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Fresh produce hits the road with Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute's mobile market

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Jun 28, 2025



Amy Licano, left, and Fabiola Cisneros look over some of the produce for sale Wednesday at the Tianguis Móvil truck, the Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute's roving farmers market, in a parking lot near the Tierra Real Mobile Home Community off Airport Road. The term *tianguis* refers to open-air markets common in Mexico and Central America.

Jim Weber/The New Mexican

The fresh vegetables stood out in the parking lot.

Situated off Airport Road behind a now-shuttered dollar store, the lot serves as the entrance to the Tierra Real neighborhood and a spot for residents to pick up their mail.

But on one recent afternoon, it became the temporary home of the Santa Fe Farmers' Market Institute's Tianguis Móvil Mobile Market, a roving farm stand of high-quality goods. On tables, market organizers set out stacks of summer squash, baskets of fresh tomatoes, clusters of kale, plus pantry goods like dried beans, honey, apple cider vinegar and herbal tea.

That's right, fresh produce might come to your neighborhood this summer — just like it came to the residents of Tierra Real. After a pilot program ran throughout the latter half of 2024, the mobile market will visit communities across Santa Fe this summer, with the ultimate goal of expanding access to fresh and healthy foods.



David Sundberg and Makayla Day set up a display of produce at the Tianguis Móvil truck Wednesday. The mobile market will be visiting communities across Santa Fe this summer with the goal of expanding access to fresh and healthy foods.

Jim Weber/The New Mexican

“The problem that this is solving is to create access points within the communities — right there. ... You can step out your door or just get down the street a short ways and ... have this access,” said David Sundberg, program development director at the Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute.

The mobile market stems from Comida Local Para Todos, a local food-for-all initiative that solicited feedback and found low-income communities in Santa Fe often did not know how or where to access nutritious food and weren’t familiar with food assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Women, Infants, and Children.

The initiative posed a tough question for farmers market organizers, Sundberg said: “Having one of the best farmers markets in the entire country right here in Santa Fe, why is our community struggling to get this good food?”

Tianguis Móvil is one response to that question.

The term *tianguis* refers to open-air markets common in Mexico and Central America. It’s a “feel good” space, Sundberg said, where commerce and community gatherings collide.

“Whenever we say the name *tianguis* to people, they get a smile on their face,” he said.

The mobile market attempts to match that energy. Organizers purchase food directly from local producers, maintain its quality in cold storage and drive it to neighborhoods across Santa Fe.

The food is sold at a slight mark-up to keep gas in the truck, Sundberg said. The mobile market is currently in the process of applying to be able to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program dollars.

During the program’s pilot sessions in 2024, the market set up in 12 easily accessible spots like schools, mobile home parks, senior housing complexes and other lower- or fixed-income neighborhoods.

In particular, Sundberg said the program’s aim was to bridge a gap in Santa Fe’s food deserts, where a grocery store selling fresh food — particularly produce — is more than a mile away.

He put it this way: If you live along Cerrillos Road, St. Michael’s Drive or St. Francis Drive, you probably have pretty good access to supermarkets near your home.

“If you do not live along those corridors, you’re going to struggle more to be close enough to a grocery store that it’s convenient or accessible to you,” Sundberg said.



David Sundberg, left, gives Pilar Luedicke, 9, a quick primer on produce Wednesday at the Tianguis Móvil truck — the Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute’s roving farmers market — in a parking lot near the Tierra Real Mobile Home Community off Airport Road.

Jim Weber/The New Mexican

Much of the south side of Santa Fe is categorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as “low income and low access,” indicating low-income Census tracts where a significant share of residents are more than a mile from the nearest supermarket.

USDA data shows a handful of tracts between the Santa Fe River and Airport Road fit that description — including Tierra Real.

C A Crossman has lived in the neighborhood for nearly 30 years.

Recently, the community has been organizing to reinvigorate the area, hauling out litter and building relationships between neighbors. Crossman, an artist who sells her work during Tuesday farmers markets, invited Tianguis Móvil to Tierra Real in 2024 upon hearing about its pilot program.

“We’re trying to bring it back to what it was when I first moved here,” she said of her neighborhood.

The mobile market is part of that. While there are grocery store options on Santa Fe’s south side, Crossman noted none of them is within a mile of her neighborhood.

Tianguis Móvil, she said, brings “more community, more people having access to what the farmers market offers in local produce.”

New Mexico Department of Health Farmers Market Nutrition Program season begins July 1

The New Mexico Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program will return July 1, providing nutritious and locally grown food to income-eligible seniors over 60, Native American elders over 55 and families participating in the Women, Infants and Children program, known as WIC.

Benefits must be spent at local farmers markets, roadside stands and mobile markets. They will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

“This program gives people access to healthy, fresh local fruits, vegetables, herbs and honey in their communities,” New Mexico Farmers’ Market Program Manager Veronica Griego said in a news release. “Healthy food makes for a healthier life and helps stretch food budgets at a time when every little bit helps.”

For more information, applications and to find farmers market locations in your area, visit nmwic.org/fmnp.

How to find the mobile market

To sign up for updates on the Santa Fe Farmers Market Intitute’s Tianguis Móvil Mobile Market — a roving farm stand visiting communities throughout Santa Fe — text “food” to 888-868-5609.

You can also track the mobile market at farmersmarketinstitute.org/about/events-calendar.

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