

2024 Senior Farm Share Program Program Summary

What is the Senior Farm Share Program?

The Senior Farm Share Program helps low-income seniors increase their consumption of fresh, local produce at the height of Vermont's growing season. With USDA support, participants receive fresh locally-grown fruits and vegetables from a farm in their community. In addition to receiving vegetables, seniors have an opportunity to connect with other seniors within their housing site through food distribution and preparation, meet other community members involved with the farm, and develop a relationship with the farmer who grows the food they eat each week.

The Senior Farm Share Program is supported with funds from the USDA Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Federal funds cover 100% of the food costs for this program. In 2024, Vermont expects to receive federal support for over 1000 senior shares, valued at \$50/share.

Who is eligible?

To participate in the program, seniors must be 60 or older and meet the income requirement. Households need a monthly income at or below 185% of the federal poverty income guidelines to be eligible. In 2023, a one-person household needed to have a gross monthly income of \$2,322 or less, and a 2-person household needed to have a gross monthly income of \$3,152 or less. It may be possible for younger adults with a disability who live in a participating housing site to qualify if: (1) they meet the income limit criteria; (2) more than half of the site residents are age 60 or older; *and* (3) the site offers congregate nutrition services. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact Johanna Doren, Johanna@nofavt.org (802) 434-7162.

Senior housing sites are selected to participate based on several factors – number of interested residents who are income-eligible, proximity to participating CSA farms, and the availability and willingness of a Housing Site Coordinator to take responsibility for program coordination, including weekly share pick up and distribution.

What are the benefits?

The Senior Farm Share Program connects seniors to the farm through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share – community members share the farm's seasonal harvest with other community members. Each program participant is eligible for a \$50 share, which is typically spread out over 5 or 10 weeks. Farmers are paid for the cost of these shares directly by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT).

The federal grant that funds Senior Farm Share also pays for the farmers' market coupons distributed to seniors through the Vermont Farm to Family Coupon Program. *Federal rules prohibit a household from receiving Farm to Family coupons and participating in the Senior Farm Share program in the same year.*

About how many vegetables will a shareholder receive each week?

Participants will typically receive \$5-10 worth of vegetables in every share, depending on the number of shares delivered. The farm share is meant to serve as a supplement of vegetables (and sometimes fruit) to an individual's diet. What is included in each share depends on what is in season, the weather, and what varieties of produce the farmer grows.

What kinds of vegetables are distributed?

Each farm grows most of the standard vegetables (e.g. carrots, lettuce, and beets) and many new or unusual vegetables (e.g. Swiss chard, fennel, and parsnips). While participants may not get to choose the vegetables they receive, they can expect a variety over the course of the summer. Participants should be open to trying new vegetables, but talk with the farmer if participants are unable to eat certain kinds of vegetables due to dietary restrictions. If possible, farmers may tailor a senior share to meet special dietary needs of participants.

Shares in the past have looked like the following:

- Potatoes, beans, cucumber, summer squash
- 1 onion, 1 small head of lettuce, 3 carrots and a tomato
- 2 ears of corn, tomatoes, summer squash
- one tomato, one zucchini, 1 bell pepper, 1 bunch swiss chard
- 1 lb. baby carrots, 2 ears sweet corn, 2 medium tomatoes, 2 small zucchini (\$10 share)

When does the program begin and end?

Farmers generally begin food distribution in mid-July. By that time, participants can expect a wide variety of vegetables to be in season. Share distribution usually ends by late August or mid-September.

Some sites decide to stagger their share weeks to take advantage of different seasonal offerings.

How do shareholders get their vegetables each week?

On designated days, the Housing Site Coordinator will either pick up the vegetables at the farm or have them delivered to the senior housing site. The coordinator is responsible for the distribution of vegetables to all members, but they may also request assistance from interested participants. It is often helpful to identify a few residents willing to take on some leadership for the distribution of vegetables during pick-up times.

NOFA-VT encourages Coordinators to engage with residents and share ideas for using the produce they receive. Coordinators have found it helpful to print off simple recipes from sites like <http://www.vermontharvestofthefmonth.org/>.

The Housing Site Coordinator is responsible for working with the farmer to establish a schedule for when shares will be provided.

Who is administering the program?

The Senior Farm Share Program is administered by the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL). They do this in collaboration with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), and the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF).

Questions? Please contact:

Johanna Doren, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont: (802) 434-7162 or Johanna@nofavt.org

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