



Double SNAP Impact on Shoppers and Farmers in Western North Carolina

On October 19, 2020 a survey was shared with farmers markets participating in [ASAP's Double SNAP](#) program to assess the impact and gather feedback. The Double SNAP program doubles the value of a shopper's SNAP benefits used at market. The survey was open for six weeks and collected 113 responses from market managers, vendors, and customers. A quarter of the responses came from shoppers who have utilized the SNAP program and a third were from farmers market vendors. Market managers from all eight markets who offer the program also responded. ASAP's Local Food Research Center has identified the following trends and impacts of the Double SNAP program.

While the duration of the program offered in 2020 varied across markets, the survey indicated the program is having an immediate and substantial impact on people's ability to access healthy food. It is changing shopping and eating habits and supporting farmers and market vendors in the process.

Over three quarters of the SNAP participants who responded to the survey reported shopping at a farmers market every week or multiple times a month. Nearly half have participated in the Double SNAP program at more than one of the eight markets that currently offer it in Western North Carolina.

All but one respondent reported the Double SNAP program has impacted their shopping habits, including how often they shop or what kinds of products they purchase. When asked how their habits have changed, respondents cited that it has impacted both the quantity and quality of the food they are able to purchase. Most shoppers specifically referenced their ability to afford more fresh produce, eggs, and/or meat, and many expressed appreciation for the high quality of products they find at markets. Additionally, many explained how attending the market had become a priority in their shopping routine. One shopper shared, "It has helped me actually come to the market regularly and be able to afford the things for sale there. It is so awesome! I'm able to get a lot more food with the double up bucks and I am so grateful that I am able to get higher quality food than the supermarket."

When asked how the program has impacted their family, over three quarters highlighted how it allowed them to eat more nutritious healthy food. One shopper explained, "It has allowed us to buy and eat more fresh produce and meat that we usually don't have access to.." Another explained that as a diabetic they need to eat healthy food, but they usually can not afford it.

A quarter of respondents also noted how they appreciated the direct connection markets provide to farmers and to supporting their local community. One shopper shared, "It has helped me immensely, not only to afford better, local food but also to feel included and a part of the community. It is great being able to be connected with the people who go to the farmers' markets as well as to be enriched by seeing the beautiful things created and grown by the people here. I have always felt seen and included by the program."



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Many also explained that the program eases concerns over having enough food each month. One shopper explained, “It has significantly reduced the stress of managing the little amount of money given per month for EBT. I can make choices that allow me to eat more vegetables and eggs than I otherwise could afford.” Additionally, the program allows shoppers the flexibility to try a variety of products and engage their children more meaningfully in the experience of shopping, cooking and healthy eating.

One shopper shared, “I have a 7 year old son and I’m a single mom. This has allowed us to really improve our nutrition and variety. He goes to the market with me and is more invested and involved in our meal planning when he can help choose things”

Half of the respondents say they would still continue shopping at the farmers market if the Double SNAP program did not exist, but that they would attend less frequently or buy less. One shopper explained, “I absolutely could not afford it. Double SNAP brings the prices down enough that shopping there is even possible. I can’t afford to overspend at markets. We wouldn’t have enough to last the month... [With this program] we can actually afford to eat healthy more regularly.”

Farmers market managers and vendors also noted the benefits of the program. Every market manager surveyed reported that the program has increased their market’s customer base and over half said the program also changed their market’s demographics. One manager shared, “With the ability to offer Double SNAP, our market has been able to reach a segment of our population that hasn’t previously shopped at our market. It has also provided needed relief and support to our community during a challenging 2020.” Another shared, “Anything that we can do to open up our market to welcome the neighborhood residents is very important to me. This is what the tailgate markets should be.”

Farmers market vendors, including both farmers and those selling value added food products experienced positive impacts from the program. 80 percent reported the program increased their sales, but beyond that, two thirds reported that it introduced more people to their business and products. Many note that this leads to ongoing relationships with shoppers and allows them to grow their business with loyal customers. One vendor shared, “It has not only increased my sales, it has allowed me to interact and build relationships with customers who would normally be outside my business’ demographic.” Another farmer shared, “This investment quite literally nourishes the community for both the producer and consumer of farmer’s market produce!” For many, the impact of the program goes deeper than financial reasons. One farmer shared, “[Double SNAP is] important to our farm as it aligns with our values of community.”