

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Bridging the Gap between Farm and Food Security

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Abstract: When the Food Stamp Program was first implemented during the Great Depression, one of its main tenets was to help reinforce farm security by redistributing surplus commodity crops to low-income people. Since, the Food Stamp Program – now the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – has transformed to focus almost entirely on food security, while at the same time ignoring farm security and making it difficult for government food assistance beneficiaries to access environmentally sustainable food from local farms. Recently, there have been both government and private foundation initiatives to provide incentives for SNAP participants to purchase locally sourced food at farmers’ markets; however, much of the financial burden has been put on the markets themselves. In Washington, D.C., the “Double Dollars” program has been tremendously successful in bridging the gap between farm and food security, but the success of programs like this depends on sustained funding. In order to ensure that government food assistance recipients have access to environmentally sustainable food, the federal government will need to make a consistent commitment to fund and publicize its initiatives so that food security can be achieved without threatening farm security.

I. Introduction

After many years of paying little attention to the increasingly expanding industrial food system, Americans are finally beginning to recognize the consequences associated with disengaged eating. As recently as ten years ago, few people thought beyond the supermarket when it came time to feed themselves;

however, with growing media coverage of issues like global climate change and industrial food contamination, more Americans have begun to consider and champion sustainable food systems.

While the word “sustainable”¹ has become somewhat of a catchword of this generation, it can have implications that are unspecified. This paper will focus on environmentally sustainable eating, but it is important to recognize that sustainability is an important concept that should be considered in terms of people, planet, and profit – commonly denoted as the triple bottom line – all of which can be applied to eating. In a social context, a sustainable food system might be considered “one that sustained communities and people, one based on democratic control” (Gussow, 1999, p.199). In an economic context, sustainable food systems require that food producers be paid a wage that allows them to continue producing food, and that consumers can afford the food on a consistent basis. Environmentally, a sustainable food system can be defined as “following the agricultural and food system practices that do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their food needs” (Wilkins & Eames-Sheavly, n.d.).

Despite being age-old practices, “sustainable agriculture” and “eating locally” have recently taken many communities by storm in the United States. Advocates for environmentally sustainable eating urge the re-localization of diets, which will

¹ The most common definition for “sustainability” recognized within the environmental community was originally crafted in the 1987 Bruntland Report, also known as Our Common Future. This definition states that sustainability is “meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (“Defining,” 2009)

cause a shift from dependence on large industrial agriculture towards small-scale regional agriculture (Gussow, 1999, p.195).

Whereas a local food movement is quickly sweeping through many parts of the United States and causing an increase in the number of farmers' markets, many low-income urban communities have not witnessed this trend. However, even if these communities had access to a farmers' market, there is no guarantee they would financially be able to purchase the locally produced food being sold. Food deserts are generally found in urban areas where residents have little economic or political power, and many of these residents rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly known as the Food Stamp Program – in order to purchase food (Gray, 2009). Traditionally, there has been limited if any ability for SNAP participants to use their government food assistance dollars at farmers markets, making it very difficult for low-income people to eat in an environmentally sustainable manner. However, a small but increasing number of urban farmers' markets has created initiatives to attract SNAP participants.

Despite both government and private efforts to encourage and support these market initiatives, there are still significant gaps in the food and farm policies in the United States. This paper will examine the causes of these gaps in access to environmentally sustainable food by first looking at the history of the Federal Farm Bill, the Food Stamp Program, and the current institutional framework that links food assistance beneficiaries with farmers' market food. I will then evaluate the

current efforts and progress of several urban areas in the United States to provide SNAP participants access to local farmers' markets.

In discussion, I will argue that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has failed to provide sufficient opportunities for government food assistance beneficiaries to purchase environmentally sustainable food on a consistent basis. In order for SNAP participants around the country to be truly food secure, it will be necessary for the federal government to take a more direct role. On a very broad level, a complete overhaul of the current subsidy program would ensure that real crops could be more competitively priced while still providing the necessary financial support for small-scale farmers. On a more realistic and immediate level, the USDA must take the financial burden off of farmers market managers by creating standardized incentives permitting SNAP participants to consistently purchase sustainably produced food with their federal assistance allowance. These incentive programs will require increased government funding, but their success will also depend heavily on the degree to which they are publicized to food assistance beneficiaries.

II. Background

A. Food and Farm Policy

Prior to the Green Revolution² that began in the 1940s, eating regionally produced food devoid of chemical additives was more of a given rather than a movement. Now, the simple act of eating has become politicized, and maintaining physical health has become one of the greatest challenges of this generation. Although many eaters are unaware of it, the current food system “operates within and is influenced by social, political, economic, and natural environments” and the United States Farm Bill is the chief entity in dictating what this food system will look like (Wilkins & Eames-Sheavly, n.d.).

The current food system in the United States has been referred to as “increasingly consolidated, industrialized, and often faceless” (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006). In a report entitled “Dietary Guidelines for Sustainability: Twelve Years Later,” author Joan Dye Gussow (1999) states that “learning to pay attention to the sources of their food seemed the only way the eating public might come to recognize its own dependence on farms, farmers, and nature” (p. 196). In 1933, just prior to the implementation of the first Food Stamp Program, approximately a quarter of the United States population lived on a farm (Landers, 2007, p.1946). Government policies tended to bolster the idea that food security and farm security could be compatible goals, and farm policy had a very direct and apparent impact on

² “The green revolution is the increase in crop yields based on cultivation of high—response varieties of wheat, rice, maize and millet, and intensive use of fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and machinery” (Green Revolution).

the average American eater. Nowadays, with just two percent of Americans living on farms, the average eater has become completely removed from federal farm policy (Landers, 2007, p.1946).

The Farm Bill, first passed in 1965 and subsequently passed every several years by the United States Congress, has become one of the most controversial pieces of legislation ever created. More than being a method of protecting small farm interests, the Farm Bill has instead reinforced the interests of large-scale industrial agriculture while threatening the security of small farms. Rather than supporting policies that would enhance community food security by improving access to affordable, nutritious, and locally grown food for all community members, the United States government has capitulated to large corporation requests to consistently underwrite subsidies for agribusinesses that produce five main crops: corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, and cotton. This subsidizing has perpetuated the monoculture that exacerbates environmental, public health, and economic concerns in the United States (Pollan, 2007). By subsidizing commodity crops, few of which are consumed directly, the United States Farm Bill has limited the diversity of food that most people can access (Pollan, 2007).

