

## **Growing the Capacity of New Mexico's Farmers' Markets & New EBT Project**

**New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association** of Santa Fe, New Mexico received \$26,070 to expand of new EBT usage at state's farmers' markets. Five new markets gained EBT access due to this grant.

[Final Report FY 09](#)



December 8, 2011

Dear Karl & FMPP Team,

Enclosed is our final report for the New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association's 2009 FMPP grant (12-25-G-0960). I have also enclosed English and Spanish copies of our *Locally Grown* food guide as well as sample signage that is used by vendors at New Mexico markets that accept SNAP. The *Locally Grown* food guide was not funded through this grant, but was a big part of our outreach efforts in this project, which is why I have included it in this final report.

As you will read in the report, we found the project to be very successful, and we are grateful for the opportunity to make such strides forward in our state's SNAP programs at farmers' markets. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding our report or project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Miller".

Denise Miller  
Executive Director



December 2011

New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association (NMFMA)

**“Growing the Capacity of New Mexico’s Farmers’  
Markets & New EBT Project”\***

Grant Number 12-25-G-0960

Project was implemented in various communities  
throughout New Mexico

*\* Only the EBT portion of the project was funded*

## **Project Summary:**

This project came about as an effort to ensure that all New Mexicans, regardless of their economic status, have access to the high quality, nutritious, locally grown foods that are available at farmers' markets across the state. Currently, 20.9% of the state's population receives SNAP (formerly food stamps) benefits. Because farmers' markets have experienced difficulty in catching up with the technological changes in the delivery of the SNAP program, this sector of the population had been virtually excluded from farmers' markets for some time. With the technological support of new wireless POS terminals, farmers' markets are now able to tap in to this market of shoppers, but there are other barriers that prevent markets from doing so. Before the implementation of this grant, only seven markets (out of 60) in New Mexico were able to accept SNAP benefits.

From past experience with beginning SNAP programs at farmers' markets, the NMFMA found the biggest barrier to implementing these programs in New Mexico to be a lack of market personnel to carry out the responsibilities of making a market SNAP-ready. The duties that go along with managing a successful SNAP program at a farmers' market are numerous: FNS paperwork, accounting, educating vendors, reimbursing vendors, staffing the POS terminal site at market, and promoting the program to the public are just some of these time-consuming duties. With the majority of New Mexico farmers' markets managed by already-stretched volunteer or very limited paid staff, it became clear that funding for market personnel was the biggest barrier to establishing successful programs.

Though the New Mexico Human Services Department is very supportive of implementing SNAP programs at farmers' markets by financially supporting the cost of POS terminals and connection fees, there are other start-up costs associated with accepting SNAP at markets. Because markets use a single terminal for all of the vendors at the market, funding is needed to purchase the supplies for a scrip system. In New Mexico, the markets use customized wooden nickels for their currency. Though the wooden nickels are durable and can be used over and over, there is still a significant initial investment needed to purchase the wooden nickels. Even a cost as small as \$500 is too much for small, primarily rural markets that operate on shoestring budgets. In addition, funds were needed to print banners and promote the programs in their respective communities.

The final major barrier identified by the NMFMA was education for the markets. When it comes to the relatively new world of accepting SNAP at farmers' markets, there have been a number of best practices that have been developed over the past few years as more and more markets have taken on SNAP programs. In order to ensure that more markets in New Mexico could successfully establish new programs, the dissemination of these best practices would be essential.

With the FMPP funds awarded, the NMFMA set out to establish new SNAP programs at six farmers' markets around New Mexico in the communities of Aztec, Bernalillo, Farmington, Los Lunas, Shiprock, and Truth or Consequences. These areas were

selected for their populations' high SNAP recipient rates and their farmers' markets' capacity to support the new customer base.

**Project Approach:**

Once the six markets were selected, the NMFMA created a budget that would ensure that all markets could receive a staff stipend, sufficient SNAP currency, banners, and promotional funds. Funds were also used to create educational materials and vendor signage for each market.

