP benefits can improve access to food for low-income populations, while also supporting local farms and farmers.

Benefits

Expanding access to food purchasing options benefits residents in terms of financial flexibility and increased options for shopping locations. Encouraging more residents to shop at the farmers' market supports local agriculture and vendors. Both of these help to build a more equitable food system.

CT Success Stories

- Bristol - Sep 2023 Certification
- Ellington - May 2024 Certification
- Glastonbury - Oct 2024 Certification
- Monroe - Oct 2024 Certification
- Southbury - Oct 2024 Certification
- West Hartford - Oct 2024 Certification
- Vernon - May 2025 Certification