Virginia Cooperative Extension’s Food Access and Availability Project: Increasing access to Virginia’s Farmers Markets
The Food Access and Availability Project

- Ensure all Virginians have equal access to affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate food
- Supporting farmers markets’ outreach to SNAP families
- Educating SNAP consumers on how and why to shop at farmers markets
- Supporting gardening with SNAP families
Approach

- Improving access
- Creating demand
  - Partner with VCE agents, state agencies and related organizations
FAAP: Direct Education

- Help participants:
  - Understand what to expect
  - Get the most food for their dollar

- Cooking demonstration and nutrition education
  - Volunteers, Program Assistants and summer interns
  - “Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables” curriculum

- Created “Farmers Market Orientation” lesson for adult participants
  - Research based
FAAP: Increasing SNAP Approved Farmers Markets

- Technical assistance to market managers
  - How to accept SNAP
    - EBT Tool Kit ([www.VAFMA.org](http://www.VAFMA.org))
      - Manual, marketing tools
      - Accounting tools
      - SNAP matching program funding tips
  - How to make their market a positive experience for SNAP shoppers
    - Creating partnerships with local agencies
    - Training vendors
FAAP: Social Marketing

Eat Smart, Move More

- Promotes using SNAP at farmers markets, launched last summer.
- Grants offered to VCE agents in partnership with SNAP-Ed agents or Program Assistants
Central District social marketing campaign: Who was a part of it?

Over 40 collaborators across the district, including agents from all program areas, including FCS SNAP-Ed Agents (formerly NOIs), adult and youth PA’s, and community partners.
What was done?

– 6 markets identified and encouraged to request free EBT machines

– Virginia’s SNAP-Ed program sponsored 3 billboards and two bus wraps in the Central District area.

– PA’s focused on encouraging SNAP clients to shop at farmers markets during their face to face programs and other one-time events.

– Over 40,000 brochures, 350 posters and 250 flyers were distributed.

– 40 news articles were published in newspapers and newsletters.

– Special events planned at markets across the district, with target audience of SNAP clients.

– 25 food and gardening demonstrations were held across the district.
What were the impacts?

- Reached FNP goals of trying to increase awareness of healthy eating among SNAP participants
- 2 markets in Central District already had EBT machines and 6 markets received their EBT machines in 2015
- $12,000 in SNAP benefits redeemed at markets during the summer months.
- Larger markets reported at least a 10% increase in overall sales and a significant increase in traffic, including typically slower market days.
- Based on written surveys conducted in markets in Central district:
  - 49% reported buying more or planning to buy more fruits and vegetables at the market
  - 40.9% reported eating more or planning to eat more fruits and vegetables
  - One market reported a 500% increase in EBT redemption
FAAP next steps

• Continue to partner with agents to provide them with the tools needed to launch and strengthen their local market’s EBT program
  • SNAP self assessment tool
  • FM Manager certification with VAFMA
  • Linking gardening and SNAP