During the NMFMA's 2010 market manager conference in February, NMFMA staff led a SNAP training with five of the six participating markets as well as three additional markets that were interested in beginning SNAP programs. During the training, managers were given a background to SNAP in New Mexico, expected job duties involved, taken through a typical market day with SNAP, and trained in accounting and reporting methods. The training also included information about the FNS licensing process and techniques for outreach to SNAP clients and potential community partners. Though one of the participating markets was not able to attend, training was conducted over the phone at a later date. Markets that were participating in the grant were required to meet a spring deadline for submitting their application to FNS for becoming an authorized SNAP retailer to ensure that they would be up and running when the market season began in July of 2010.

Once markets were licensed to accept SNAP, trained on how to use their POS terminal, educated their vendors on the rules, and acquired their token currency and banners, managers began their outreach efforts. Individual markets reached out to their local communities through newspaper advertising, radio, television, fliers, mailings, posters, banners and signage, and working with local government offices that provide services to low-income people. As a statewide effort to raise awareness of SNAP at farmers' markets, the NMFMA provided press releases to media outlets across the state, created outreach materials such as fliers, and provided outreach through periodic newsletters, the NMFMA website, printed local food guides that were distributed statewide, and social networking outlets. The targeted audience for outreach was low-income consumers in communities where SNAP is available at farmers' markets.

At the 2011 NMFMA market manager conference, SNAP managers involved in the grant and others, and NMFMA staff led a whole-group session for managers from all 60 farmers' markets around the state about the benefits, responsibilities, and lessons learned from their programs. This session was an effort to increase interest in the SNAP program among other markets and to give them realistic information about what is involved with accepting SNAP at their markets. Throughout the 2010 and 2011 seasons, the markets participating in the grant, as well as additional markets that took on SNAP, used what they learned in the trainings to promote and operate their programs.

### **Goals and Outcomes Achieved:**

The NMFMA was very pleased with the achievements of the project. Though the grant set out to implement new SNAP programs at six markets in New Mexico, many other markets also agreed to start programs thanks to the financial support of the grant to purchase supplies, and the education that was available to them through the project. During the life of the grant, the number of New Mexico farmers' markets that accept SNAP benefits grew from seven during the 2009 season to 29 during the 2011 season. **This represents growth of more than 400% in the number of markets that can accept SNAP.** In addition, sales grew from \$15,336.25 during the 2009 season to \$49,917.11 during the 2011 season. **This represents an increase of 325.5% in annual SNAP sales.** By bringing in these new customers, New Mexico farmers' markets and the farmers they serve are contributing to their long-term sustainability.

### **Beneficiaries:**

The direct beneficiaries of this program included 430,032 New Mexicans who receive SNAP benefits and now have access to farmers' markets, the 22 new farmers' markets that now accept SNAP benefits, and the estimated 500+ farmers and ranchers that sell at markets that accept SNAP.

Indirectly, this project greatly enhanced the partnership between the NMFMA and the New Mexico Human Services Department (NMHSD), which further benefitted markets, customers, and farmers. As a product of this partnership, the state of New Mexico secured \$50,000 in stimulus funding in 2010 for an incentive program that allowed SNAP shoppers to double their buying power at farmers' markets during the 2010 and 2011 market seasons. This program provided nutritious food for low-income people across the state and put \$47,000 in the pockets of local farmers and ranchers. This program created a great deal of interest among SNAP shoppers who had previously never attended farmers' markets, and was a major contributing factor to the increase in sales. (The sales data in the previous section **does not** include the bonus sales—those are taken strictly from EBT card transactions.)

Additionally, the NMFMA took on new outreach projects with the NMHSD, and among other initiatives, created a SNAP-focused local food guide that was distributed across the state through NMHSD offices and other outlets. The guide, printed in both English and Spanish, gave information on how to get SNAP benefits, farmers' market listings, simple seasonal recipes, budget shopping tips, the benefits of shopping at farmers' markets, and more. This project, along with the ongoing financial support that NMHSD provides for banking and POS terminal services, would not have been possible without the partnership that was established during the grant period.

### **Lessons Learned:**

With each year that markets continue their SNAP programs and implement new programs, the NMFMA learns more about what makes SNAP programs at farmers' markets successful. This information is then passed on to the 60 (and growing) member markets.

