



**Maine Senior FarmShare Program (MSFP)**  
**Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**  
**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**

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1. How do I know if an individual qualifies for the Maine Senior FarmShare Program?

Participants “self-declare” that they are eligible for the program. Participants must meet **ALL** of the requirements below to qualify for FarmShare:

- Must be age 60 or older (age 55 or over if Native American), **AND**
- Must be a Maine resident, **AND**
- Must meet income guidelines for the current year (see the Maine Senior FarmShare Program Income Eligibility Guidelines for the current year).

2. How does a farmer arrange for individual shares?

- Contact qualifying seniors and discuss the options available to them –
  - Senior and Farmer selects
  - Delivery or pick-up
  - Seasonal availability
  - Range of produce, etc.

There are many ways to distribute produce to your seniors. Please contact the Maine Senior FarmShare Program office if you would like assistance in choosing a distribution method.

- Give seniors a list of your crop offerings. This is a great tool to use with seniors to give them an idea of what you will offer.
- Go over all Maine Senior FarmShare Program information with each senior and explain what a Senior FarmShare Agreement Form is and what they are expected to do to obtain their produce. Remember that you are responsible for assuring that seniors receive their full \$50 share benefit and that they are satisfied with the program.
- Some farms create a written notice for seniors stating that the senior will agree to use certain percentages of their share by specific dates. This written notice helps to prevent seniors from waiting until last minute to use their share.
- The senior signs the electronic or paper Senior FarmShare Agreement Form. Farmers mail the paper copy of all signed Senior FarmShare Agreement Form's to the MSFP within one week of senior signature.

3. How are farmers paid for Senior FarmShare Agreements?

Farmers submit Senior FarmShare Agreement Forms by mail or enter them in MOSSA beginning in April. MSFP will issue payments on a minimum bi-weekly basis beginning the second week of April. The Treasurer, State of Maine issues payments to farmers on Mondays.

4. What does a farmer tell seniors if their allocated shares are filled?

When seniors contact you after you have filled all your available shares:

- Explain that you have already filled your number of allocated shares for the season.
- Offer to add their name to your waiting list and you will notify them if a share becomes available.

Please remember, you must keep a waiting list of interested participant names and contact information in case extra shares become available later in the season or in the event that you

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need to replace an existing senior. MSFP will provide a waiting list form that includes all information you should maintain.

- You can give seniors the number for the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) 1-877-353-3771. The AAA will try to connect the senior with another local participating farmer, or food pantry, or provide ideas for other resources.

### 5. What does a farmer do if all allocated shares are not filled by the submission deadline?

- The first submission deadline for all Senior FarmShare Agreement Forms is **July 31** each year. If a farmer is unable to fill their allocated shares by this deadline, the farmer can request an extension by calling Donna Murray, Program Manager at 207-446-5550.
  - MSFP reserves the right to reallocate unfilled shares to other farms after the July 31<sup>st</sup> deadline.
- During the first week of August the MSFP will begin second allocations. Farms that receive additional shares can then begin signing up new seniors. **The final deadline for submitting Senior FarmShare Agreement Forms is September 30<sup>th</sup>.**

### 6. What are a farmer's options if seniors are not using their shares?

It is extremely important that seniors use their full \$50 share. **Donations are not allowed** to close out unused Maine Senior FarmShare Program balances.

- Contact the senior via phone, mail, family members, or neighbors to inquire of the senior's status and determine if they intend to use the remainder of their balance. If the senior is not going to use the remainder of their balance you can sign up another eligible senior. Do not give extra produce to one of your current seniors, as this cannot count towards balancing your farm's account with the MSFP.
- You can/should combine unused balances of multiple seniors who are unable to utilize their full shares to create a new \$50 balance for a new senior. Each senior is entitled to a full \$50 worth of produce.

### 7. How can a farmer prevent having a balance due at the end of the season?

- a. Consider sending seniors a note or call them when the season has kicked off to remind them to use their share. Seniors sign up in early spring and it may be several weeks before you have available produce. A senior may forget that they signed up for the Maine Senior FarmShare Program.
- b. Sign up an additional senior when you realize that a senior will not utilize their full \$50 share. Again, each senior is entitled to a full \$50 worth of produce. You can/should combine unused balances of multiple seniors who are unable to utilize their full share to create a new \$50 balance for a new senior.

### 8. What are "Spare" and/or "Replacement" participants?

Many farmers choose to sign up a few additional participants above their allocated number of shares because they anticipate that some of their seniors will not use their entire \$50 share during the season. There are several reasons seniors might not use their full \$50 share (deceased, moved, nursing home, etc.). Farmers can sign up participants as **"replacements"** to offset other seniors' unused balances on their end of season accounting report.

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If you sign up additional seniors after you have filled all your allocated share’s they will have a “**Spare**” status. You should only sign up spare seniors if you intend to provide them with a full \$50 Senior FarmShare benefit throughout the season. Otherwise, seniors should be placed on your waiting list and contacted once you intend to provide them with the \$50 Senior FarmShare benefit.

### ***It is a choice for each farmer to sign up spare participants or not.***

Farmers are not paid for spare contracts. Therefore, it is a risk that the farmer may not be compensated for the full amount of produce distributed to participants if you choose to sign up spare participants. Spare participants can be used as replacements if needed.

Farmers may be reimbursed for spare contracts if the program has funds remaining at the end of the season. This is not guaranteed. Each year it depends on a variety of factors. E.g., Shares not filled during the season, additional grant funds received later in the season, unused senior share funds returned by farmers at end of season, etc.

- The value of produce distributed to certified participants must equal the amount the MSFP paid to the farmer. Farms with unused share balances at the end of the season must reimburse the MSFP with a check/money order payable to Treasurer, State of Maine. These unused share balances must be submitted to the MSFP by the due date. The MSFP must reallocate your unused share balances to other farms before our report is due to USDA.

Please note: It is extremely important that all farmers submit End-of-Season-Accounting by completing the “Record Share Redemptions” in MOSSA (A paper report can be requested for farms not using MOSSA) by the due date. If this is entered late, it could affect your farms participation/allocation the following year.

## 9. Where do farmers send paperwork?

MAINE SENIOR FARMSHARE PROGRAM  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY  
28 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0028

## 10. Whom do farmers call with questions?

Donna Murray, Program Manager

Maine Senior FarmShare Program

(207) 446-5550, email [donna.murray@maine.gov](mailto:donna.murray@maine.gov)

Please leave a detailed message if you reach the voicemail system.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time with questions or issues. I encourage and enjoy ongoing communication with all farmers. I always welcome feedback and suggestions. Your communication is valuable and helps improve the Maine Senior FarmShare Program each year!