



Virginia Fresh Match

Strengthening Access to Fruits and Vegetables

October 22, 2020



The Problem

- Food insecurity is a growing problem in Virginia, especially for families with children
- Feeding America estimates an additional 447K Virginians will experience food insecurity in 2020 due to COVID-19
- Northwestern Institute for Policy estimates food insecurity in Virginia increased from 9.4% (February 2020) to 22% (June 2020)
- SNAP enrollment at state and local levels is increasing. Issuance is also high, for example, increasing 64% in the Fredericksburg region from Feb-Aug 2020.
- Access to affordable fruits and vegetables is often out of reach for limited resource families
- Small businesses, family farmers, neighborhood retail outlets struggle to make ends meet, which impacts food access



Key strategies

- Expand Child Nutrition Programs
- Improve Participation in SNAP and WIC
- Expand WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition programs
- Increase Virginia Grown products in schools, retail outlets, food banks
- Encourage investment in low income/low access communities
- Utilize healthy food (nutrition) incentives, like Virginia Fresh Match
- Further connect food access programs to education, health, and community

Virginia Roadmap to End Hunger





Virginia Fresh Match Approach

SNAP incentive programs increase consumer purchasing power so individuals and families with tight food budgets can bring home more fruits and vegetables.





Virginia Fresh Match: Food Access

Proximity

Virginia Fresh Match partners with outlets that are centered in their community to help meet people where they are

Affordability

Virginia Fresh Match provides a match or discount that makes produce more affordable

Education

Virginia Fresh Match works with SNAP-Ed to provide nutrition education and improve food literacy



Virginia Fresh Match: For customers

YOU SNAP. WE MATCH.

Virginia Fresh Match
1234 5612 3456 7890
Call us at 1-800-555-1234

wholesome wave

It's the healthy way to stretch your SNAP.

GREENS
EVERYDAY LOW
PRICE 99¢

EBT PRICE
ONLY 49¢

through Virginia Fresh Match



Virginia Fresh Match: Structure

- A collaborative, voluntary network of farmers markets, mobile markets, CSAs, farmers, and neighborhood grocery stores
- Employs a Hub and Spoke Structure that provides statewide support, regional leadership, and local control
- Encourages SNAP recipients to purchase additional healthy produce from local farms
- Serves as a replicable local food access model in partnership with other food security programs





Virginia Fresh Match: A Systems Approach

- Increases the purchasing power for individuals and families with limited food budgets
- Provides additional revenue for farmers and food businesses selling to local communities
- Connects people to each other and to their food
- Increases consumption of nutrient-dense food
- Supports thriving local economies by leveraging federal benefit dollars
- Advances community connections around food access and food security

VCE Model of Community, Local, Regional Food Systems



Virginia Fresh Match

A win for families, farmers & communities



\$332,000

In SNAP and
SNAP Match
spent at
partner outlets



6,800

Shoppers spent
SNAP funds at
partner outlets
20,590 times



532

Farmers sold
SNAP shoppers
fresh produce



75 Partner
Outlets

71 farmers markets
4 neighborhood grocery stores





Virginia Fresh Match: For operators/ community

- 1) Identify a retail outlet (farmers market, mobile market, CSA, farm stand, and neighborhood grocery store)
- 2) Accept SNAP
- 3) Partner with Virginia Fresh Match
- 4) Secure support funding, as needed
- 5) Integrate SNAP and VFM into outlet operations and community outreach strategies
- 6) Run VFM program (discount for customers and reimburse vendors/outlets)
- 7) Collect data, listen to community, refine the program



Virginia Fresh Match: COVID-19 response

- **Lift cap** on incentives to provide more purchasing power for SNAP households
- Support acceptance of **Pandemic-EBT** and scale to meet **surging SNAP enrollments**
- **Obtain national funding** to offset outlet's unbudgeted expenses related to Covid-19
- **Help Farmers Markets strategize and pivot** to meet changing operational requirements through **weekly network calls** and **COVID-specific resources**



VFM Covid-19 case studies

Grocery Retail

- Roanoke Co-op: average discount increased 96% from Feb 2020 to August 2020
- Friendly City Co-op: average discount increased 150% from August 2019 to June 2020, 15% of the discounts over \$20.



Farmers Markets

- Roanoke: LEAP Mobile Market had **281% increase** in VFM and Grandin Village Farmers Market had **226% increase** in VFM in spite of moving market locations, drive thru set up, and fewer Mobile Market stops (2019 to 2020, Jan-Sept)
- Abingdon Farmers Market: **88% increase** in VFM (August 2019 to August 2020)
- Central Virginia: Markets had a **69% increase** in VFM, a **12% increase** in the number of transactions and a **46% increase** in the dollar amount of SNAP transactions (2019 to 2020, Jan-Sept)



From the community

“We are so thankful for the Pandemic EBT Cards. I am a freelancer and I have a small business that relies entirely on vendor fairs and being able to do business in crowds and events and things like that so we had been really worried as this started to stretch on and have a financial impact on our family. So being able to not only have the Pandemic card, but also the matching grant here at the Community Market has been a blessing”

Lynchburg Community Market

In May, Tim, a restaurant worker who lost his job suddenly in March, found the Birdhouse Farmers Market during the first weeks of May. “I’m so glad you’re here”, he said, “I finally got May benefits, and just discovered your market. I’m so excited to have a place to buy fresh foods.” When asked what he did in April, before he got his benefits, Tim replied, “April. April was a hungry month.”

Birdhouse Farmers Market (Richmond)

“The token program provides our business with a substantial amount of additional income that we would not otherwise receive.”

Alfredo Gutierrez, Little Green Farm,
Spotsylvania Farmers Market Producer



Virginia Fresh Match: Growth Opportunities

- **Increase capacity** of the network and outlets to provide incentives
- **Expand outreach** to end users to build program awareness and usage
- **Secure sustainable funding** for SNAP incentives and additional funding for other Healthy Food Incentive pilots
- **Further integrate into local, regional, state programs** to improve food security and community viability





Call to Action

- Build awareness and have conversations throughout your community
 - Hunger Action Coalitions, Food Councils, community-wide networks/coalitions
- Partner with organizations in your community
 - Neighborhood retailers, farmers markets, SNAP-Ed, Dept of Social Services, Health system, Clinics, non-profit organizations, churches, local government
- Connect to statewide groups/efforts
 - Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (information coming soon!)
 - Virginia Food System Council (Listening Session, Nov 16)
 - Virginia Food Access Coalition (Chelsi Bennett, American Heart Association, and Salam Bhatti, Virginia Poverty Law Center)
 - Virginia Fresh Match Nutrition Incentive Network
 - Virginia Farmer Market Association



Contact

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Virginia Fresh Match

www.VirginiaFreshMatch.org

Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP)

www.LEAPforlocalfood.org

Virginia Food System Council

www.VirginiaFoodSystemCouncil.org