

Fresh Food Bucks

Fresh Food Bucks is a program that provides a dollar-for-dollar match for people using SNAP (food stamps) to buy more local, fresh fruits and vegetables. Buy Fresh Buy Local-Greater Lehigh Valley launched the program in 2015, with financial assistance from Northampton County (DCED). We match up to \$10 per day for people shopping at producer-only farmers markets, farm stands, several corner stores in urban areas, the Eat Real Food Mobile Market (Kellyn) and other retail locations. This year, we are working with Bangor Main St. Market to pilot the program at an independent grocery store in a designated low-income/low-food-access community (as determined by USDA).

In 2019:

- There were 881 unique customers using the Fresh Food Bucks program in Northampton County.
- Redeemed FFB matching dollars in the County totaled \$15,867.99 (this amount reflects only the match, so the actual amount spent on healthy, local fruits and vegetables across all locations is higher).
- We offered FFB incentives at 22 locations across the county.
- Incentives redemptions have increased 19% since 2017.

This program is funded through a federal USDA grant and requires 100% matching. Our grant ends in May 2021, but we will likely be able to extend it through the 2021 growing season.

Farmers Market Nutrition Program

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides a series of checks to low-income seniors and mothers enrolled in the WIC program to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables grown in Pennsylvania. In 2020, the value of the checks will increase by one dollar each. Seniors will receive four \$6 checks and mothers will receive four \$6 checks if they are pregnant or breastfeeding and four checks for each child ages 1-5. Senior checks are distributed by the Agency of Aging, WIC checks at quarterly appointments beginning in June. Distribution and redemption rates for the checks have declined since 2015.

In 2019:

- Just 65% of WIC checks were distributed to mothers and only 26% of available checks were redeemed, leaving \$40,730 dollars for fresh, local produce unused.
- WIC check redemptions have declined by 36% since 2015.
- 79% of senior checks were distributed and 61% of available vouchers were redeemed, leaving \$19,395 dollars for fresh, local produce unused.
- Senior check redemptions have declined by 16% since 2015.

Buy Fresh Buy Local-GLV has been researching these declines for the past two years (because it is also lost revenue for farmers!). We are working to coordinate efforts between various agencies, local food providers and organizations working with low-income/food insecure populations. However, this work is largely unfunded. FMNP is a state-run program.

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