**Senior Project FRESH in Michigan with Michigan State University Extension**

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[Senior Project FRESH](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/adults-and-seniors/behavioral-and-physical-health-and-aging-services/special-programs/senior-project-freshmarket-fresh) (SPF), which is part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Bill, is a program designed to help older adults incorporate more fresh fruit and vegetables in their diet. Senior Project FRESH was created to assist older adults living on a limited income with a secondary benefit of supporting Michigan farmers.

The program is available in all 83 counties in the State of Michigan. Currently, [Michigan State University Extension](https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/) serves as a lead agency, providing nutrition education and coupon distribution in 16 counties. MSU Extension also provides nutrition education with other lead agencies. This varies from year to year.

**Things you should know:**

* Coupon distribution is on a first come, first serve basis.
* Participants must receive coupons in their home county but can spend them at any authorized farmers market or roadside stand that accepts Senior Project FRESH coupons Michigan.
* There are some rules of what can be purchased with the coupons.
* Distribution is administered by a wide variety of agencies in Michigan.
* The program runs from May 1 to October 31 of any given year. Coupons expire on October 31 each year.
* If you are receiving coupons from an MSU Extension staff person, you may need to attend a class that provides fun and interactive nutrition education and resources. Depending on your county, these can be attended in-person, by Zoom video or audio, or over the telephone.

**Who is eligible:**

To receive coupons, all three conditions must be met: age, residency, and income.

* By age - Adults 60 years and older, or 55 and older and a member of a Michigan federally recognized tribe or urban tribal group.
* By residency - you must live in the county where the coupons are being distributed.
* By income - your income must be at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guideline:
  + Visit the 2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines, or see the chart below
    - <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>
  + For 2024, 185% of poverty guideline is determined to be:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Household/Family Size** | **Annual Income** | **Monthly Income** |
| 1 | $ 27,861 | $2,321.75 |
| 2 | $ 37,814 | $3,151.17 |
| 3 | $ 47,767 | $3980.58 |
| 4 | $ 57,720 | $4,810.00 |
| 5 | $ 67,673 | $5,639.42 |

**Limitations of the coupon:**

* Coupons can only be spent at approved farm stands, roadside stands, farm markets and growers. The vendor will usually have a sign indicating they accept Senior Project FRESH coupons. The agency distributing the coupons will have an idea where you can spend the coupons in your home county.
* There are purchasing limitations:
  + Purchase is restricted to Michigan-grown produce or produce that is grown in states bordering Michigan. The farmer or vendor may sell produce from other states however, SPF coupons have this purchasing restriction.
  + No processed fruits and vegetables can be purchased with the coupon, such as jellies, jams, pickles, canned produce, etc.
  + You cannot receive change after spending the coupon; it is best to supplement the coupon with cash. For example: If your total purchase of approved items is $5.50, your choices are:
    - Spend one coupon at $5, plus 50 cents cash, or
    - Spend two coupons at $10, and lose $4.50
  + Coupons are like cash and cannot be replaced if lost or stolen.

**What you get:**

* One coupon booklet:
  + Five coupons of $5.00 each, a total of $25.00 for purchasing fresh fruit, vegetables, herbs, or honey.
  + Coupons are contained in a holder which must always accompany the coupons:
    - The holder is signed by you or a proxy\* before going to the market, or when you receive the holder in-person.
      * *\*A proxy is a trusted individual who you give permission to spend the coupons on your behalf if you are unable to go to the market yourself. It may be helpful to let the person distributing the coupons know that you have a proxy.*
    - You are allowed to have up to two proxies.
    - When using the coupons, you or your proxy will sign each coupon in front of the farmer. Coupon signatures must match a signature on the holder.

**What do you need to provide to receive the coupons?**

For 2024, this information may be collected in-person, by telephone for a web-based application or a paper application, or you may fill out a paper application yourself, depending on the county and/or agency distributing the coupons.

* Name
* Date of birth
* Gender
* Address
* Number in household
* Income eligibility
* Do you participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps?
* Do you participate in other assistance programs like home delivered meals, commodities, congregate meal sites, etc.?
* *Ethnicity and race are asked for, but it is not required to complete the application*

[**To find the lead agency doing education and distribution in your county of residence**](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Adult-and-Childrens-Services/Adults-and-Seniors/BPHASA/Lead-Agency-Coupon-Distribution-Sites---County-Contacts.pdf?rev=1ff628906d284c2388ba6389c903aa53&hash=8ED272BA944B3BEF6AE9C492D75F4F50)

(Source: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Adult Services Agency)

**[For Making Healthy Choices for Adults Age 60+ newsletters](https://www.canr.msu.edu/making_healthy_choices/newsletters-for-seniors)**

[**For Making Healthy Choices for Adults Age 60+ videos**](https://www.canr.msu.edu/search?tag=making%20healthy%20choices&county=&contentTypeOption=VideoObject&tagUsage=or&searchType=searchBar&hideHomePage=true#results)

**[For instructions on Freezing and Blanching](https://www.canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/uploads/files/2023%20Blanching-Freezing_AA.pdf)**

[**For a Michigan produce availability guide**](https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/236/59248/MI_Availability_Guide.pdf)