

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2007

Contact: Denise Miller, Director
New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Assoc.
983-4010 (office), 699-2064 (cell)

**Low-income Seniors and Small-Scale Farmers to Benefit from
Newly-Approved Farmers' Market Nutrition Enhancement Program**

Santa Fe – New state-funded assistance to help low-income senior citizens purchase fresh produce at local farmers' markets in the counties of Socorro, Valencia, Grant, Curry, San Juan, and Bernalillo counties became official Friday, April 6, when Governor Richardson signed the 2007-2008 legislative session budget.

Sponsored by Representative Don Tripp (R-Socorro) and Senator Ben Altamirano (D-Silver City), the Farmers' Market Nutrition Enhancement Program will provide about 3,200 people whose incomes are up to 130% of the poverty level each with \$28 in food vouchers for spending on fresh fruits and vegetables at local area farmers' markets during the coming agricultural season.

Representative Tripp, whose wife Rosie volunteers at the Socorro Storehouse, a local food pantry that serves the needy, knows the difficulty many seniors in his district have in obtaining fresh, nutritious food. "I was happy to support this bill and try to help make a difference in the lives of the low-income elderly. We have had a very successful senior pilot funded by the Socorro Health Council during the last two years, and I hope to see the program expand statewide in the future," he said.

In addition to helping the low-income elderly, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Enhancement Program will also help small-scale farmers who benefit directly from this new source of income generated at local farmers' markets. "Small-scale growers are an important part

of the traditional agricultural fabric of our state,” said Secretary of Agriculture I. Miley Gonzalez. “Programs that help create new customers for these farmers, especially while meeting the needs of underserved citizens, deserve financial support.”

While a similar federal program exists, New Mexico is one of only nine states to be denied funding, despite the fact that 15.8% of New Mexico’s population did not have enough food to meet basic needs during 2002-2004, ranking 49th in the country only behind Texas.* It is hoped that the new state-funded pilot will help New Mexico secure future federal funding.

The Farmers’ Market Nutrition Enhancement Program will be administered by the Department of Health through their Commodity Supplemental Food Program. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture, the Aging and Long-Term Services Department, NMSU Co-Op Extension, and the New Mexico Farmers’ Marketing Association will provide additional program support.

**USDA, ERS Study*

###

The New Mexico Farmers’ Marketing Association provides communities around the state with technical and promotional resources to grow and sustain farmers’ markets. Currently there are 45 farmers’ markets in New Mexico that provide tens of thousands of people fresh, locally-grown food, and who in turn support about 1,000 small-scale farmers.