The biggest lesson learned during the grant period is that gaining SNAP customers is an ongoing process that does not happen overnight. Though SNAP programs have been in place and growing in New Mexico for some years now, it was not until the incentive program that went from 2010 to 2011 that real momentum was gained. At the rural Española Farmers' Market, for instance, which began offering SNAP in 2008 and had \$326 total sales during the 2008 season (an average of \$16 per market), sales grew very slowly for the first two years. However, during and after the incentive program, the market is now averaging \$235 in SNAP sales per market and it is not uncommon for the market to have over \$500 in SNAP transactions in one market day at the peak of the season. Without great changes in the market's promotional strategies, it seems clear that the incentive program made a huge impact in their SNAP participation and gave customers that first motivation that was needed to try shopping at the market. Because SNAP sales continued to be high after the end of the incentive program in 2011, it seems that shoppers' experiences with market shopping with their SNAP benefits was positive and led to behavior changes as well as word-of-mouth promotion.

Another important lesson learned during the grant period was that offering information and expertise to market managers can empower them to take on SNAP programs. Though the grant set out to fund SNAP programs at six markets, an addition 16 markets chose to participate after given the tools and support they needed at the conference as well as funding for supplies. Though SNAP programs do place extra burden on already stretched (and often all volunteer) market staff, many participating markets have seen the positive impact that SNAP has had on their markets and communities and continue to put in the extra hours to make it happen. However, utilizing these volunteers and market staff may not be sustainable into the future, and the NMFMA will continue to explore ways of supporting market staff.

### **Additional Information:**

Included in this report are copies of the NMHSD-funded local food guide, *Locally Grown*, which was used for outreach as well as vendor signage used at markets.

### **Contact Person:**

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# I accept EBT/SNAP!

**Please visit the info booth for tokens**



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**¡EBT/SNAP aceptado aquí!**

**Visite por favor la barraca de información  
para obtener sus fichas**

# How to accept EBT, Debit, WIC & Senior FMNP Checks\*

## EBT:

- Each printed wooden nickel is worth \$1
- Can be used to purchase ANY FOOD ITEM to be consumed at home including edible plant starts & seeds
  - **EXCLUSIONS:** Any prepared food meant to be consumed on-site, e.g. hot tamale or burrito, coffee
- Change CANNOT be given
- Be sure the token has your market's name printed on it

## DEBIT:

- Each printed wooden nickel is worth \$5 and works just like cash
- Can be used to purchase ANYTHING at the market, including prepared foods and crafts
- Change CAN be given
- Be sure the token has your market's name printed on it



## WIC FMNP\*:

- Each check printed in green is worth \$4
- Can be used to purchase **FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES ONLY** (no eggs, honey, meat, breads, etc)
- Food cannot be processed beyond natural state besides cleaning (e.g. red chile cannot be in a ristra or dried and powdered)
- Change CANNOT be given
- Be sure that the check has not expired and that the customer has signed it



## SENIOR FMNP\*:

- Each check printed in brown or blue is worth \$4
- Can be used to purchase **FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES AND HONEY ONLY** (no eggs, meats, breads, processed foods, etc)
- Fruits and vegetables cannot be processed beyond their natural state besides cleaning
- Change CANNOT be given
- Be sure that the check has not expired and that the customer has signed it



\* **DO NOT** cash your FMNP check until you have verified that it has 1) the customer's signature 2) your correct 4-digit vendor number and 3) a LEGIBLE (complete and straight) market stamp



