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FAMILIES CAN USE THEIR P-EBT CARD AT LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS THIS SUMMER

Local families impacted by COVID-19, school closures, and unemployment can get access to fresh local produce through an underutilized program – CalFresh and P-EBT

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Yesterday, [the U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) announced a new effort](#) to provide adequate nutrition to more than 30 million children over the summer by expanding Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefits. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack called this expansion of P-EBT benefits over the summer “a first-of-its-kind, game-changing intervention to reduce child hunger in the United States.”

Locally, 14,907 students (45.1%) qualify for free or reduced-price school meals in SLO County. Through the P-EBT expansion, these students and their families may receive up to \$365 per month on an electronic benefit card to spend on food over the summer at local grocery stores and farmers markets. This is good news and a relief for families facing hunger – an issue exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as the SLO County Food Bank distributed 54% more food in 2020 than they did in 2019.

CalFresh and P-EBT are food benefit programs that provide money to qualifying households each month. CalFresh is underutilized in SLO County and it is estimated that only 41% of potentially eligible people are currently receiving CalFresh. May is CalFresh Awareness Month, started in 2011, as a way to increase public awareness of a program that improves community health and well-being by reducing hunger.

Also, while several farmers markets accept CalFresh and offer the market incentive Market Match, many people are not aware that they can use their P-EBT and CalFresh benefits at farmers markets and can double their money with Market Match. A local workgroup of the SLO County Food System Coalition is working to change that. Through increasing communication and promotion, the workgroup has helped local markets realize a [90% increase in CalFresh](#) and Market Match redemption between 2017-2020. This has brought an additional \$265,000 in revenue to local farmers and healthy food to low-income community members.

There is no P-EBT application, families qualify through their school meal programs and should ensure their school has their current mailing address on file.

To find markets across California that accept CalFresh and P-EBT and offer Market Match, visit <https://ecologycenter.org/fmfinder/>.

For Pandemic EBT information: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/home/pandemic-ebt/info>

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