In the case of the Farm Bill, the United States government has continuously yielded to large agribusinesses like Monsanto, Cargill, and Archer Daniels Midland that have extremely powerful lobbyists. This power has effectively immobilized small farmers who are more likely to promote sustainable agriculture techniques. Gussow (1999) also states, “The government has given lip service, at best, to small

farmers and their policies have helped the largest ones. ‘Get big or get out’ has been the general message” (p.197). Currently, American fruit and vegetable farmers receive less than half of one percent of agricultural subsidies (Nischan, 2010). Through commodity crop subsidies, the federal government has facilitated heavy reliance on chemical fertilizers, pest and weed controls, and energy inefficiency (Gussow & Clancy, 1986, p.2). Rather than promoting a food system based on small farms serving regional eaters, federal policies have created a geographically concentrated expanse of monoculture farms in the Midwestern United States. This monoculture not only requires long-distance transportation for food, but is also highly susceptible to biological pathogens causing food safety outbreaks (Gussow & Clancy, 1986, p.2).

The diversity that has been sacrificed in favor of commodity agriculture has led directly to the food insecurity that threatens the health of many low-income Americans. Food insecurity may be defined as having “limited or uncertain unavailability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (Cohen, 2002, p.3). In the United States, food insecurity is especially prevalent in urban areas. Many cities have entire communities that sustainable food advocates refer to as “food deserts” that are fed solely by fast food chains and corner stores, which often have limited or no fresh or locally produced food (Gray, 2009). When supermarkets are accessible, the fresh produce is often significantly more expensive than processed food. Due in large part to the government commodity crop subsidies, “one dollar can buy 1,200

calories of chips or 870 calories of soda – but only 170 calories of fresh fruit,” making healthy food far less financially viable to low-income eaters (Nischan, 2010).

Recently, a movement promoting local and sustainable diets has attempted to re-bridge the gap between farm and food policy. Thus far, people of a higher socioeconomic level have led much of this movement. While guides on environmentally sustainable eating often encourage maintaining a diverse diet sourced from local producers, economic capacity to do so is rarely addressed. For example, in “10 Tips for an Eco-Friendly Meal,” a guide published online by Everyday Health, author Jen Laskey (2008) suggests eating seasonally, using organic ingredients, and looking for fair trade products; however, there is no mention of how low-income people can achieve these standards. While the message of this guide and many similar guides is a positive one, it is crucial not to ignore large portions of Americans who rely on government food assistance programs such as SNAP.

B. Food Stamp Program and SNAP

The SNAP is a reformed version of the Food Stamp Program, which began during the Great Depression as a method of allocating superfluous farm commodities, has been referred to as the “cornerstone of the nation’s nutrition safety net” (Landers, 2007, p.1945). According to data from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) there were 33,722,293 SNAP participants as of March 2010 (“Program”). While this tremendous number is indicative of the significant portion

of the United States population that is food insecure, the Food Stamp Program was originally intended to rescue the considerable community of farmers.

Following a significant drop in United States farm prices due in part to a drop exports to Europe in the 1920s, Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. As a part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, this program authorized the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation to purchase, transport, store, and distribute surplus commodity crops to state and local relief agencies. To further organize this mission, Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace established the Food Stamp Program in 1939 (Landers, 2007, p.1946). The original program allowed eligible low-income people to purchase orange food stamps and receive fifty cents worth of blue stamps for every dollar spent on orange stamps. While the orange stamps could be used normally to buy any supermarket item, blue stamps could only buy USDA-deemed "surplus foods" (Landers, 2007, p.1946). While this was a clear effort to encourage low-income people to purchase and consume a target group of excess foods, the subsidized foods between 1939 and 1943 included items like eggs, plums, dry prunes, pork and potatoes – hardly the corn domination that the United States experiences today (Landers, 2007, p.1946). In the first four years, participation peaked at around 4 million people, but over 20 million people received benefits from this early program. Many of the early recipients of government food assistance money were mainly urban residents, with New York City beneficiaries receiving 14.4 percent of the total subsidy in the first part of 1942 (Landers, 2007, p.1946).

Although the first Food Stamp Program ended in the spring of 1943 due to a booming wartime economy that limited farm surpluses, the program returned under President John F. Kennedy with some critical changes that shed light on the current program. In this new and “improved” system, participants would still purchase stamps, but there were no stamps specifically geared towards surplus commodities (Landers, 2007, p.1946). This change indicated a critical shift in the Food Stamp Program: it was now geared almost entirely towards insecure eaters and had a much weaker link to farm policy. The additional stamps provided to participants were intended to “allow them to obtain a low-cost nutritionally adequate diet,” and the only restrictions were that they could not be used to purchase alcohol or imported items (Landers, 2007, p.1947). When President Johnson made this Food Stamp Program permanent through the Food Stamp Act of 1964 as a part of his War on Poverty, it was clear that the original focus of farm security and health were waning priorities.

With the passage of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, several changes further indicated that the program values had been altered. Participants no longer needed to purchase food stamps; instead, they were provided by the government for qualified low-income people. Perhaps more significant was the modification that no longer required food stamp users to have access to cooking facilities (Landers, 2007, p.1947). While this allowance allowed for more participants – food stamp beneficiaries skyrocketed by 1.5 million in one month resulting in more than 20 participants by the end of 1979 – it also indirectly opened the door for a low-income diet with a much greater reliance on processed foods (Landers, 2007, p.1947). In

the words of food journalist Michael Pollan, this helped to create the current urban food system that is “awash in added sugars (derived from corn) and added fats (derived mainly from soy)” (Pollan, 2007). With the abandonment of the home kitchen as an integral place for the preparation and eating of food came a newfound – and less healthy – direction for eating on a limited budget.

While the Food Stamp Program has drastically transformed since its founding, many of its original tenets and challenges remain as a part of the SNAP. After its establishment, the administrator of the original Food Stamp Program Milo Perkins said, “We got a picture of a gorge, with farm surplus on one cliff and undernourished city folks with outstretched hands on the other. We set out to find a practical way to build a bridge across that chasm” (Landers, 2007, p.1946). Particularly in the last several years, urban SNAP participants have increased in counties throughout the United States. In 2007, about eight percent of residents in urban counties received food stamps and by June 2009 this number was elevated to 10.8 percent (“Food Stamp Use,” 2009). Although the numbers of rural low-income SNAP beneficiaries have also risen, the urban SNAP participants are especially vulnerable to the capricious distribution of environmentally sustainable food in the United States.

