

*Maximizing CalFresh Usage at  
Farmers Markets Through Incentives*

# MARKET MATCH

SNAPing Up Benefits for Farmers & Shoppers



by  
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for  
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**market match**  
making fresh affordable

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**ROOTS OF CHANGE (ROC)** conceived the **California Market Match Consortium (CMMC)** to exemplify a central tenet of its theory of change: Actions to improve the food system should seek to solve multiple problems to create transformative synergy. The CMMC was designed to fulfill three goals to increase the promotion and marketing of specialty crops through California certified farmers markets, farm stands and community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms: 1) to expand the income of small and medium-sized fruit and vegetable growers; 2) to increase access to fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables by a consumer base that uses food assistance programs, specifically reaching the underserved communities that suffer disproportionately from nutrition-related diseases; and 3) to demonstrate the power and efficacy of coordinated statewide action by a team of motivated community-based organizations.

ROC's approach has worked. CMMC has aided more than 840 specialty crop farmers and 37,000 federal benefit customers. By linking organizational partners in 16 California counties, it has rewired communities around a farmers market core. The consortium is ROC's most robust example of how broad-based NGO collaboration can have measurable impact on the entire state and influence the nation.

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In 2009, ROC received from the **California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)** the first of four grants totaling \$1.9 million from the \$14 million to 17 million

in Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) money California is awarded annually under a 2008 Farm Bill provision. This money catalyzed 134 farmers markets to expand sales of specialty crops to low-income people receiving CalFresh or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

During the 2009-10 pilot year, six partners expanded EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) access to 46 farmers markets in six counties, spurring fundamental changes in buying patterns by federal nutrition benefit program clients. A match program offered EBT cardholders an

incentive bonus based on the value of fruits, nuts and vegetables they purchased at eligible farmers markets. Within the first two years, the CMMC had expanded to 17 counties, covering the families most in need.

Subsequently, the consortium leveraged additional CDFA SCBG dollars with matching philanthropic support to increase the number of farmers markets with EBT access and Market Match, and increased regional and statewide access to federal nutrition benefit clients. ROC continuously added new partner organizations, expanding CMMC's regional reach and increasing partnerships with local NGOs and agencies working to connect vulnerable communities with farmers markets. By 2012, 32% of all California certified producers were participating in CMMC. They generated total project sales of \$879,131 in 2012, a \$263,000, or 43%, increase from 2011 (\$616,437), and a \$555,000, or 171%, increase from the pilot year (\$324,350).

The sustained growth in EBT sales and EBT customers since the project's 2010 inception are the result of multifaceted efforts. CMMC partners conducted outreach and formed strategic partnerships with WIC offices, public health, agricultural commissioners, school districts, hospitals, housing development

organizations, senior centers, local churches, food banks, food pantries, television and radio stations, newspapers, local businesses, city officials, public transit agencies, and more than 100 community-based organizations serving local residents. Their expansive multilingual promotion, advertising and outreach campaign reached California's many diverse communities in English, Spanish, Hmong, Punjabi, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Now in its fourth year, ROC is passing leadership of Market Match to the **Ecology Center**, bringing an expanded vision and required additional focus to move the Market Match program into its next phase of development. Along with the partners in the CMMC, the

Ecology Center will standardize Market Match across the state and move from a highly successful pilot to a ubiquitous statewide program. Partners are currently benefiting from a consistent identity using their new Market Match branding, and are working to unify

the program across markets while maximizing the impact, in order to better communicate about the program to customers, farmers and market managers.

The return on investment (ROI) revealed in this report demonstrates the power of match-incentive funds in attracting additional low-income customers to farmers markets. Market Match has become a key tool, notable for its measurability.

The ROC vision of a wider, more holistic system of farmers markets and consumers connected to one another in a healthy and resilient community is beginning to emerge. Even as farmers markets continue to grow in size and number, we are challenged to be inclusive. Together, community partners across California are inviting members of low-income communities to the table, and invitations are being accepted. The partnerships within CMMC and local communities have begun to yield results that strengthen a sustainable food system for all.

Just as farmers markets become more vital in addressing community food insecurity, they aid the survival of California's family farms. However, the right technology must be in farmers' hands for them to serve all Californians, and they need assistance from farmers markets to access customers. To reach those with the greatest need, markets need sufficient funding, government partnerships and financial incentives.

With the Ecology Center at the helm and continued participation of foundations, community organizations, the CDFA, **California Department of Public Health**, market managers and nutrition benefit clients, CMMC will become a statewide program serving California specialty crop farmers in the critical mission of offering the freshest locally grown, affordable produce to all Californians.



CalFresh cards are processed at the farmers' market on wireless Point Of Sale devices.

# Roots of Change

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