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UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
Center for Research in Nutrition & Health Disparities

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## SNAP DOUBLE BUCKS PROGRAMS:

### Increasing Access to Produce While Supporting Small-Scale Farmers & the Local Economy

*“I just feel that everyone should be able to have access to farm raised foods... Because if it's good for you, you should make it available for everyone.”*

*- A SNAP recipient (#1) in South Carolina<sup>1</sup>*

**By Carrie Draper, MSW & Sonya Jones, PhD**



***The SNAP recipient quoted above is not alone; access to fresh healthy foods is good for all of us. Researchers, policy makers, and practitioners around the country have been working to find effective ways to improve access to farm-fresh foods. Some of the approaches being tested include healthy corner stores, healthy food financing, WIC and Senior farmers' market vouchers, and SNAP double bucks programs.***

***What are SNAP Double Bucks Programs?*** The premise of SNAP double bucks programs is simple: When SNAP recipients use their benefits on produce purchases, they receive additional money to go towards more fruits and vegetables. Often implemented at farmers markets, shoppers may be given a \$1 for every \$1 they spend. Other programs, such as at the Right Choice, Fresh Start Farmers' Market in Orangeburg, SC, operate by giving an additional \$5 for the first \$5 of fruit and vegetable purchases.<sup>2</sup>

**Interviewer:** *What do you think we need to do to end child hunger?*

**SNAP Recipient (#2) in South Carolina:** *“... make sure people really go to the local farmers at the Farmer's Market. I don't know if the Farmer's Market accepts EBT, which they should. That would truly, truly, truly help. Just having, I guess, more access to more varieties of food.”<sup>1</sup>*



*Eating fruits and vegetables lowers the risk of developing many chronic diseases and can help with weight management.*<sup>5</sup>

#### In SC...

- ⇒ An estimated \$1.2 billion dollars was spent due to obesity in 2009.<sup>6</sup>
- ⇒ About 1/2 of all adults and adolescents report eating less than 1 serving of fruit daily; and about 1/4 of adults and 1/2 of adolescents report eating less than 1 serving of vegetables per day.<sup>7</sup>
- ⇒ 13.6% of farmers' markets currently accept SNAP benefits as a form of payment.<sup>7</sup>

## What are the Benefits of SNAP Double Bucks Programs?

**Incentives work!** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is testing a program similar to Double Bucks, *The Healthy Incentives Pilot*. 76% of people are spending more money on fruits and vegetables as a result. They are using about \$5 more per month, and report feeling like they have better access to vegetables.<sup>3</sup>

## Would This Approach Work In South Carolina?

Through the 2013-2014 Appropriation Act of South Carolina,\* \$1.892 million has been allocated for coupons to go towards fresh produce purchases for SNAP recipients.<sup>4</sup> The rules for how the proviso will be implemented have not been determined; however, previous research in South Carolina shows that SNAP recipients eat a healthy SC grown diet with this type of program. For example, when a double bucks program was implemented at the Right Choice, Fresh Start Farmers' Market in Orangeburg, SC, **four times more SNAP dollars** came to the market than in previous years. Therefore, this money not only increased the produce purchases of low income South Carolinians, it also increased income for small scale farmers in the area.<sup>2</sup>

**SNAP participants in SC want to purchase fresh healthy foods at farmers' markets.** The Midlands Family Study included 550 adults caring for children, 69% participating in SNAP. One in three of these participants shopped at farmers' markets, and 97% said they would use their SNAP benefits at a farmers' market if a participating one was close by to them. Shopping at farmers' markets may help alleviate child hunger, too, as families that shopped at farmers markets reported being more food secure, including being able to protect their children from hunger.<sup>1</sup>

**SNAP?** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly the Food Stamp Program, and often called EBT in communities. SNAP provides money for food to families with low incomes. In 2011, \$1.33 billion was issued in SC to buy food for 844,000 South Carolinians.<sup>8</sup>



#### **\*South Carolina 2013-2014 Appropriation Act**

**"38.26.** (DSS: SNAP Coupons) The Department of Social Services shall establish a program to provide coupons that will allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to obtain additional fresh fruits and vegetables when purchasing fresh produce at grocery stores or farmers markets with SNAP benefits through their EBT cards. Each coupon shall allow the beneficiary to double the amount of produce purchased, up to five dollars. The agency shall utilize all funds received in the prior and current fiscal years from the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a bonus for reducing the error rate in processing SNAP applications to fund the program."<sup>4</sup>

# Recommendations:

Recognizing the health, economic, and social impact potential of implementing a SC SNAP Double Bucks program, we recommend:



- ⇒ the SC Department of Social Services uses the \$1.892 million allocated for \$5 coupons for additional fruits and vegetables for SNAP purchases for this purpose;
- ⇒ involving SNAP recipients, farmers, and other stakeholders in developing the regulations for how the proviso will be implemented in order to increase the likelihood of success;
- ⇒ increasing awareness that SNAP can be used at participating farmers markets, as well as which farmers markets are in fact participating; and
- ⇒ ensuring all farmers markets are set-up to accept SNAP as a form of payment.

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