C. Institutional frameworks for use of government food assistance money at farmers’ markets

Within this movement, the structural organization of governmental players includes the USDA’s National Food and Nutrition Service, the State SNAP agencies,

the Local SNAP offices, and the state and local nutrition education providers. Amongst non-governmental organizations, the main players are the Farmers' Market Coalition, which works to "strengthen farmers markets for the benefit of farmers, consumers, and communities" and the Wholesome Wave Foundation, which provides financial and technical assistance to farmers markets in low-income communities ("Purpose," 2008).

While the concept of allowing government food assistance recipients to use their benefits at farmers' markets is not a recent phenomenon, the framework for this movement is still in the early stages of development and varies greatly by region across the United States. This framework is comprised of the 1) market infrastructure, 2) education 3) the funding. Although the USDA generally sets the framework at the national level, the implementation of the framework relies heavily upon other players, including state and local governments and NGOs. The shortcomings and inconsistencies with implementing use of these food benefits at farmers' markets have often been a result of the lack of a clear framework that designates responsibility and expectations among each of these players.

1) Market Infrastructure

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 began a phasing out of paper food stamps in favor of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) (Grace, Grace, Becker & Lyden, 2005). The EBT is an electronic system that allows food assistance recipients to "authorize transfer of their government SNAP benefits from a Federal account to a retail account to pay for

products received” (Farmers’ Market Coalition [FMC], 2010). While this transition allowed for a more modern and efficient way for low-income people to purchase food in a supermarket, the new and highly technological system was not as accommodating to a farmers’ market setting.

Between the start of the EBT transition process in 1997 and the final expiration of all paper food stamps in 2009 there were major concerns about how the outdoor farmers’ markets could accommodate EBT card users. In normal retail locations, the infrastructure used to process EBT food assistance requires a telephone line and electricity, but this is not as feasible in a farmers’ market setting (Grace, Grace, Becker & Lyden, 2005). The highly bureaucratic USDA also requires farmers’ markets interested in accepting SNAP benefits to apply for a licensed FNS# from the Food and Nutrition Service by filling out an online application and providing supporting documentation (The Food Trust, 2009). After just a year into the transition to EBT cards, there was a noticeable drop in food stamp use at farmers markets. In 1998, food stamp redemptions at farmer’s markets totaled \$3.8 million, a number that had been as high as \$6.4 million just four years earlier (Grace, Grace, Becker & Lyden, 2005). With this significant drop in government food assistance dollars spent at farmers’ markets negatively impacted both the low-income food stamp users and the farmers, there was an urgent call for a solution.

These solutions have come in two forms, both of which have contributed to the rebounding of government food assistance acceptance at farmers’ markets. First is the Central Terminal Scrip system, which involves EBT cardholders obtaining

scrips of paper with a dollar total of produce they wish to buy from a certain vendor. This scrip is then brought to a central table with a Point-of-Sale (POS) device that can swipe an EBT card for the total produce amount; next the customer returns to the vendor with a proof of purchase receipt to collect their produce (“Supplemental Nutrition,” 2010). Second is the Center Terminal Token system, where the EBT beneficiary uses his or her card to purchase tokens at the central table. These tokens can then be used to purchase produce from vendors. Vendors are later reimbursed at the central market table for the receipts or tokens (FMC, 2010).

While these solutions have been successful in reviving food assistance redemptions at some farmers’ markets, there are still barriers that have made the process somewhat challenging or prolonged at certain markets. Markets that have the technological infrastructure and that conduct more at least \$100 in SNAP business each month can receive a free POS device from the USDA in order to process EBT (“Supplemental Nutrition,” 2010), but many markets that do not have access to a telephone line or electricity. Some of these markets have opted to purchase wireless POS devices from third party retailers, but these machines cost upwards of \$1,100, making them too costly for many small markets hoping to implement an EBT program (“Supplemental Nutrition,” 2010; Zezima, 2009). Additionally, individual markets are generally responsible for researching and securing proper equipment, training market staff and vendors, and maintaining accounting records once the POS machine is in place (FMC, 2010). Thus, while well-established markets with a high volume of low-income customers may not face barriers in the transition to accepting EBT, more assistance is necessary for smaller

markets hoping to attract more SNAP beneficiaries (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006).

2) Education

The educational framework is comprised of two parts: the nutrition education programs aimed towards teaching SNAP beneficiaries why this local and sustainable produce should be consumed and the publicity directed towards SNAP beneficiaries about the programs that allow them to use their food benefits at farmers markets.

After the major reforms to the Food Stamp Program in 1977, Congress further amended the program to include nutrition education in 1981. The current educational program directed towards SNAP participants is the SNAP-Ed program. The main purpose of this education is to “encourage the purchase of nutritious foods,” but rarely is environmental sustainability addressed (“SNAP-Ed,” 2010). While program content may be lacking, the major problem with the educational framework is that the responsibilities associated with this education – program development, financial management, and training – are rather ambiguously dispersed among the national, state, and local bureaucracies.

In theory, these separate roles are clearly assigned and reported, but the actual implementation of nutrition education has revealed that the delegation of responsibilities is often unclear. This reality has resulted in an inconsistent quality of programming across the United States, leaving many SNAP beneficiaries – especially those in urban areas – prone to malnutrition (Landers, 2007, p.1948). The

official delegation of roles and responsibilities for the food nutrition education problems in the governmental framework – in the USDA’s *Food Stamp Nutrition Education Guiding Principles* (2009) – can be found in Appendix 1. This document shows that the tasks are somewhat vague and often overlap between governmental powers at the local, state, and national levels.

The framework for publicizing the ability for SNAP beneficiaries to both purchase food and receive incentives at farmers’ markets is very simple, and thus, not always effective. The national USDA highlights some suggestions on its website, but the actual implementation of these techniques is left to the individual markets. Among these suggestions are providing signage within the market to direct EBT cardholders to POS machines and providing farmers with signs and buttons to advertise that they accept SNAP benefits (“Supplemental Nutrition,” 2010). Additionally, the USDA encourages market managers to advertise in public aid offices, food banks, soup kitchens, places of worship, child care centers, libraries, public housing, public transportation stations, on local bus and rail systems. To incentivize SNAP beneficiaries to come to farmers’ markets, the USDA recommends that the local municipalities or market managers offer free public transportation from designated areas to the market, schedule cooking demonstrations featuring seasonal produce from the market, and distribute recipes and nutritional information to market attendees (“Supplemental Nutrition,” 2010). While these publicity recommendations can be useful, they are very general and depend on the local organizers to take significant initiative.

