

**RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE**

**SENIOR FARMERS MARKET
NUTRITION PROGRAM**

**FINAL REPORT RHODE ISLAND SENIOR FARMERS
MARKET PROGRAM 2008**

SUBMITTED TO:

FOOD and NUTRITION SERVICE, USDA

BY

**THE RHODE ISLAND
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
235 PROMENADE STREET
PROVIDENCE, RI 02908**

DECEMBER 2008

**FINAL REPORT RHODE ISLAND SENIOR FARMERS MARKET
NUTRITION PROGRAM 2008**

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture in cooperation with the Rhode Island Department of Elderly Affairs recruited one hundred and two (102) farmers to accept RI Senior Farmers Market Coupons at thirty two (32) Farmers Markets and thirteen (13) Roadside Stand throughout the State. These figures show

an increase of 15 farmers, 6 farmers market and 2 roadside stands over the 2007 numbers we had for places for Seniors to redeem their coupons.

Farmers were given material instructing them how the RI Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program works and how it benefits both senior citizens and the farming community. Informational meetings were held with these farmers in April, May, June, July, and August to answer any questions they may have had. In addition the RI. DEM Division of Agriculture visited all the farmers markets and roadside stand to make sure the farmers were adhering to the rules of the program and not accepting coupons for items that are exempt. The Division of Agriculture also had a presence at the farmers markets throughout the year instructing seniors as how to use the senior farmers markets coupons.

Meetings were also held in cooperation with the Department of Elderly Affairs State Nutrition Directors to explain the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to them. The five (5) area directors were responsible for the training of Department of Elderly Affairs personnel to distribute the Senior Farmers Market Coupons to their clients. The five area directors cover forty two (42) senior meal sites located throughout the State of Rhode Island. We are planning to meet with the five (5) area directors of the Department of Elderly Affairs nutrition program in February to discuss how we can improve the Senior Farmers Market Program for 2009.

Meal site managers and staff were trained on all aspects of the program such as participant eligibility which for RI was seniors sixty (60) yrs. of age or older with incomes of one hundred eighty five percent (185%) of the poverty level or less and other pertinent program particulars. This year we also added handicapped people living in elderly housing. Each center was responsible for documenting the distribution of coupons from their site this was accomplished by using a log sheet, which listed the recipient's name and coupon numbers. It was also the method used for recipients to declare their income status. Trainings for employees and volunteers were held in April, May.

Senior Farmers Market nutrition Program Coupons and information was distributed at forty two (42) meal sites to nineteen thousand two hundred (19,200) eligible senior citizens and handicapped people living in elderly housing. These senior meal sites held weekly informational meetings coordinate by the Department of Elderly Affairs Nutritional Specialists. Seniors were taught the importance of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables. Also seniors were told about the RI Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and how they could receive fifteen dollars (\$15) in coupons to be spent at Farmers Markets or Roadside Stand. Seniors were instructed as to what they could buy and where they could redeem their coupons. Also the DEM/Division of Agriculture created a traveling farmers market that we took to fourteen (14) meal sites to make it convenient for the seniors to use their coupons. This was a great success and will be expanded in 2009.

In the final count there were fifty seven thousand six hundred (57,600) coupons (\$288,000 dollars) distributed to nineteen thousand two hundred (19,200) eligible seniors and handicapped people living in elderly housing in the State of Rhode Island. Of these coupons, forty four thousand three hundred seventy seven (44,377) coupons were redeemed by seniors and handicapped living in elderly housing for a redemption rate of eighty eight percent (88 %) of eligible food funds, which exceeded all our goals. This reflects \$221,885 dollars that helped keep farming in Rhode Island viable. In addition to helping our Seniors purchase nutritional fresh fruits and vegetables.

For the 2009 season we plan on increasing our recruitment efforts of farmers into the program so seniors and handicapped people living in elderly housing will have more outlets to use their coupons. We also plan to expand the traveling farmers market. The traveling farmers market was a big hit with the seniors and they liked the convenience it afforded them. We also plan on holding more informational cooking demonstrations at the farmers markets in partnership with Johnson & Wales University and the University of Rhode Island to instruct seniors on how to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables.