

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

FARMERS' CERTIFICATION HANDBOOK



Program requirements for all FMNP participating
farmers through December 31, 2028

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT &
RESOURCE CONSERVATION
450 COLUMBUS BLVD, SUITE 703
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06103
WWW.CTGROWN.GOV

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Authorized Farmers' Market

C.G.S. § 22-6g(2) "Authorized farmers' market" means a farmers' market that operates within the service area and is a site authorized by the department for the exchange of electronic benefits and Connecticut-grown fresh produce;"

Becoming an authorized farmers' market and participating in the FMNP is optional.

If a market elects to become an authorized farmers' market and participate in FMNP, the market **must** meet the following requirements:

- Require all farmers selling fruit, vegetables, fresh cut herbs, eggs, or honey participating in the market to be trained and certified in FMNP by DoAg BEFORE participating in the market
 - Only allow the sale of Connecticut Grown farm products
 - Have a signed agreement on file with DoAg
 - Have a minimum of two (2) produce farmers (not a jobber, as defined on page 6) attend on a weekly basis
 - Submit the Exempt Statement Form if applicable

Authorized farmers' markets are encouraged to contact DoAg to verify a farmer's status prior to accepting a farmer into the market.

Certified Farmer

A farmer who meets all the qualifications to accept Connecticut S/FMNP electronic benefits, electronic benefit cards, an approved elicense FMNP application, an approved crop plan on file with DoAg, has current farmer portal access to process electronic benefits, and a valid Certified Farmer ID Poster.

Certified Farmer Poster

The poster provided to certified farmers which must be displayed when selling at an authorized farmers' market to make FMNP participants aware the S/FMNP electronic benefits can be redeemed with the certified farmer.

Certified Market

C.G.S. § 22-6r(3) "Certified farmers' market" means a farmers' market that is authorized by the commissioner to operate;

To become certified by DoAg, a signed agreement is submitted to DoAg acknowledging a commitment to allowing only Connecticut Grown farm products. Only certified markets are eligible to become an authorized farmers' market and participate in FMNP.

Connecticut Grown

C.G.S § 22-38. Advertising of Connecticut-Grown farm products. Selling of Connecticut-Grown farm products at farmers' markets. (a) For purposes of this section, "farm products" means products resulting from the practice of agriculture or farming, as defined in section 1-1 and "Connecticut-Grown" means produce and other farm products that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut.

Only farm products grown or produced in Connecticut shall be advertised or sold in Connecticut as "Connecticut-Grown". Farm products grown or produced in Connecticut may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as "Native", "Native-Grown", "Local" or "Locally-Grown". Farm products grown or produced within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale for such farm products may be advertised or sold in Connecticut as "Native", "Native-Grown", "Local", or "Locally-Grown". Any person, firm, partnership or corporation advertising farm products as "Native", "Native-Grown", "Local", "Locally-Grown", or "Connecticut-Grown" shall be required to furnish written proof within ten days of the sale of such products that such products were grown or produced in Connecticut or within a ten-mile radius of the point of sale, as applicable, if requested to do so by the Commissioner of Agriculture or said commissioner's designee.

Any person who violates any provision of this subsection shall be fined not more than one hundred dollars for each product label in violation of this subsection.

In addition to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, any person who sells any farm product as "Connecticut-Grown" at a farmers' market in this state shall offer such product for sale in the immediate proximity of a sign that is:

1. Readily visible to consumers
2. Not less than three inches by five inches in size
3. In a form that is substantially as follows: THIS FARM PRODUCT IS CONNECTICUT-GROWN. THIS FARM PRODUCT WAS GROWN OR PRODUCED BY THE FOLLOWING PERSON OR BUSINESS: (INSERT NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON OR BUSINESS).

The lettering on any such sign shall be of a size, font or print that is clearly and easily legible. Such a sign shall accompany each type of farm product that any such person sells as "Connecticut-Grown". Any person who violates the provisions of this subsection shall receive a warning for the first violation and for any subsequent violation shall be fined one hundred dollars for each violation.

Signage that meets the requirements above can be ordered for free online at www.connecticutgrownstore.com.

DoAg

Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the state agency administering FMNP.

Exempt Market

A certified farmers' market that allows participating certified farmers to sell Connecticut Grown farm products grown by another Connecticut farmer. The certified farmers' market must have an Exempt Statement Form on file with DoAg.

Exempt Statement

If a certified farmers' market will allow certified farmers to buy Connecticut Grown farm products from other Connecticut farmers and resell it, the market is required to complete the Exempt Statement Form at the start of the market season.

While an authorized market may elect to be an exempt market, the majority of eligible products offered for sale by each certified farmer at an FMNP authorized market must be produced by that certified farmer at all times.

Farm

A "farm" or "farming" constitutes the raising or harvesting of any fruit, vegetable, fresh cut herb, or honey on land owned or leased by the applicant and meets the definition of a farm found in C.G.S. § 1-1q

Farm Products

C.G.S. § 22-6r(7) "Any fresh fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, nuts, shell eggs, honey or other bee products, maple syrup or maple sugar, flowers, nursery stock and other horticultural commodities, livestock food products, including meat, milk, cheese and other dairy products, food products of "aquaculture", as defined in subsection (q) of section 1-1, including fish, oysters, clams, mussels and other molluscan shellfish taken from the waters of the state or tidal wetlands, products from any tree, vine or plant and their flowers, or any of the products listed in this subdivision that have been processed by the participating farmer, including, but not limited to, baked goods made with farm products;"

Farmer

For the purposes of this certification packet, a person, firm, limited liability company, farm which produces fruits and/or vegetables and/or fresh cut herbs, and/or eggs, and/or honey. The farmer applicant who applies to the Connecticut FMNP must have the legal authority to make decisions for and bind the farm/business entity associated with the farmer applicant.

Farmers' Certification Handbook

This guidance document which outlines the rules and regulations of FMNP.

FMNP

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. This reference is inclusive of both the WIC and Senior programs in Connecticut.

Farmer Portal

Electronic application providing access to the platform used to process transactions of the electronic benefit card.

Jobber

Individuals engaged in the buying and reselling of farm products. They have limited to no production area and grow less than 50% of the items sold by the farm/business entity at an authorized farmers' market.

Jobbers are ineligible for FMNP certification.

Producer Only

A certified farmers' market that allows participating certified farmer(s) to sell only the products they have grown.

Proxy Form

A form an eligible senior would complete which allows someone other than themselves to utilize SFMNP electronic benefits on the senior's behalf at an authorized farmers' market or farm stand. The proxy would utilize the electronic benefits when designated by the program participant. A Proxy Form must be on file with the issuing agency.

S/FMNP

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program/Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. This is used to reference the two types of electronic benefits, the application on a smart device and a physical card associated with FMNP – electronic benefit cards for eligible seniors and the smart device electronic application/electronic benefit card for eligible WIC participants.

Senior

The term 'Senior' includes individuals at least 60 years of age meeting income requirements or older or disabled individuals under the age of 60 living in housing facilities occupied primarily by older individuals where congregate nutrition services are provided and have a maximum household income of not more than 185% of the annual poverty income guidelines.

USDA FNS

United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. The federal agency that oversees DoAg's administration of FMNP and SFMNP. They provide funding, determine eligibility requirements and eligible foods for the program. DoAg's supervising office is the Northeast Regional Office located in Boston, MA.

WIC

Women, Infants, and Children. A federal assistance program of USDA FNS for healthcare and nutrition of low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under the age of five.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Connecticut Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) consists of two programs: the Women, Infants, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). Eligible WIC and senior participants are provided electronic benefit cards or an account to access benefits on a mobile device to purchase fresh, unprocessed Connecticut Grown fruits, vegetables, fresh-cut herbs, and eggs (and honey for seniors) at authorized farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets.

