



Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers, Inc.
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Fresh Access Bucks Program Description

Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers Inc. (FOG) is a 501(c) (3) grassroots nonprofit corporation established in 1987 to promote organic and sustainable agriculture through educational outreach and collaboration with growers, consumers, schools, universities, allied non-profits and government agencies at state, national, and international levels. In 2013, FOG received a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to develop the Fresh Access Bucks Program to increase sales of Florida grown fruits and vegetables to Florida consumers. This program increases access to and consumption of healthy, locally produced fruits and vegetables for low-income Florida residents through an incentive program at Farmers Markets for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-formerly the Food Stamp Program).

This project builds a highly visible network of Florida farmers markets implementing innovative programs that incentivize the use of federal nutrition assistance benefits to purchase Florida grown fruits and vegetables. To increase the demand for locally grown fruits and vegetables in underserved communities, FOG works with Wholesome Wave (WW), a national leader in the implementation of nutrition incentive programs.



In partnership with WW, FOG provides training and technical assistance, materials and initial incentive funding to implement the incentive program at a total of 20 markets throughout the state over the first two years. The incentive program, now being implemented by WW at more than 300 markets with almost 60 partners across the country, doubles the value of federal nutrition assistance benefits (including SNAP, WIC FMNP and Senior FMNP) redeemed at farmers markets. For example, an individual spending \$10 at a participating market can buy \$20 worth of fruits and vegetables-- increasing revenues for specialty crop farmers and making healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables much more affordable for low-income Florida residents.

To promote long-term sustainability, FOG works closely with local farmers markets and organizations to expand local funding and capacity building opportunities. Local farmers markets and partner organizations are expected to provide staffing for the EBT and incentive program, assist in outreach, provide supplies for the EBT and incentive booth, including a tent, tables, chairs, etc., (matching funds may be available to assist with these supply costs), collect and enter data, and have the capacity to administer the additional accounting required for this program.

Project Needs

FOG is excited about this new partnership with FDACS and is encouraged by the forward-thinking department to increase revenue for specialty crop growers while also increasing the affordability of and access to fruits and vegetables for all Floridians. These goals will be measured by the numbers of fruit and vegetable growers impacted. We anticipate at least 100 fruit and vegetable farms in Year 1 and 150 in Year 2, with 13 sites in the targeted counties in Year 1 and 20 sites total by the end of Year 2. Additionally, FOG will measure the increase in revenue by at least \$120,000.00 through incentives and matching funds. Project partners will process at least 200 federal benefit transactions in Year 1 and over 500 in Year 2. To be able to meet our goals, additional funding will need to be secured. FOG has received interest from across the state and is hopeful to be able to accommodate all communities that would like to benefit from this extremely effective program.





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Project Opportunity

Incentive programs for fruits and vegetables are effective at promoting local economies and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in underserved communities. WW has found that:

- 90% of SNAP recipients reported increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- On average, 27% of total market sales at participating farm-to-retail venues were from SNAP recipients.
- In response to increased sales, farmers expanded acreage/production, diversified products and added additional hoop houses or greenhouses.

FOG and WW are committed to the intent of the original project: increase sales of Florida-grown fruits and vegetables to Florida consumers, providing more direct markets for Florida's small farmers, while increasing access to and consumption of healthy, locally produced fruits and vegetables for low-income Florida residents.

Testimonials

"When SNAP customers realize that they can get more food with their food stamp benefits using Fresh Access Bucks, they take advantage of the program and eat more healthy, fresh Florida-grown fruits and vegetables. Sometimes they are skeptical, thinking it is too good to be true, and we have to convince them that it real. Once they try it, they are thrilled, especially now that SNAP benefits have been cut by average of \$42.00/month for a family of four."

-Fresh Access Bucks market manager partner, Miami, FL

"The market is a godsend. I often buy 10 bunches of kale to make kale chips for my kids to snack on during the week. It's very exciting to bring some of my older kids to the market, and hear them say, "mom, let's get more carrots!"

- Fresh Access Bucks customer



Urban Oasis' Upper East Side Farmers Market at Legion Park, Miami

