

## NUTRITION INCENTIVE MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM: SAN DIEGO

The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is a proposal that builds on the evidenced based success of California Market Match, which was founded in 2009 and has been sustained through private donors and foundations on a limited basis up and down the state. This nutrition incentive program has demonstrated a six-fold return on investment by doubling the purchasing power of nutrition assistance benefits such as CalFresh when used to buy fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables at farmers' markets. Market Match is an equitable investment that ensures all Californians benefit from healthy and sustainable food.

### DEMONSTRATED IMPACT OF INCENTIVES IN SAN DIEGO

City Heights Farmers' Market (CHFM), run by the San Diego County Farm Bureau, runs on Saturdays in East San Diego City. Customers buy their fresh fruits and vegetables direct from their farmers, at a market where people of color are 97% of the farmers. CHFM is also a place where the community can come together and enjoy arts and crafts, health programs, live entertainment, children's activities and more.

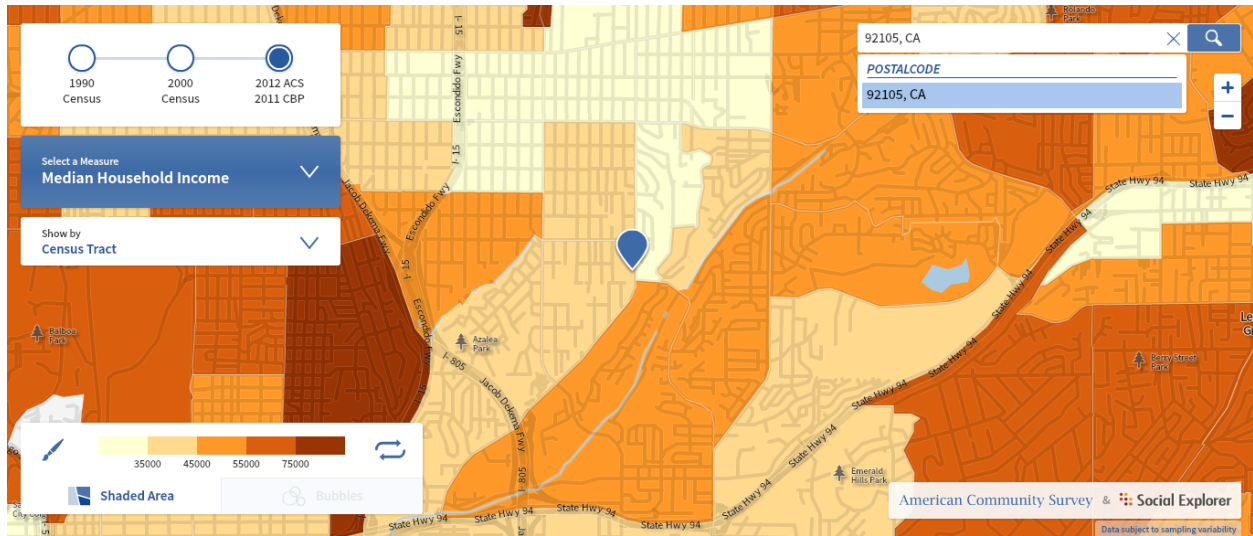
CHFM runs a nutrition incentives model very similar to Market Match called the Fresh Fund, which was launched in 2008 by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in San Diego. According to IRC data, CalFresh sales at CHFM are more than 20 times the national average at \$6,092 per month. Average farm vendor revenue at CHFM was \$47,000 in 2011, supported by the additional income derived from nutrition assistance benefits and Fresh Fund incentives. Nutrition incentives are a unique model that simultaneously benefits California's low-income communities and local farmers. Direct economic benefits support local California producers who struggle with keeping price points competitive for healthy food, and achieve a win-win for California's people and local businesses.

Market Match supports economic development, but its impact is felt most by the consumers who benefit from it. One Fresh Fund customer states:

“Wow, for me it has meant a lot, it has been such a big help in both economic and nutrition aspects. I have changed the way I think about our diet. I was looking for help since my husband was diagnosed with high blood cholesterol and pre-diabetes. Here I started to see fresh produce; the children are more motivated to eat healthy and my husband who never liked veggies is eating them now. I tell them the produce is fresh which makes it better than the super market [produce], their view has also changed about produce. So, it has benefited me so much.

... The freshness of the produce. Coming here also, the environment. I feel there are people looking for the same interests and it makes me feel good. Today I am making better choices, I am buying fresh fruits.”

Financial incentives that support low-income communities' purchase of fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables can be an effective anti-poverty strategy as well. The map on the next page shows that the median household income for the community near CHFM can be as low as \$24,000 per year. The California Health Interview Survey estimates that 15.4 percent of low-income people, in the zip code that CAFM is located in, are food insecure. The statewide average is 8.4 percent. Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked, and a statewide Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is an evidence-based intervention for these issues.



## THE OPPORTUNITY TO SCALE UP AN EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAM

With institutional support from the state government, this nutrition incentive model can grow beyond 150 (of 800) certified farmers’ markets in California, which only serves 23 counties. A state Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program would also leverage new federal matching funds under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Only \$69 million of FINI’s \$100 million remain and California must maximize its share considering that its farms produce a majority of the nation’s fruits and vegetables (i.e. specialty crops), which are the target products for FINI funding.

### CONCLUSION

- The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is based on Market Match, which aids more than 984 specialty crop farmers in California and approximately 65,000 EBT customers.
- Consumer nutrition incentives for fresh produce is a common sense, proven model for local economic development and promotes a more nutritious diet among safety net beneficiaries.
- CalFresh clients have a buying power of \$7.8 billion. California can drive more of this money towards local farmers and small businesses using this nutrition incentive model, which generated total project sales of over \$2 million in 2014.

For more information, please contact the organizations coordinating support for the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program:

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