The program expands awareness, use of, and sales at farmers' markets. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) collaborates with the Connecticut Department of Health, 23 local WIC offices, and over 200 senior local coordinating agencies.



Connecticut's FMNP is funded through the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC and the State of Connecticut. WIC FMNP was established by Congress in 1992.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February-April

- Recertification meetings and farmer trainings take place.

February and March

- Farmers' market information solicited – farmers' market agreement, market information sheets, Exempt Statement Form, and vendor/market looking lists are developed and maintained.

March-May 1

- Senior FMNP electronic benefit distribution sites can sign up to participate in the upcoming program year.

April 1

- Certified farmer electronic application access is set up, and ID posters are ordered and mailed.
- Authorized farmers' market information is sent to S/FMNP electronic benefit Contractor.
- S/FMNP electronic benefit cards arrive at DoAg.

May

- Initial distribution of S/FMNP electronic benefit cards to distribution locations.
- Recertification and annual training materials must be submitted to DoAg by May 30 to maintain certification for the coming year

June 1

- FMNP officially starts.

August-September

- All benefit distribution must conclude by September 30.

November 30

- FMNP officially closes. WIC/Senior participants cannot use electronic benefits, and certified farmers cannot redeem electronic benefits after this date. Any remaining funds are removed from the cards and will not carry over.

PROGRAM USERS

Connecticut Fruit, Vegetable, Cut Herb, Honey, and Egg Farmers

See page 11 for more information on farmer eligibility.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

All recipients of the Connecticut FMNP are current participants in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) administered by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, State WIC Program. The WIC Program provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding post-partum women, and to infants and children up to 5 years of age, who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Annually, the Connecticut Department of Public Health provides a list to the Contractor of all eligible WIC participants.

WIC authorized users receive one electronic application account or an electronic benefit card, depending on their access to email and a mobile device connected to internet. At the beginning of the season the funds for all eligible participants associated with the authorized user will be distributed to the respective accounts. One account per family, including dependents, will be issued to each family. Example: If a mom is pregnant and has two children under the age of five, the mom will receive benefits for herself and each of her two children as the authorized user.

Seniors

SFMNP is conceptually similar in most respects to WIC FMNP. Seniors in participating municipalities are provided with an electronic benefit card for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables, cut herbs, honey, and eggs

Seniors must be 60 years of age or older and have a maximum household income of not more than 185 percent of the annual poverty income guidelines. These seniors may also be participating in other programs with similar income testing to verify eligibility.

DoAg may also authorize distribution to disabled individuals under the age of 60 living in housing facilities occupied primarily by older individuals where congregate nutrition services are provided. They have a maximum household income of not more than 185% of the annual poverty income guidelines.

The electronic benefit cards are issued to municipal social or elderly service directors, senior centers, subsidized resident housing coordinators, and elderly service nonprofits by DoAg.

Seniors receive electronic benefit cards which is reusable for multiple seasons. Funds will be loaded onto the card at the beginning of each season after an application has been completed and approved. In Connecticut, each senior in a household will receive an electronic benefit card. Example: If a couple over the age of 60 requests electronic benefits and the couple meets the income guidelines, two electronic benefit cards will be issued to the household.



FARMER ELIGIBILITY FOR FMNP CERTIFICATION

Fruit, vegetable, cut herb, egg, and/or honey producers must meet all of the qualifications below to be eligible to accept the S/FMNP electronic benefit cards:

1. Reside within the State of Connecticut.
2. Meet the definition of a farmer.
3. Grow the majority of eligible products they offer for sale at an authorized market.
4. Participate in/be accepted into one or more authorized farmers' markets.
5. Have the legal authority to act on behalf of the farm/business entity to represent/apply for participation in the FMNP.
6. Verify that he/she has no controlling or membership interest in any farm or business entity that is currently under suspension from participating in Connecticut FMNP.
7. Verify that the business is not associated with a S/FMNP benefits distribution site.
8. Triennial certification and annual training requirements are maintained.

