

## FarmBill

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tmp.htm (1 KB) NHFMA-Input-to-2007-Farm-Bill1...

24 October 2005

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns  
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Secretary Johanns,

On behalf of the New Hampshire Farmers' Market Association, I am pleased to offer the attached written comments to the USDA Farm Bill Listening Forum, hosted by USDA Rural Development Under Secretary Thomas Dorr, on Tuesday, October 25, 2005, held in Manchester, NH and the Farm Bill Nutrition Forum will be chaired by Eric Bost, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, and held in Boston on Friday, October 28.

r/  
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**NEW HAMPSHIRE FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION**

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I would like to provide my input by:

- 1) forwarding an article on USDA subsidy programs that was in a recent issue of the NH Weekly Market Bulletin,
- 2) a few data points on local agriculture gleaned from a variety of sources,
- 3) by offering you some facts on New Hampshire farmers' markets, and
- 4) offering a bottom-line comment on USDA programs.

1) The New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food carried the following article in their Weekly Market Bulletin, Vol. 84 Wednesday, August 31, 2005 No. 26

***USDA Food Pyramid, Subsidy Programs Out of Sync***

*"Two-thirds of Americans are overweight, and the government tells them they should eat better. But it doesn't put its money where their mouths are," reports The Associated Press.*

*This year farmers will receive \$17 billion in subsidies, but "Rather than focusing on the producers of good-for-you fruits and vegetables, half [of the] subsidies go to grain farmers, whose crops feed animals for meat, milk and eggs and become ... ingredients in processed food," writes AP's Jay Berman.*

*Andy Fischer, executive director of the Community Food Security Coalition, an advocacy group, told Berman, "Obesity. That's clearly the problem, if you look at the outcome in today's society." Berman notes, "Since two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, it's clear people are getting the calories they need and more. Diet and disease experts say, however, that they're not getting enough nutrition."*

*The new Department of Agriculture food pyramid calls for fewer calories and more fruit, vegetables, low fat milk and whole grains, and for avoiding partially hydrogenated oils and sweeteners used in snack foods.*

*In contrast, "Federal farm programs ... aim to maintain the financial health of American agriculture," Berman writes. Subsidies "encourage an abundant supply of corn, wheat, rice and soybeans [which ultimately] translates to lots of calories, lots of artery-clogging fat and little or no healthful fiber."*

*Adam Reendows, professor of epistemology at the University of Washington, told Berman, "As those foods ... become progressively cheaper, the prices of fruit and vegetables rise. If we tell a family, 'You really ought to be eating more salads and fresh fruit,' and this is a low-income family, we're essentially encouraging them to spend more money."*

*Ralph Gross, president of American Farmland Trust, a group that advocates conservation on the farm, said, "Here we are as a society, talking constantly about obesity and diets, and yet our farm policies are not structured to encourage the kind of diet that the food pyramid suggests we should adopt."*

*—Rural Blog and Weekly Market Bulletin, Vol. 84 Wednesday, August 31, 2005 No. 26*

2) The following data points were gleaned from a variety of sources:

*Estimated distance a conventional tomato travels from farm to market: 1,569 miles.*

*Estimated distance a conventional head of lettuce travels from harvest to market: 1,823 miles.*

*The typical American prepared meal contains, on average, ingredients from at least five countries outside the United States.*

*During the past 50 years, an average of 219 farms per day in the United States have closed or been amalgamated into a larger enterprise.*

*Average time spent preparing an evening meal in United States, 1954: 2.5 hours.*

*Average time spent preparing an evening meal in United States, 2004: 6.5 minutes.*

***Small farms are 2 to 10 times more productive than larger farms.***

***Buying food in local farmers' market generates twice as much for the local economy than buying food in supermarkets chains.***

*Money spent with a local supplier is worth four times as much as money spent with non-local supplier*

*[Sources: Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, checking the Food Odometer, July 2003, New Scientist, October 9, 2004, <http://www.energybulletin.net/5173.html>]*

3) New Hampshire's farmers' markets foster a *sense of community*. They are re-energizing and re-invigorating cities and towns. On market days, people drawn to the markets, also visit and buy from other

community merchants, restaurants, etc. Markets provide a highly valued social event—people look forward to each market day. They bring farm and quality food consciousness into the minds and kitchens of thousands of people throughout out state. Steve Taylor, NH Commissioner of Agriculture, said it well *"A farmers' market is one of the things that was identified as a way to bring people downtown. They are viewed as fundamental to a community, like a good rec (recreation) program or a good library."*

In 2001 there were 29 NH farmers' markets; in 2005, there were 54.

More than 300 NH vendors grow, harvest and sell a broad range of fresh produce, plants and flowers, baked goods and other food items at the markets. Also, most markets include the sale of fresh meat, eggs, honey and maple products as well as agriculturally connected crafts such as wool products & goat milk soaps.

**Farmers' markets contribute significantly to the economy of their communities and their vendors. We estimate NH farmers' markets grossed over \$1.5 million in 2004. The WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition programs are significant benefactors of the 54 markets. The WIC program in 2004 redeemed over 97,000 coupons worth \$194,000.**

**In 2004, five markets participated in a UNHCE pilot project to redeem food stamp benefits, another great way to ensure NH citizens get farm-fresh produce. 4 markets participated in 2005. There are some communications infrastructure and licensing issues with accepting food stamps at farmers' markets. We are addressing these with NHDHHS, USDA Boston and Washington D.C., and to the national farmers' market coalition.**

The New Hampshire Farmers' Market Association's mission is to educate the general public on the benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle acquired through locally grown, fresh produce. We are dedicated to helping consumers understand the economic, social and ecological benefits of this lifestyle for themselves as well as for local farmers, growers and producers. The association seeks to educate local producers on best management practices and common operating procedures through a variety of means including workshops, seminars and multi-media. The NHFMA will work to provide the educational assistance; support and training that local producers need to provide healthy food in an ecologically sound manner. Through education and member participation, the NHFMA strengthens agriculture in NH.



In May of 2004, the NHFMA became a special committee within NH Made, nhmade.com, because both organizations missions are so similar—educating the public on the benefits of buying local NH products. We have collaborated on several projects including the "Buy Local This Season" buttons, shown above.

4) Bottomline:

**The NHFMA requests the USDA continue to fully fund, support and improve:**

- 1) the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and**
- 2) the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP) and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and**
- 3) to consider offering support (monetary and intellectual) to a national farmers' market coalition to develop farmers' market associations in all states.**

**The food stamp program and the FMNPs have proven to be invaluable in offering the means for eligible participants to get both the nutritional food and the nutrition education they need. These programs have also provided the means for many a small farmer to stay in business or to expand their business to become profitable.**

I wish to thank you again for the opportunity to provide these comments on behalf of the NHFMA.

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