

# Farmers Market Navigators Program increases access to healthy, local foods!

Completed 

## Reporting Periods

SNAP-Ed 2022 (October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022)

## Site

North County Farmers' Market

## Unit

Santa Barbara (County)

## COVID-19 Impact

Modified due to COVID-19

## Program Activity

*Not Specified*

## Keywords

Food Assistance

Nutrition

Food Access

## Uploads

[SLO Proclamation.jpeg](#)

[FarmersMarket3.jpg](#)


[FarmersMarket1.jpg](#)

[FarmersMarket4.jpg](#)


## Has Photo Releases

Yes

## Created By

 Rosa Vargas

### Last Modified By

 Rosa Vargas

### Created

09/29/2022 1:33 p.m.



### Modified

09/30/2022 3:17 p.m.

### PEARS Success Story ID

28196

## Collaborators

User	Contributor	View Only	View & Edit	Contribution
Rosa Vargas				Author
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## Story

### Background

CalFresh Healthy Living, University of California Cooperative Extension in San Luis Obispo County (UCCE) partners with farmers markets, the Department of Social Services, WIC, and other low-income client-serving organizations to increase access to healthy foods through the CalFresh at Farmers Market Working Group. Through these partnerships, we found that markets in the northern part of the county, near low-income census tracts, are underutilized. To better understand the issues and increase access to the two markets in Paso Robles that accept CalFresh and offer the market incentive, Market Match, UCCE led an initiative to develop a Farmers Market Navigator program in partnership with the San Luis Obispo Food Bank, Promotores Collaborative: Center for Family Strengthening, North County Farmers Market Association, Paso Robles Farmers

Market, and the Country Farm and Craft Market. The primary goals of the Farmers' Market Navigator program are to enhance the sustainability of our local food system through increasing purchases of locally grown foods, while supporting the health of low-income individuals by improving access to and consumption of locally grown produce. In October 2021, UCCE received funding through the Danone Foundation to support the Farmers Market Navigators.

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## Story Narrative

### The Issue

Farmers markets have the potential for increasing equitable access and availability of local fruits and vegetables. In addition, markets that accept CalFresh/EBT and offer nutrition incentives, like Market Match, can increase the purchasing power and food security of low-income community members while supporting local farmers. However, there is some evidence that not all communities benefit equally from farmers markets and that barriers to shopping at farmers markets are greater for customers who do not speak English. Currently, San Luis Obispo County has a total of 15 year-round farmers markets and nine accept CalFresh/EBT benefits and offer the nutrition incentive Market Match. However, these programs are underutilized at two northern San Luis Obispo County markets in Paso Robles.

### The Work

Starting in October 2021, UCCE staff collaborated with the local promotores program to support and train community leaders to take on roles as Farmers Market Navigators. Farmers Market Navigators (navigators) are leaders from the community who address the language, culture, knowledge, trust, and discriminatory barriers to shopping at local farmers markets that low-income clientele may face. Training topics included: basics of the CalFresh at farmers markets program, giving a farmers market tour, increasing awareness through community outreach in Spanish and Mixteco monolingual communities, and working with market managers and vendors to implement practices to enhance equitable market access for diverse communities.

Starting in March 2022, the navigators began doing outreach in the community surrounding the farmers markets and spending one day per month at the markets welcoming new customers and answering their questions related to using their CalFresh card at the market. As navigators do outreach in the community, they have conversations with people and are able to speak with the market managers to let them know the barriers that people face in shopping at the farmers market. Navigators report that community members are mostly unaware that the farmers markets accept CalFresh and that they can get additional produce with the Market Match program. Many community members also have questions about the CalFresh program, P-EBT, and who qualifies. The navigators are able to bring their questions back to our work group and find answers to these questions and concerns. One of the most consistent barriers reported is the time of the markets since both occur in the morning while many people are at work. This has led us to shift our outreach approach and include information about evening markets in the county that also accept CalFresh and offer Market Match.

To increase awareness of the markets we sent out a total of 2,869 postcards to low-income households surrounding the Paso Robles farmers markets and navigators distributed a total of 636 flyers during the door-to-door canvassing. In addition, navigators and UCCE staff led efforts to promote National Farmers Market Week locally, distributing informational packets that contained EBT/Market Match information, recipes, fun activities for families, and resources. In addition, we submitted a proclamation to the County Board of Supervisors declaring Farmers Market Week throughout the county through a resolution adoption.

### The Impact

In the first six months of the Farmers Market Navigator program, there has been a steady increase in the number of customers utilizing CalFresh and Market Match at farmers markets. Though the total attendance numbers remain low for these smaller markets, the navigators have already experienced a large percent increase in traffic in a short time. Comparing the months of

March-August, total CalFresh customers increased from 80 in 2021 to 212 in 2022 (165% change) and new CalFresh customers increased from 18 to 49 (172% change). The total amount of CalFresh and Market Match tokens redeemed at the two markets has increased as well. From March to August 2021, the total redemption was \$2109 compared to \$5722 during the same months in 2022 (171% change). In addition to the increase in CalFresh customers and redemptions, the navigators are serving as a bridge between low-income Spanish and Mixteco speaking community members and the market managers.

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### **Favorite Quote**

“There was a customer who was showing other customers all the vegetables she had purchased with MM. She had the biggest smile as she showed her friends what she purchased with EBT & MM. Priceless. We also had a disgruntled customer who did not care for the MM initially as she wanted only cooked foods. With patience, kindness, and education she now comes and buys a few veggies and fruits with a grateful attitude. Estolia was the best at reaching out” – Linda Market Manager

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## **SNAP-Ed Custom Data**

### **Related Framework Indicators**

Healthy Eating Behaviors (MT1)  
 Food Resource Management Behaviors (MT2)  
 Nutrition Supports (MT5)  
 Nutrition Supports Implementation (LT5)  
 Multi-Sector Partnerships and Planning (ST8)  
 Fruits and Vegetables (R2)

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### **Socio-Ecological Framework**

Individual/Family  
 Environmental Setting  
 Sectors of Influence

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**Approaches**

Community and public health approaches (community-focused, population-based interventions)

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