If at any time during the certification period, a certified farmer is no longer producing the majority of the products the farm offers for sale at an authorized farmers' market(s), the farm will have their certification revoked.

Jobbers are not eligible for this program.

Any farmer accepted and certified mid-certification cycle will be certified for the remainder of the current three-year cycle. Prior to certification by DoAg, Connecticut fruit, vegetable, egg, and/or honey producers must be accepted, but not yet selling, at an authorized farmers' market within the state of Connecticut. DoAg will not certify a farmer who has not been accepted into an authorized market.

First Time Certification Requirements

An initial on-farm site visit is required. This includes a review of the FMNP Farmers' Certification Handbook (this guidance) and a walk-through/tour of all production areas associated with the farm to verify the growing of fruits and/or vegetables, eggs, and/or honey. Additionally the farmer will need to complete the following:

- Register your farm on CT elicense and complete the FMNP application.
- Upload a current crop plan for a complete summary of fruit, vegetable, and/or honey production, and a Specialty Crop Plan, if applicable.

Resources for applying for FMNP can be found under the Farmers tab on www.portal.ct.gov/FMNP

Applications from new farmers must be received by DoAg within thirty (30) days from the on-farm certification.



Recertification Requirements for Previously Certified Farmers

Every three years, previously certified farmers must attend an in-person recertification meeting.

ANNUAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

In addition, ALL certified farmers who wish to maintain their certification and ability to accept the S/FMNP electronic benefit cards are required to do the following:

1. Complete an annual online certification. Information on how to access the training will be sent at the end of the season. This training requires the farmer to complete the entire online learning module.
2. Pass the knowledge test with a score of at least 80%
3. Renew your FMNP license every three years for continued participation in the program
4. Submit an updated crop plan if your production has changed, or if new items have been added to your growing schedule.

Forms and resources are available on the Farmers tab found at www.portal.ct.gov/FMNP.

FMNP RULES AND REGULATIONS

A certified farmer must comply with the program's federal regulations established by the USDA FNS when handling Connecticut S/FMNP electronic benefits, electronic benefit cards, and engaging in transactions.

ELIGIBLE FOODS

Only fresh, unprocessed Connecticut Grown fruits and/or vegetables, eggs (with State funds ONLY) and/or fresh cut herbs may be exchanged for Connecticut S/FMNP electronic benefits. Only Senior electronic benefits may be used to purchase honey.

INELIGIBLE ITEMS

- Ineligible purchases with Connecticut S/FMNP electronic benefits shall include but not be limited to:
- Non-Connecticut Grown fresh fruits, vegetables, fresh cut herbs, eggs, and/or honey
- Processed fruit or vegetable products
- Jams/Jellies/Preserves Pickled products
- Sauces
- Baked goods with fruits, vegetables, herbs of any kind
- Juices/ciders
- Beer/wine/distilled or other fermented products
- Dried or otherwise processed fruits or vegetables (dried beans, cut/spiralizer squashes, frozen fruit)

Other ineligible items Examples:

- Meat and/or meat products
- Seafood and/or seafood products
- Milk and/or any dairy products
- Poultry and/or poultry products
- Ornamental products—carving/mini pumpkins or gourds, etc.
- Popcorn
- Nursery/greenhouse/flower/plant items
- Soaps, lotions, and other bath and beauty products
- Non-agricultural products (pottery, jewelry, etc.)
- Honey for WIC participants