3. Funding

Similar to education, the responsibilities for providing the necessary funding to allow for SNAP participants to use their benefits at farmers' markets is very complicated. For both farmers' markets organizers and SNAP participants hoping to create a link between farm and food security, insufficient funding has frequently been a crucial barrier. For market organizers seeking to make it both structurally possible and financially appealing for SNAP beneficiaries to access environmentally sustainable food, there are several options:

Federal grants geared towards farmers' markets that aim to serve low-income communities can be very influential in helping to bridge the gap between farm and food security in urban areas. The primary government grant targeted towards farmers' markets is the Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP), funded by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service since 1976. This grant is intended to "improve and expand domestic farmers markets" (Farmers' Market Promotion Program [FMPP], 2010). Projects can receive a maximum of \$100,000 and about five million dollars is allocated for the FMPP for fiscal year 2010, with that amount doubling for fiscal years 2011 and 2012 (FMPP, 2010).

While this grant can fund a number of different initiatives, one of the main tenets of the FMPP is to "expand local and rural economies" (Morrison, 2010). The 2008 Farm Bill stipulated that "no less than 10 percent of the funds for the FMPP will be used to support the use of electronic benefit transfers for Federal nutrition programs (food stamps and WIC) at farmers' markets and community supported

agriculture enterprises” (Farmers’ Market Promotion Program [FMMP], 2008). This specification guarantees that more farmers’ market will be able to purchase wireless POS machines to accept EBT. This money can also go towards the funding of double voucher incentive initiatives. It is clear that the federal government understands the value of expanding the access that low-income people have to farmers’ markets; however, as with most grants, they are not equally rewarding for all applicants and only certain markets will reap benefits.

NGO grants have also proven to be a significant alternative source of funding for farmers’ markets that have not received for or do not qualify for federal grants. Recently, many market recipients of private foundation grants have been using the funding to implement double voucher programs that double the value of SNAP and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits when used at participating markets. Thus far, almost all of the double voucher programs in the United States are funded through foundation grants, the most common of which is offered by the Wholesome Wave Foundation. In addition to the direct funding that the Wholesome Wave Foundation has been providing to markets since 2008, the foundation also assists markets with grant writing, mustering community support, and complying with government policies³ (“Nourishing Nations,” 2010).

³ The federal USDA requires individual markets that are interested in accepting SNAP benefits to apply for a licensed FNS# from the Food and Nutrition Service by filling out an online application and providing supporting documentation (“The Food Trust,” 2009). Markets hoping to implement double voucher programs must apply for waivers from the USDA (Burros). Furthermore, individual farmers and farmers’ markets must be authorized by state agencies to accept FMNP coupons (“WIC,” 2010).

For SNAP recipients seeking supplementary benefits in order to purchase environmentally sustainable food, there are limited options. The majority of SNAP beneficiaries do not have access to a double voucher program, but some may qualify for the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program:

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was established in 1992 to increase access for participants of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC beneficiaries to fresh and locally grown produce (Cohen 37). Additionally, this program was aimed to "expand the awareness, use of and sales at farmers' markets" (WIC, 2010). These supplementary coupons allow WIC participants – limited to low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and infants and children under the age of five – to receive FMNP vouchers valued between ten and thirty dollars per year. The FMNP is funded by Congress, and the federal government funds 100 percent of the food costs and 70 percent of the administrative costs for the program (WIC, 2010). In order for states to receive WIC FMNP federal funding for the qualified residents, state agencies must submit plans detailing how they will "implement, operate, and administer" aspects of the FMNP (WIC, 2010). Additionally, individual farmers and farmers' markets must be authorized by state agencies to accept and accept FMNP coupons. Forty-five states participate in the FMNP and they are required to contribute the remaining 30 percent of the administrative costs (WIC, 2010). Although this program is not specifically targeted towards all SNAP beneficiaries, there is some overlap in those who qualify for both programs.

III. Urban Case Studies

The movement to provide SNAP beneficiaries with increased access to environmentally sustainable food is challenging, but some cities have shown that this is not a fruitless venture. Several farmers' market networks –including those in Washington, D.C., Rhode Island, Kansas City, and Takoma Park, Md. – have demonstrated that programs working in the interest of both farmers and low-income people are both possible and popular. However, the long-term success of these programs is questionable, and in order to implement these programs on a broader scale to impact a significant portion of the SNAP participants nationwide, more innovative and collaborative ideas will be necessary.

Washington, D.C.

FRESHFARM Markets, the network of farmers' markets in Washington, D.C. gained approval to accept SNAP benefits at two of its markets in 2008. Bernadine Prince, Co-Director of the FRESHFARM Markets, said that the first year of accepting government food benefits at the markets ended with limited success and only \$183 in food stamp redemptions. She attributes this to the lack of information provided to SNAP beneficiaries: "Food stamps were set up to be redeemed at grocery stores, and there is very little information about redemption at farmers' markets" (B. Prince, personal communication, April 8, 2010). After this year, administrators at FRESHFARM Markets recognized that an incentive-based program, like those that had proven successful in several other cities in the United States, was the best bet to attract the low-income community to farmers' markets.

In initiating the “Double Dollars” program in the Washington, D.C. markets, FRESHFARM Markets was met with several barriers. Aside from funding, the main challenge has been gaining the attention and assistance of the Washington, D.C. government administrators in charge of food benefits. Prince noted that FRESHMARM Markets experienced problems in simply reaching this administrator and also convincing the financially strapped city government to provide educational program materials to social welfare staff and low-income clients. In this way, the Double Dollars program was “met with a lot of suspicion” (B. Prince, personal communication, April 8, 2010).

In terms of funding, FRESHFARM was unable to receive federal funding for the incentive program because it is a well established non-profit, and the grants are geared towards start-up programs. FRESHFARM initially received grant money for its incentive program from the Wholesome Wave Foundation, and has received subsequent financial assistance from individual donors and Washington, D.C. foundations; however, the high program costs are always a concern for organizers (Stefani, 2009). In addition to subsidizing the low-income customers, the Double Dollars initiative has continued to be very costly due to the necessary recordkeeping and the USDA’s requirement that the markets have a dedicated staff member to administer the program at each market (B. Prince, personal communication, April 8, 2010).

