



Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers, Inc.
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Fresh Access Bucks

Increasing Food Access and Florida Farmer Sales at Markets Statewide

Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers Inc. (FOG) is a 501(c) (3) grassroots nonprofit corporation established in 1987 to promote organic and sustainable agriculture through educational outreach and collaboration with growers, consumers, schools, universities, allied non-profits and government agencies at state, national, and international levels. In 2013, FOG received a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to develop the Fresh Access Bucks Program to increase sales of Florida grown fruits and vegetables to Florida consumers. This statewide program increases access to and consumption of healthy, locally produced fruits and vegetables for low-income Florida residents through an incentive program at Farmers Markets for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-formerly the Food Stamp Program).

This project builds a highly visible network of farmers markets implementing innovative programs that incentivize the use of federal nutrition assistance benefits to purchase Florida grown fruits and vegetables. To increase the demand for locally grown fruits and vegetables in underserved communities, FOG works with Wholesome Wave (WW), a national leader in the implementation of nutrition incentive programs.

In partnership with WW, FOG provides training and technical assistance, materials and initial incentive funding to implement the incentive program. FOG currently has 21 participating markets statewide. This type of incentive program, now being implemented in partnership with WW at more than 300 markets with almost 60 partners across the country, doubles the value of federal nutrition assistance benefits (including SNAP, WIC FMNP and Senior FMNP) redeemed at farmers markets. For example, an individual spending \$10 at a participating market can buy \$20 worth of fruits and vegetables-- increasing revenues for specialty crop farmers and making healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables much more affordable for low-income Florida residents.

To promote long-term sustainability, FOG works closely with local farmers markets and organizations to expand local funding and capacity building opportunities. Local farmers markets and partner organizations are expected to provide staffing for the EBT and incentive program, assist in outreach, provide supplies for the EBT and incentive booth, including a tent, tables, chairs, etc., (matching funds may be available to assist with these supply costs), collect and enter data, and have the capacity to administer the additional accounting required for this program.

The federal Farm Bill passed in 2014 with significant support for healthy food incentive programs like Fresh Access Bucks. The USDA's new Food Insecurity and Nutrition Incentive Program (FINIP) amounts to \$100 million over five years and represents the first time the federal government has supported programs of this type of program through legislation. Organizations, such as FOG, have built the expertise in designing and implementing incentive programs and represent the best strategy to effectively deploy this funding. FOG is in a competitive position to receive these funds, as we provide the infrastructure for consistent, streamlined, replicable programming. FOG applied for FINIP in December 2014 in order to maintain our current 20 market partners, while expanding the program into 30 new markets over three years.

Project Needs

FOG is excited about this new partnership with FDACS and is encouraged by the forward-thinking department to increase revenue for specialty crop growers while also increasing the affordability of and access to fruits and vegetables for all Floridians. Our goals are measured by the numbers of fruit and vegetable growers





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impacted, the total revenue generated by SNAP and incentives, the number of EBT transactions and new market shoppers. Since its inception, Fresh Access Bucks has generated over \$188,300 in healthy food purchases for over 150 Florida farmers, with over 7,776 Federal Benefit Transactions (SNAP & WIC/Senior FMNP) and over 2,865 New Market Shoppers.

To be able to meet our goals, additional funding will need to be secured. FOG has received interest from across the state and is hopeful to be able to accommodate all communities that would like to benefit from this extremely effective program.

Project Opportunity

Incentive programs for fruits and vegetables are effective at promoting local economies and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in underserved communities. WW has found that:

- 90% of SNAP recipients reported increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- On average, 27% of total market sales at participating farm-to-retail venues were from SNAP recipients.
- In response to increased sales, farmers expanded acreage/production, diversified products and added additional hoop houses or greenhouses.

FOG and WW are committed to the intent of the original project: increase sales of Florida-grown fruits and vegetables to Florida consumers, providing more direct markets for Florida's small farmers, while increasing access to and consumption of healthy, locally produced fruits and vegetables for low-income Florida residents.

Testimonials

"When SNAP customers realize that they can get more food with their food stamp benefits using Fresh Access Bucks, they take advantage of the program and eat more healthy, fresh Florida-grown fruits and vegetables. Sometimes they are skeptical, thinking it is too good to be true, and we have to convince them that it real. Once they try it, they are thrilled, especially now that SNAP benefits have been cut by average of \$42.00/month for a family of four."

-Fresh Access Bucks market manager partner, Miami, FL

"The market is a godsend. I often buy 10 bunches of kale to make kale chips for my kids to snack on during the week. It's very exciting to bring some of my older kids to the market, and hear them say, "mom, let's get more carrots!"

- Fresh Access Bucks customer



Urban Oasis' Upper East Side Farmers Market in Miami