USDA LIST OF ELIGIBLE ITEMS

Fruits	Vegetables	Vegetables (cont)	Herbs	Honey*	Eggs
Apples	Artichokes	Mushrooms	Arugula	Only eligible through SFMNP	Only eligible through state funds
Apricots	Asparagus	Mustard	Basil		
Blackberries	Beans	Okra	Chervil		
Blueberries	Beets	Onions	Chives		
Cantaloupe	Bok Choy	Pak Choi	Cilantro		
Cherries	Broccoli	Parsnips	Dill		
Currants	Broccoli Rabe	Peas	Edible flowers		
Gooseberries	Brussels Sprouts	Peppers	Lovage		
Grapes	Cabbage	Potatoes	Marjoram		
Kiwi fruit	Callaloo	Pumpkins	Mint		
Melon	Carrots	Radicchio	Oregano		
Mulberries	Cauliflower	Radishes	Parsley		
Nectarines	Celery	Rhubarb	Rosemary		
Paw Paw	Chicory	Romaine	Sage		
Peaches	Collards	Rutabaga	Savory		
Pears	Cucumbers	Shallots	Sorrel		
Plums	Daikon	Spinach	Tarragon		
Raspberries	Eggplant	Sprouts	Thyme		
Strawberries	Endive	Squash/ Summer			
Watermelon	Escarole	Squash/ Winter			
	Fennel	Sweet Corn			
	Fiddlehead	Sweet Potatoes			
	Garlic	Swiss Chard			
	Horseradish	Tomatillos			
	Artichoke	Tomatoes			
	Kale	Turnip			
	Kohlrabi	Lettuce			
	Leeks				

VALID S/FMNP APP OR SHOPPER CARD

Only valid S/FMNP electronic benefit cards or mobile application, shall be accepted by a certified farmer for the purchase of eligible foods.

AUTHORIZED LOCATIONS

Only authorized farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets are eligible to accept S/FMNP electronic benefits. Location authorization is annual and not guaranteed. If a certified farmer also operates a farm stand on the home farm, the farmer may not accept S/FMNP electronic benefits at that stand.

Please contact the Department of Agriculture FMNP for more information on certification of farm stands.

PRODUCE PRICING

All products eligible for sale must be clearly priced for all customers to see during posted market hours and follow the signage requirements per C.G.S. § 22-38. Customers presenting S/FMNP electronic benefits must be charged a price equal to or less than the posted price.

Signage, as seen below, can be ordered free of charge to farmers and shipped directly to you at <https://www.connecticutgrownstore.com/>.



CERTIFIED FARMER IDENTIFICATION

Certified farmers are required to visibly display the Certified Farmer ID Poster when selling at an authorized farmers' market.



To ensure visibility, the poster should be prominently displayed and posted at eye level.

If the poster is lost or severely damaged it should be reported to DoAg so a replacement can be issued, and a violation isn't cited. Multiple posters can be provided.

PAYMENT

Connecticut S/FMNP electronic benefits are to be exchanged for eligible produce, eggs or honey only, never in whole or in part for cash – this includes giving change.

Exception: If cash is involved in the transition, then change can be given to the participant. For example, if S/FMNP electronic benefit balance is \$4 and a \$5 bill is presented for \$5 worth of eligible food. Cash can be given back as change.

S/FMNP ELECTRONIC BENEFIT DEPOSIT

A certified farmer will receive an account log in to access the (SoliPortal) back end of the electronic benefit portal. There they can enter their banking information for direct deposit into an account. On a weekly basis the total from that previous week's transactions will be deposited into the provided account.

To access your account visit <https://farmer.soliportal.com/auth/login>

Deposits will occur weekly (typically on a Wednesday) and will end on the week following November 30th.

NONDISCRIMINATION

Certified farmers participating in the Connecticut FMNP shall not refuse to accept properly presented Connecticut S/FMNP electronic benefits in exchange for eligible Connecticut Grown products.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender

Certified farmers who do not comply with program rules shall receive written notification from DoAg. Failure to adhere to program regulations can result in non-payment and disqualification from participation in the Connecticut FMNP and all authorized farmers' markets. More information on program violations is available on page 22.