Rhode Island

In the summer of 2007, Farm Fresh Rhode Island worked with state advocacy groups to begin accepting SNAP benefits at its markets. Two years later, the non-profit group that manages farmers markets throughout the state collaborated with the Wholesome Wave Foundation to establish an incentive program, known as “Bonus Bucks.” Through this program, food assistance beneficiaries could receive up to ten dollars in extra assistance for shopping at farmers’ markets (Greene, 2010). Similarly to people paying with credit and debit cards, EBT card users receive gold coins representing market dollars to exchange for food at different vendors. This uniformity limits any stigma or embarrassment that may be linked with using government food assistance benefits (Greene, 2010).

Positive results of the incentive program manifested very quickly after its inception. Not surprisingly, the use of SNAP benefits has skyrocketed due to the Bonus Bucks program. Due to the incentives and a statewide increase in SNAP benefits, Rhode Island farmers’ markets saw a jump from around \$3,000 to \$32,000 in SNAP benefit redemptions between 2008 and 2009 (Greene, 2010). The Pawtucket Market, one market that Farm Fresh Rhode Island oversees, has documented that they process between \$200 and \$600 per week, requiring anywhere from \$100 to \$300 in extra incentive dollars (Greene, 2010).

Despite the astounding success, funding may act as a barrier for this program to be sustained. The funding for the original incentive program ran out in October 2009. Due to an additional grant of \$5,000 from the Rhode Island Foundation, the

program could be continued during the winter, and another \$1,500 grant from the Frederick C. Tanner Memorial Fund has provided incentive money thus far in 2010 (Greene, 2010). While the Farm Fresh markets have been fortunate to attract grant money since establishing the Bonus Bucks program, there is no long-term plan for permanent funding. According to Farm Fresh food systems coordinator Jenn Baumstein, “[Farm Fresh is] constantly looking for more funding for the Bonus Bucks program” (Greene, 2010).

Kansas City

Farmers’ markets in the Kansas City area are in the process of developing programs to attract more SNAP participants. In October 2009, representatives from the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture (KCCUA)⁴ and the Menorah Legacy Foundation⁵ facilitated a meeting aiming to “initiate an action plan to assure that low and moderate income people living in the Kansas city area can fully utilize various coupon programs such as SNAP, WIC, and Senior Coupons at local Farmers' Market” (Krotz, 2009).

This planning group, referred to as the “Kansas City Double Value Coupon Collaboration” finished the meeting with a proposal for a program to be implemented in Spring 2010 that would include several initiatives to attract SNAP

⁴ The KCCUA is a non-profit organization founded in 2004 that has the mission of “promoting the production and consumption of food in city neighborhoods” (Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture, 2010)

⁵ The Menorah Legacy Foundation is based in Kansas City, Missouri and aims to “achieve a balance that meets the health care needs of the future while honoring the commitment to our past. Funding awarded by this foundation is from the contributions of patients, families, and leaders of the Jewish community affiliated with the Menorah Medical Center (“About Us,” 2010)

beneficiaries. The plans involved ten farmers' markets that would be placed in areas along public transportation lines easily accessed by low-income residents. These markets would not only accept SNAP, WIC and other government food benefits, but would also offer incentive funding by matching each dollar spent (Krotz, 2009). Additionally, each market would receive assistance in education and outreach efforts from different local agencies. To ensure success, the markets' organizers would attempt to collaborate with agencies that had already established relationships with the low-income communities, including Head Start, Catholic Charities and public housing organizations. The organizers would seek funding from several governmental sources, including specialty crop money⁶, farmers' market promotion funding, and state SNAP outreach program rewards (Krotz, 2009).

Within their report that came out of the meeting, the Kansas City Double Value Coupon Collaboration formulated a list of future steps that were crucial to developing a successful farmers' market program. While programs in each city are planned and implemented differently, these steps – listed below – demonstrate the significant challenges that market organizers must conquer prior to providing low-income people with environmentally sustainable food. The different levels of government play a part in these processes, but most of the burden falls on the non-profit organizers and local bureaucracy.

⁶ The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is part of the federal Farm Bill that funds projects that “enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops ... defined as ‘fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)’” (“Specialty,” 2010)

Next steps:

1. Identify a project steering committee, committees and committee heads
2. Finalize criteria for farmers markets and select markets
3. Develop criteria for agency partners and select agencies
4. Request a service proposal and budget from the Wholesome Wave Foundation
5. Prepare a business plan
6. Connect with Missouri and Kansas USDA, Departments of Agriculture and Departments of Health and Human Services offices. Work to garner WIC support for expanding benefits to be used at area farmers markets.
7. Establish plan for securing USDA waivers for each market
8. Secure funding for phase 1 and future sustainability plans
9. Connect with the Institute for Social and Economic Development to establish data collection and reporting needs
10. Develop Communication plan

(Krotz, 2009)

Following the extensive planning efforts, the Kansas City farmers' markets will open this season showcasing incentive programs that have proven successful in other cities as well as some innovative aspects that are unique to Kansas City. The Juniper Gardens⁷ Farmers' Market began in 2008 at the same time that the KCCUA

⁷ Juniper Gardens is a low-income residential community in Kansas City that includes a training farm and community garden (Leverett, 2009).

established an incubator-training farm at Juniper Gardens (“Juniper,” n.d.). The market experienced limited success in its first year and business only minimally increased after it began accepting EBT cards in 2009. A research survey conducted by a community group indicated that the low turnout was a result of the low-income community not knowing about the market or not feeling confident in cooking with fresh vegetables (Krotz, 2010).

Envisioning this market as potentially successful if provided with adequate resources, the KCCUA and the Menorah Foundation selected the Juniper Gardens market as one that they would assist with their comprehensive program. This program, now referred to as the “Beans and Greens” initiative, will implement an incentive program at the market and has already selected four residents of Juniper Gardens will serve as “market ambassadors, working with program staff to develop an effective marketing plan for the neighborhood” (Krotz, 2010). Thus, not only will the market serve low-income customers, but it will also include the low-income community in the development of the market to ensure that community outreach is effective. The reinvigoration of the market will also be enhanced by alliances formed with several local agencies including the Housing Authority, Healthy Parents Healthy Kids, the KCK Greenmarket, and Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas (Krotz, 2010).

Kansas City is also seeking to further improve low-income food security by providing resources and encouragement to residents interested in growing their own food. The KCCUA’s Farm Business Development Program lasts from three to five years and provides low-income participants with training, development support

and funding to become urban farmers. Eventually, once they begin to sell their own produce at the market and become more financially independent, the program subsidy decreases. For the residents who are not interested in the intense business program, the Juniper Gardens training farm also includes a community garden space so that residents can take advantage of the land, water, gardening supplies, and education provided to grow their own food ("Juniper," n.d.).

