FOOD ACCESS AND FARMERS MARKETS 2021

BY THE NUMBERS

- 10 Farmers markets supported through WSFMA Regional Leads programming in Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason and Grays Harbor Counties.
- 17 Farmers Market and 1 Farm Stand supported in Technical Assistance through the Statewide SNAP Market Match program in Kitsap, Jefferson, Clallam, Mason, Grays Harbor, Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, and Skamania counties.
- Onboarding of one new farm stand and recruitment of 3 additional farm stands to take part in SNAP Market Match for 2022.
- Assisted 2 farm stands with support and resources on their FNS application process to acquire ability to run SNAP on farm.
- Increase in amount of SNAP and SNAP Market Match distributed and redeemed at West Sound Markets in 2021.

ISSUE

Many farmers markets across Washington State accept SNAP, WIC & Senior Farmers Market Nutrition (FMNP) vouchers, and offer fresh fruit and vegetable incentives to SNAP shoppers (known as SNAP Market Match). Markets across the West Sound are continually looking for ways to increase access to fresh, healthy and local foods to their community. These markets rely on resources from partner organizations such as Washington State Farmers Market Association and our Washington State Department of Health to implement programming and provide additional resources to their customer base.

In addition, there is a growing number of direct market farms in our region looking to provide SNAP customers with further access to fresh foods through their farm stands and CSA programs. Often times these farm businesses need additional support to navigate the process and implementation of SNAP as part of their business model.

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RESPONSE

In 2021, WSU Kitsap Extension continued their partnership with the Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) to act as the West Sound Regional Lead providing support for farmers markets in five counties wishing to build or expand food access programming. Additionally a partnership with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) was also continued, acting as the Technical Assistant for their SNAP Market Match program in nine counties across Western Washington.

Through these partnerships, WSU Kitsap Extension provided assistance to farmers markets across Kitsap, Jefferson, Clallam, Mason, Grays Harbor, Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, and Skamania counties. Program support included:

- Building local capacity at farmers markets around food access programs.
- Increasing the number of farmers markets accepting food assistance benefits (SNAP, FMNP, and SNAP Incentives such as SNAP Market Match).
- Develop and strengthen partnerships with regional partners working to promote access and education around healthy food availability and consumption at farmers markets.
- Improve outreach, promotion and awareness of food access programs at farmers markets.
- Provide support and technical assistance to farmers markets taking part in the SNAP Market Match statewide program in counties assigned.
- Additional support given to direct market farms looking to provide SNAP and SNAP Market Match as part of their farm stand and/or CSA programs.

IMPACTS

In 2020, there was over $73,000 in SNAP/EBT and $67,000 in SNAP Market Match distributed to SNAP customers at West Sound Farmers Markets. Those number increased to approximately $125,000 in SNAP/EBT and $116,000 in SNAP Market Match being distributed during the 2021 season. The increased need during COVID, the addition of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) as well as the added interest in purchasing locally, all contributed to the growth seen across our region this past year.

Additional dollars spent at the markets not only meant greater access to nutritious foods for SNAP customers, but it also meant increased sales for farmers and other vendors. Those dollars were kept circulating in our local economy instead of going out to larger corporations.