CONNECTICUTS/FMNP ELECTRONIC BENEFIT CARD/APP



Farmer	Amount
Farmer A May 10, 2021	\$ 7.54
Farmer D May 10, 2021	\$ 56.78
Farmer C May 6, 2021	\$ 12.32
Farmer A May 2, 2021	\$ 9.14



Information regarding the mobile app, including training videos and helpline access, can be found on the Department of Agriculture website at www.portal.ct.gov/FMNP.

DUE PROCESS FOR NOTICE OF VIOLATIONS



An official notice of non-compliance or suspension shall be issued to the certified farmer by Connecticut DoAg.

A certified farmer may request a meeting with the DoAg to present evidence to substantiate a reversal of the notice of non-compliance or suspension within seventy-two (72) hours of receipt of the written notice.

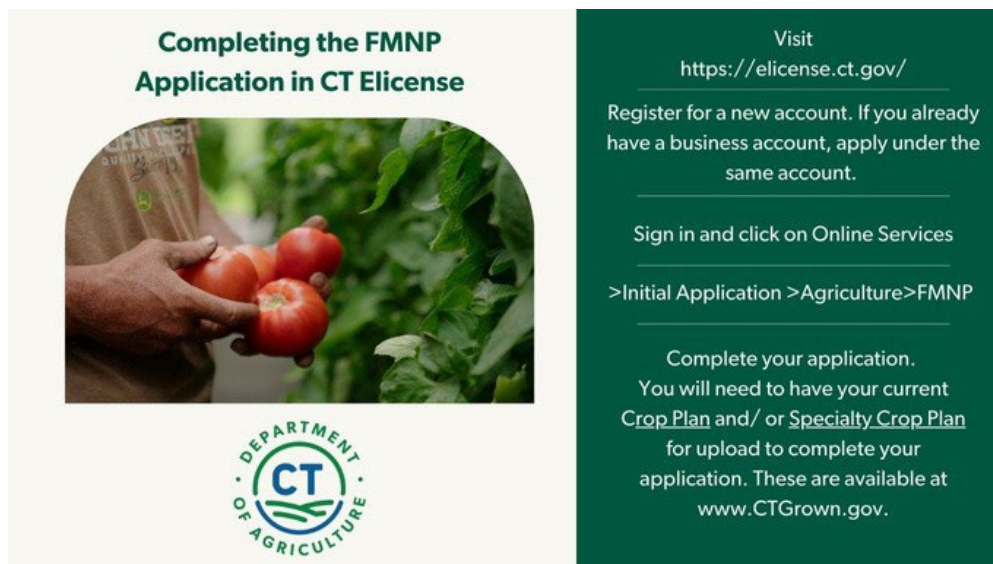
Failure to respond to the notice of suspension of non-compliance within the specified time period shall constitute acceptance of the notice.

A violation involving multiple S/FMNP electronic benefits in a single sales transaction will be treated as a single violation. Multiple violations can occur on the same day.

FARMER CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

To complete your certification, all the items below must be received and approved by DoAg.

- Attend an initial in-person FMNP training
- Register your farm on Connecticut eLicense (<https://www.elicense.ct.gov>) and upload your 2026 Crop Plan and, if applicable, the 2026 Specialty Crop Plan



Completing the FMNP Application in CT ELicense

Visit <https://elicense.ct.gov/>

Register for a new account. If you already have a business account, apply under the same account.

Sign in and click on Online Services

>Initial Application >Agriculture>FMNP

Complete your application. You will need to have your current Crop Plan and/ or Specialty Crop Plan for upload to complete your application. These are available at www.CTGrown.gov.

- Complete an initial on farm inspection with DoAg staff to verify production (Must be completed before your application can be approved.)
- Complete ANNUAL training as required by USDA Food and Nutrition Services

Once your application has been approved, you will be added to the list of approved FMNP vendors and receive an email to activate your SoliMarket Register account.

Questions can be directed to:
Erin Windham at 860-519-6083 | Ally Hughes at 860-500-8918
E-mail CTFMNP@ct.gov