Takoma Park, MD

The Crossroads Market of Takoma Park, Maryland was established as a market that allows immigrant and minority growers to sell their local produce. This market was organized by the managers of the Takoma Park Farmers' Market, which is a short distance away but serves a different demographic (Nguonly, 2010). The Crossroads Market features produce that has an international flare and will likely appeal to the large foreign-born population in the Washington, D.C. suburb. While the produce sold at the Crossroads Market is be local, it would also showcase some of the environmental values of other cultures. For example, one vendor at Crossroads said, "In my country we never used fertilizers" (Nguonly, 2010). With this cultural value in mind and his recognition that, "the soil [in the Washington, D.C. area] is naturally damp and fertile, he has promised to only grow and sell food without artificial agricultural additives (Nguonly, 2010).

In order to better serve a low-income client base, the Crossroads Market has sought financial assistance from the City of Takoma Park, the Crossroads Development Authority, and other local sources to offer free bus transportation for

seniors and incentive programs – the first market to offer double vouchers in the nation (Burros, 2010). When the incentive program “Fresh Checks” was first launched, SNAP beneficiaries could use this government assistance and receive extra money to spend at the market (Arias, 2009). In this case the program was successful in that, by 2009, it directed a lot of money – originally \$10 for a customer’s first visit and \$5 for each subsequent visit – to SNAP participants (Benwick, 2009). However, after attendance and redemption of these benefits rose by more than 300 percent, the market could only offer a \$3 bonus to the low-income clients (Burros, 2010). Thus, the success led to the eventual weakening of the program after the limited funding was exhausted, and this market was forced to find alternative methods of supporting its programs. Even the well-established Crossroads Market in its fourth year still struggles to find a way to build a more sustainable funding mechanism for its programs aimed towards the low-income communities (Burros, 2010).

IV. Analysis and Discussion

With little resemblance to the original Food Stamp Program, the current SNAP serves more than 36 million people throughout the United States, with six million of these people depending on this assistance as their only source of income (Stiffman, 2010). Still, only 20 percent of approximately 4,900 farmers markets nationwide accept SNAP benefits, resulting in a wide gap between food security and farm security interests (“Hope,” 2009). Among the reasons for this gap are the strict permit requirements of the bureaucratic USDA. While these tasks are manageable

for well-established farmers' markets that have full-time staff members like Washington D.C.'s FRESHFARM Markets, they are more of a challenge for markets that struggle to maintain a consistent client base of any income (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006).

Recently, a widespread movement has sprouted in many urban areas to better equip farmers' markets to serve the low-income communities. Non-profit organizations, the predominant leaders of this movement, have made significant progress in increasing the food security of government food assistance recipients; however, there are several critical barriers that are hindering the widespread success of this movement: 1) a lack of information provided to SNAP participants about the environmentally sustainable food options and 2) the existing initiatives are not sustainable due to a lack of permanent long-term funding. With its budget proposal for 2011, the Obama administration is demonstrating a level of commitment to addressing these barriers, but this is a very preliminary effort that will require further government support.

Lack of information

The lack of information encompasses two separate barriers: the failure of the government nutrition education programs to emphasize the importance of eating environmentally sustainable foods and the failure of the market organizers to adequately publicize market programs that target low-income communities.

In her "Review of Nutrition Education Research in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 1998 to 2007," Isobel Contento (2008) states, "Nutrition

has often been described as the link between agriculture and health” (p.331). Even though SNAP and WIC participants are not likely to have environmental sustainability at the top of their minds, many studies of nutrition education have concluded that environmental sustainability shares objectives with eating well. Contento (2008) further asserts, “Nutrition education that focuses on sustainability of diets can also focus on eating locally, which can improve agriculture sustainability and safety of the food supply, help local farmers survive, and sustain communities and people based on democratic control” (p.336). Reflecting on her 1986 study with Katherine L. Clancy called “Dietary Guidelines for Sustainability,” Joan Dye Gussow (1999) observed, whereas most nutrition recommendations were mainly grounded on an “accepted relationship between food and human health,” perhaps the “recommendations should also take account of the health of the planet” (p. 195).

In reality, the nutrition education programs sponsored by the USDA that are directed towards low-income people have a limited sustainability component. Even with its inclusion, environmental sustainability is often masked by the notion of saving money. For example, the USDA’s SNAP-Ed Connection includes a component called “Nutrition through the Seasons” that encourages participants to eat seasonal produce. Although eating food from the regional food system significantly reduces the amount of fossil fuels required to transport food, the USDA simply states, “choosing fruits and vegetables that are in season is a great way to stretch food dollars” (“SNAP- Ed,” 2010).

The online component of SNAP-Ed also includes resources with gardening advice. While teaching the low-income communities to grow their own food is a compelling concept that has been championed by non-profit organizations around the country, it is often not realistic for people with limited time and space, like many of the urban low-income residents throughout the country. The Juniper Garden program in Kansas City has been successful not only in organizing a farmers' market for low-income residents but also in providing outlets for some of these residents to grow their own food. These non-profit gardening education programs like Juniper Garden's Farm Business Development Program promote food security by providing opportunities for people to have greater power in the food production process. In this case, many of the participants are refugees who bring a unique international vibe to the community by selling their products at the farmers' market amongst their neighbors (Krotz, 2010). In contrast to the non-profit initiatives, the USDA's comprehensive garden resources are not tailored towards the low-income communities and thus, do not address many of the barriers to gardening ("SNAP-Ed," 2010).

In addition to failing to stress environmentally sustainable food and methods that the low-income community can use to purchase or grow this food, the government nutrition education programs are also inconsistent in quality on a state-by-state basis. Nutrition education programs are partially funded by federal dollars and guided by federal criterion, but an audit conducted by the United States General Accounting Office in 2004 concluded that nutrition education programs vary greatly across the country (Landers, 2007, p.1949). In some states, SNAP and

WIC beneficiaries receive one-on-one counseling or small group classes while in other states broad social marketing campaigns qualify as nutrition education (Landers, 2007, p.1949). In 2005, federal funding for SNAP nutrition education programs in South Carolina was as \$0.25 per person, whereas in Wyoming participants received nutrition education valued at \$64.57 per person (Landers, 2007, p.1949). The program, albeit geographically inconsistent in quality, has grown tremendously since its origin. In fiscal year 1992, the first year of nutrition education funding, only seven states had contracts with the USDA FNS for a combined total of \$661,000 in federal funding. By 2007, this total reached \$275 million and was more widespread, encompassing 52 distinct nutrition education plans for states and territories throughout the country (Contento, 2008, p.331).