Comer Fresco y Saludable en Nuevo México

DE CULTIVO  
LOCAL

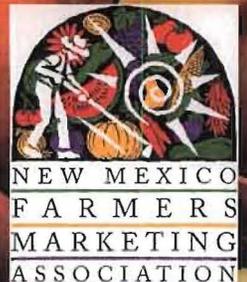
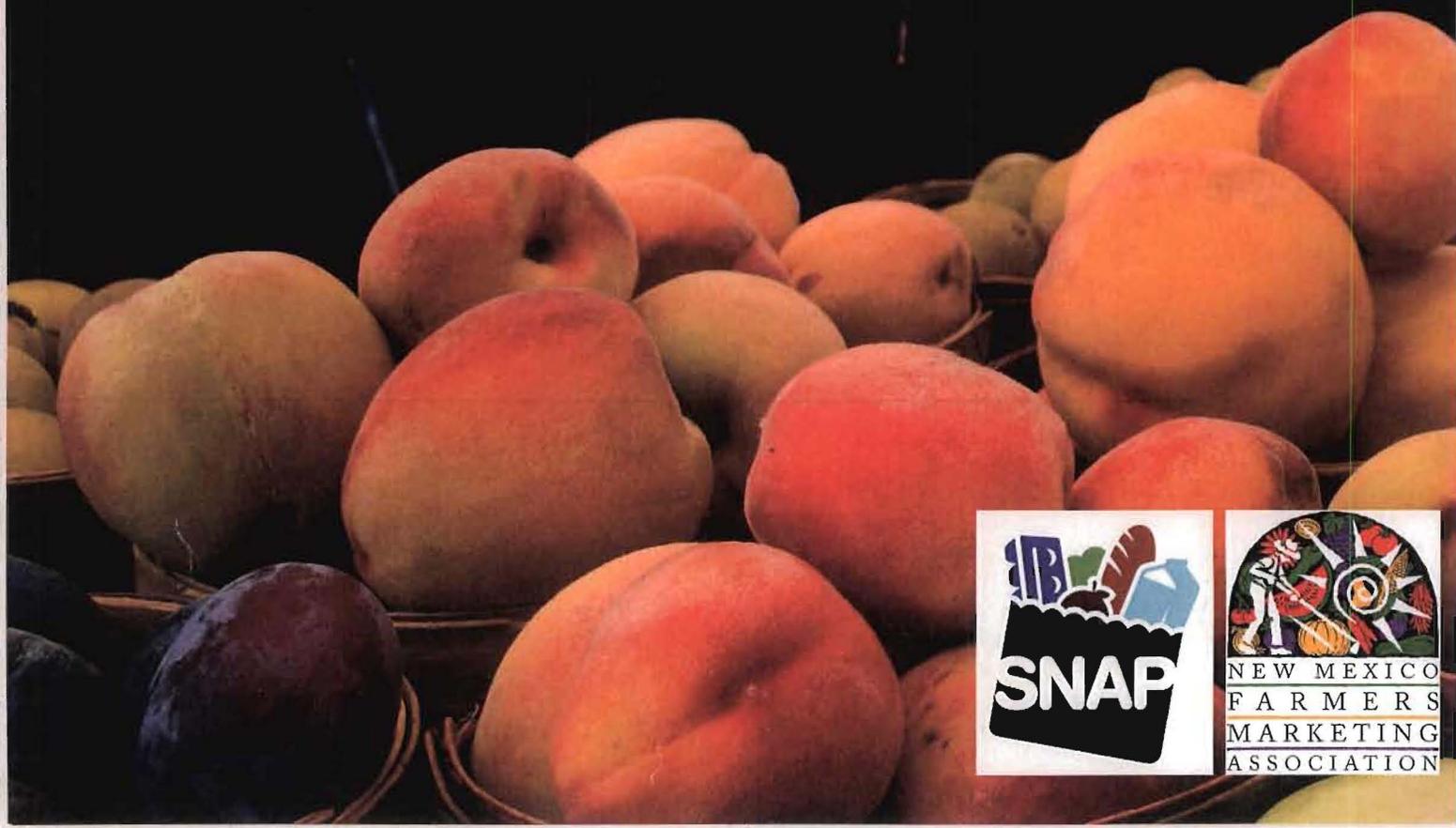


*Verano 2011*

# ¡Elegimos!

- \* Comidas frescas y saludables
- \* De cultivo local cuando esté disponible
- \* Comidas preparadas en el hogar lo más frecuentemente posible

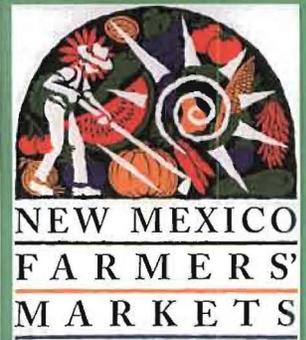
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Summer 2011

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