

IMPROVING ACCESS TO LOCAL FOODS AMONG LOW-INCOME AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES



RESEARCH STUDY SUMMARY

Farmers markets have the potential for becoming learning centers and shaping how people 1) think about, know about, and value healthy eating, 2) relate to the production of food, and 3) become aware of food choices and their impact on health, the environment, and how we live together. However, low-income families across the state have less access to healthy, local foods. This pilot study, sponsored by Colorado Farmers Market Association and Share Our Strength, explores how 35 low-income families along the Front Range think about, shop, and cook food for their families on limited budgets, and includes recommendations for farmer's market managers to increase access among this population.

A CHECKLIST FOR FARMER'S MARKET MANAGERS

<p>Low-income parents shopped at farmers markets and grew vegetables to instill long-term healthy eating habits for their kids.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide children-friendly activities at markets (ex: arts and crafts booth). ✓ Advertise at schools, daycares, social services departments, WIC, etc. (ex: leaving fliers, setting up meetings, talking with parents).
<p>Many SNAP participants discussed a tension between serving their families healthy meals and having enough food to feed their family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explore "Double Value Coupon Program" as an option for your market.
<p>Parents often learned about the farmers markets through their kids. Once at farmer's markets, they exchanged information about local food, ideas for new recipes, and canning methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pursue opportunities to partner with schools and teachers (ex: field trips to farmer's market or local farms). ✓ Locate new markets at or near schools. ✓ Design your market as a comfortable space that encourages sustained interaction between customers (ex: set up picnic tables, feature culturally-relevant music and activities, etc.).
<p>SNAP participants taking part in farmers markets also visited food banks, had gardens, and shopped with coupons. The order in which they shopped was important for understanding budgeting practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Advertise farmer's market SNAP benefits and "Double Value Coupon Programs" at area food banks. ✓ Invite food banks to table at farmer's markets to raise awareness as well as create a stronger link between farms, food vendors/restaurants, and food banks.
<p>Farmers markets are competing with bigger food retailers that provide the Mexican-American market with a diverse selection of culturally-relevant food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure a diversity of products that cater to different cultural practices and recipes. ✓ Provide materials (fliers, signage, SNAP information, etc.) in Spanish directly alongside English materials. ✓ Encourage diversity among participating farmers. ✓ Identify and partner with local cultural organizations and leaders that can help shape your market and think through access for all types of marginalized communities.

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