While nutrition education programs for low-income SNAP and WIC beneficiaries are significant, even the most expensive and thorough programs are trivial unless they correlate with the foods that those being educated are able to purchase with government benefits. Just as SNAP and WIC nutritional education programs need to be more consistently comprehensive across the United States, they must be more aligned with the specific government assistance programs so the low-income communities are aware of the healthy food choices and the opportunities for accessing these foods.

Funding not sustainable

Food spending tends to be one of the more flexible parts of a family budget, meaning that it will often be limited during hard economic times (Cohen, 2002, p.2).

Although SNAP participants are already receiving aid from the government, disproportionately higher food prices at farmers' markets make environmentally sustainable food items less financially practical; thus, incentives like supplementary federal farmers' market coupons and double voucher programs are imperative to attracting the low-income communities to farmers' markets. These incentives, while initially very effective, are often not sustainable in the long-term as evidenced by the challenges faced by the both the Crossroads, FRESHFARM, and Rhode Island markets. This reality indicates that the federal government must dedicate more funding towards these programs to decrease the burden on non-profit organizations, local governments, and individual markets.

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, laudable for its intention to introduce low-income families to healthy and locally sourced food through supplementary assistance coupons, appears to have widespread success based on numerical statistics. In fiscal year 2008, 2.3 million WIC beneficiaries received vouchers amounting to more than \$20 million from the FMNP (WIC, 2010). The same year, 16, 016 farmers, 3,367 farmers' markets, and 2,398 roadside stands were approved to accept FMNP vouchers. Respectively, these numbers escalated from 15,062, 3,217 and 2,371 in fiscal year 2007 (WIC, 2010).

Although these numbers are impressive, these do not represent WIC participants who are necessarily long-term farmers' market patrons or farmers who are consistently receiving business from FMNP beneficiaries. Instead, because the annual FMNP vouchers per person are valued at such a small amount, they are not a

“substantial or consistent source of subsidy” (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006). The subsidy provided to WIC participants – less than thirty dollars per year – is too minimal to encourage sustained participation. There is some overlap between the WIC and SNAP beneficiaries; thus, those people who do benefit from both programs may be able to use government funds to continuously purchase farmers’ market food, but this is dependent on farmers’ markets being equipped to accept EBT cards. Otherwise, FMNP benefits are rapidly exhausted and the program is unlikely to be an effective gateway if low-income people would eventually be expected to pay the full price of farmers’ market food (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006). The joint funding between the state and federal governments for the FMNP also contributes to the inconsistencies in the gaps between government food assistance beneficiaries and farmers’ markets, with states valuing and funding the FMNP differently.

Double voucher programs throughout the country have also demonstrated the challenge in securing funding that can sustain incentives at a level that will continuously attract low-income people to farmers’ markets. In the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress allocated \$20 million to “explore buying incentives for healthful foods to improve the diets of [SNAP] recipients,” but almost all double voucher programs in the United States have been a result of initial funding through the Wholesome Wave Foundation (Guddat, n.d.). Once markets exhaust this original money, they are occasionally able to secure more funding through additional foundation grants or local governments; however, the federal government does not subsidize these programs on any significant level and thus, individual market organizers must seek funding from non-profit organizations. The example of the Crossroads Market,

which was continuously forced to decrease the number of dollars that it could match until it was so low that low-income attendance decreased significantly demonstrates the importance of the funding in maintaining the SNAP beneficiary attendance at markets (Burros, 2010). In Rhode Island, the Bonus Bucks program has been sustained through a series of small private grants, but these influxes of money are arbitrary. Because the burden is at the market level, new or poorly organized markets will face especially difficult challenges in securing scarce funding.

The Future of SNAP benefits under the Obama Administration

Whereas the federal government has yet to take action to standardize incentive programs at farmers' markets throughout the United States, the Obama administration is altering the framework of EBT use. The slow transition to EBT – as opposed to paper food stamps – at farmers' markets has often led to concern that the institutional technological impediments would permanently hamper the use of government food benefits at markets; however, recent strides suggest that this hurdle is a temporary challenge that will soon be completely overcome to reveal a much more efficient system of accepting government benefits at farmers' markets (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006). The federal government could have avoided this brief lapse in redemptions of government food assistance at farmers' markets by properly educating and preparing the markets prior to the transition from paper food stamps, but a growing number of markets accepting EBT indicates that the markets have finally caught up with the technology.

For those markets that have not yet acquired the necessary technology to process EBT cards, the Obama administration has recognized that “the need to help farmers cross the digital divide has never been greater” (“Hope,” 2009). The USDA’s fiscal year 2011 Budget (2010) states,

“To assist direct-to-consumer food sales \$4 million is included to provide point of sale terminals to all farmers’ markets nationally that cannot currently redeem SNAP benefits. Ensuring farmers’ markets have point of sales devices will substantially increase the redemption of SNAP benefits at these outlets.”

In reaction to this proposed funding, the Farmers’ Market Coalition submitted a letter to the United States House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, the USDA’s Rural Development, and the Food and Drug Administration supporting this funding, but warning that simply providing the technology to farmers’ markets will not be sufficient in guaranteeing increased access for low-income people. The FMC insists,

“...it has become increasingly clear that the successful implementation of SNAP at farmers markets requires far more than the provision of wireless point of sale devices. Technical assistance for new markets to implement programs and funding for existing markets to do the required outreach, recordkeeping, and evaluation are needed most. This is the missing link that could dramatically increase the rate of SNAP redemption at farmers markets”

(“FMC comments,” 2010).

In the same letter, the FMC recommends that the funding not be limited to the purchasing of POS machines; instead, it should also be considered for use in supporting “inter-agency collaborations between SNAP agencies, state farmers’ market associations, and other on the ground partners” to determine which markets should be selected as the most pressing recipients of the funding (“FMC comments,” 2010). The FMC also strongly urges that at least 20 percent of the funding should be used to provide technical assistance to markets so that “SNAP does not become an added burden to these small, community-based organizations” (“FMC comments,” 2010). Furthermore, the FMC hopes that some of the technical assistance funding should be directed towards markets with established EBT acceptance that are aiming to “increase their rate of redemption and need funds for outreach, staffing, and recordkeeping” (“FMC comments,” 2010).

