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SNAP Sales Increase Dramatically at Farmers Markets

More community members have access to fresh, healthy foods and farmers earn additional income

ASHEVILLE, NC (December 17, 2020)—Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's Double SNAP program has dramatically increased SNAP customers and sales at farmers markets. In a recent survey of markets and shoppers, ASAP found that Double SNAP is providing vital access to fresh, healthy food during a challenging time, as well as bringing in more income to local farmers and food businesses.

"The ability to stretch food budgets and increase vendor sales is obvious, but we also found that the impact goes farther than that," says ASAP Program Director Molly Nicholie. "SNAP recipients feel empowered to make healthy food choices and to support farms in their community by having access to Double SNAP."

Double SNAP is a one-to-one match on dollars spent through the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For every dollar spent using SNAP/EBT at participating farmers markets, customers get twice that amount to buy food. ASAP launched Double SNAP at Asheville City Market in 2019 and continued it at the ASAP Farmers Market at A-B Tech during COVID-19. This spring ASAP built on Mills River Farm Market's existing SNAP incentive and expanded the program to Hendersonville Farmers Market and Transylvania Farmers' Market. In August ASAP added East Asheville Tailgate Market, Enka-Candler Tailgate Market, North Asheville Tailgate Market, and West Asheville Tailgate Market. ASAP Farmers Market and Transylvania Farmers' Market will offer Double SNAP through the winter. With continued support, ASAP intends to offer the program again at all participating markets in the spring.

All eight farmers markets reported a sharp increase in SNAP customers and 80 percent of surveyed market vendors reported increased sales due to Double SNAP. With ASAP's support, three participating markets offered SNAP for the first time in 2020. Where comparison data is available, pre-match SNAP sales more than doubled, and in some cases tripled, the amount spent before implementing the program. According to survey responses, this is due both to an increase in food insecurity during the pandemic as well as Double SNAP drawing more shoppers to farmers markets.

Ninety-six percent of SNAP customers surveyed reported changing their shopping habits because of Double SNAP. This included shopping at farmers markets for the first time, shopping more often at farmers markets, buying more fruits and vegetables, eating a healthier diet, and a reduction in stress about grocery budgets.

"It has helped me immensely, not only to afford better, local food, but also to feel a part of the community," said one survey respondent. "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.”

Since 2009, ASAP has worked to build SNAP farmers market programs and provide management resources and promotional materials. Many markets in the region now accept SNAP, with a subset offering double or other SNAP incentives. Find out more at asapconnections.org/snap.

Double SNAP is made possible through contributions from market shoppers and donors, as well as support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Walnut Cove Membership Foundation, and Pisgah Health Foundation. Some markets are supported through partnerships with MountainWise and the Henderson County Partnership for Health’s Committee for Activity and Nutrition (CAN). Donations to support the program in 2021 may be made at asapconnections.org/donate.

[High-resolution photos available. Contact Sarah Hart at sarah@asapconnections.org.]

ABOUT ASAP (APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT)

ASAP’s mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. To learn more, visit asapconnections.org.

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