The increased funding proposed in the budget is a significant step in the movement to provide SNAP beneficiaries with increased access to environmentally sustainable food, but the concerns of the FMC are very valid. Providing POS machines to all markets is necessary, but, as the FMC states, the government must also ensure that the proper education is provided so that these machines can be properly utilized (“FMC comments,” 2010) The market organizers – just like the food assistance recipients – must be educated about the opportunities available to them so that the government financing can be used to its full potential.

V. Conclusion

The original Food Stamp Program of 1939 was mutually beneficial for farm and food policy. Whereas farmers were able to earn an adequate income for their surplus crops, these crops were distributed to the low-income, food-insecure communities. The success of the program was evident by its eventual end, at which point the farm prices had rebounded; however the Green Revolution and subsequent federal Farm Bill policies have promoted large-scale agriculture over more environmentally sustainable methods of growing food. With the intention of building a more stable agriculture system in the United States, these initiatives have in fact exacerbated small farm security while also creating a food system that champions heavily processed and unhealthy foods. Essentially, since the end of the first Food Stamp Program, the synthesis that once existed between the food and farm security has dissipated.

While the current SNAP is heavily dependent on grocery store redemptions for its participants, there has been steady effort towards making the environmentally sustainable food at farmers' markets more accessible to the SNAP beneficiaries. The structural organization for use of government food assistance money at farmers' markets involves many stakeholders, including those at the national, state, and local levels. As we saw in the section regarding Food and Farm Policy, the USDA has consistently obliged to the interests of the powerful agribusiness corporations; so, while they have thus far set the framework for

accepting SNAP benefits at markets, the implementation has mostly the work of the local government and nongovernmental organizations.

Although use of food benefits at farmers' markets is not a new concept, the transition from paper food stamps to EBT cards presented a challenge to outdoor farmers' markets that lacked the technological infrastructure to support the EBT machines. Wireless EBT machines have proven successful at many farmers' markets, but are very costly and thus not realistic for many markets without financial assistance from the government or private sector. In its most recent budget for fiscal year 2011, the USDA under the Obama administration has proposed significantly more funding to make EBT machines a more standard concept at farmers' markets across the country. This is the first step necessary to begin to close the gap between food and farm security.

Once the EBT machines have made it possible for the low-income communities to use food benefits at farmers' markets, the next step is education. First, the low-income consumers must be informed of the devastating impacts that the modern industrial food system has on the environment. Second, they must be made aware of the programs that are in place that allow them to use their government food benefits in exchange for environmentally sustainable food. On both accounts, the government has demonstrated great weakness, instead leaving nongovernmental organizations like FRESHFARM Markets to do its own publicity and educational campaigns.

In addition to both infrastructure and education, funding is crucial in creating long-term programs that will serve low-income communities. The surge in low-income accessibility to farmers' markets has been largely due to various incentive programs that have been possible due to the financial help of nongovernmental organizations. Both federal grants and supplementary food benefits like the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program have contributed to forging an initial connection between low-income residents and farmers, but the most successful programs have been the double voucher opportunities that have resulted from private funding like grants from the Wholesome Wave Foundation. While these programs have proven to be tremendously successful in attracting SNAP beneficiaries to farmers' markets, the programs are not self-sustaining. Many markets including Crossroads Market in Takoma Park, MD have found that constant work is required of market managers to seek new funding so that the programs can stay afloat.

The Future

The ideal future of agriculture in the United States would involve a grand overhaul of the current subsidy system that promotes large agribusiness and monoculture. Due to the strong power of agribusiness interests within the United States Congress, bridging the gap between food and farm policies will more realistically occur with the government providing more funding to programs like the incentive double voucher programs that have proven success in bringing low-income people to farmers' markets. The main question that sparks controversy

within this debate has always been, “Who should pay the difference between the cost of produce and a person’s ability to pay?” (Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006). Non-profit and local funding has been the main driver behind this movement thus far, but it has become clear that these incentive programs are subsidy-based and are not self-sustaining. Markets that have incentive double voucher programs must be more effective in documenting and publicizing their success so that the USDA sees the value in providing supplementary farmers’ market subsidies for government food assistance beneficiaries.

Although the trend towards supporting sustainable agriculture and local food has often been considered a movement driven by and only financially plausible for the upper classes, this mindset is shifting. Thus far, the burden has too frequently been placed on the local level. Non-profit organizations, market managers, and occasionally the individual farmers have been expected to work within the framework of the federal USDA by applying for permits, and only recently has the federal government given serious recognition to this issue. With its new budget, the USDA has demonstrated a financial commitment, albeit limited, to increasing the access that SNAP participants have to farmers’ markets; however, significant and sustained government funding is necessary for these programs to success across the United States. Additionally, more collaboration between the all levels of government, non-profit organizations, and individual markets is crucial for this movement to make a substantial impact.

Appendix 1

USDA's *Food Stamp Nutrition Education Guiding Principles* (2009), the defined roles and responsibilities for the national, local, and state bureaucracies are as follows:

National Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA

- Establishes national SNAP nutrition education policy
- Reviews and approves state nutrition education plans
- Reimburses states for 50 percent of nutrition education costs
- Monitors state nutrition education projects
- Works with other Federal agencies and national organizations to lead coordination of nutrition education at the national and regional level
- Provides training and technical assistance to program providers at all levels and links staff with appropriate resources
- Develops and provides nutrition education materials
- Incorporates the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Food Guidance System into nutrition education programs

State SNAP Agency

- Develops a coordinated and cohesive State nutrition education plan that addresses national and state priorities
- Submits a unified state nutrition education plan
- Monitors implementation of the State's approved plan including allowable expenditures
- Offers training to state/local office human services staff on the availability of the SNAP and nutrition education programs

State Nutrition Education Provider

- Assists the State SNAP agency to develop the State nutrition education plan
- Implements science-based nutrition education as specified in the approved State nutrition education plan
- Assists the State SNAP agency to provide training to state/local office human services staff

Local SNAP Office

- Informs SNAP participants and applicants of opportunities to participate in SNAP services, including nutrition education programs
- Builds relationship with other local service providers (WIC, local health departments, school meals programs)
- As space and resources allow, makes nutrition education information and services available in the SNAP office
- Coordinates opportunities between SNAP outreach and nutrition education efforts

Local Nutrition Education Provider

- Delivers nutrition education services to SNAP participants
- Uses appropriate educational strategies and implementation methods to reach SNAP participants

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