SNAP at Farmers Markets during the Corona Virus

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Common Issues, Common Concerns

• Your market is moving online and you are unsure about what to do about SNAP sales
• You are unsure what to do about tokens in your market
• You want to open a pop up market location, but your EBT machine is being used at your main site at that time
• You just feel overwhelmed!
Some Basic Information

- There is a huge surge in the SNAP caseload at this time, with many of those people who are new to the system.

- At this time SNAP cannot be used to pay online for food in VA. VA is looking for a waiver for this but that may take some time.

- Markets with can apply for a second DSS terminal to serve new locations if they provide a strong reason for their need.

- Markets have found ways to use credit/holds on their online platforms to accept SNAP sales.

- Each online platform is a little different
Some Basic Information

- Some markets are still using tokens, and some are not.
  - Sanitize tokens and don’t redistribute the same day
  - Pre-count and bag
  - If you go tokenless, decide what to do about tokens that customers already have. According to USDA, a SNAP customer must be able to ask for a refund.
- Some markets are using paper vouchers
- Ensure your staff and vendors all understand and can explain the new system
Some Basic Information

- Markets participating in Virginia Fresh Match are still applying the discount to eligible foods (fruits and vegetables)
  - Statewide limit on VFM discount has been lifted, but markets may choose to maintain one

- Some markets are creating “grab and go” boxes of aggregated produce for SNAP shoppers to quickly serve those who don’t order online. Box has a fixed price ($10-$20) and is eligible for VFM. Try to include culturally appropriate and staple items.
Resources are available!

Virginia Fresh Match and the Family Nutrition Program have partnered on a how-to guide for accepting SNAP and Virginia Fresh Match during this crisis.

How to Provide Virginia Fresh Match and SNAP Benefits during COVID19

- How to accept SNAP using online platforms
- Ideas for running a “tokenless market”
- Links to resources for protecting customers and vendors
Market Manager Education

Virginia Fresh Match hosts a regular call for Virginia farmers markets who want to learn from each other about how to solve issues around food access, SNAP, VFM and similar topics.

Email Katie Struble (katie@leapforlocalfood.org) to ask to join the list serve and you will receive the invitations.

Weekly notes are compiled and emailed out.
Consumer Education

Things to consider as you move forward:

- Educating SNAP shoppers who have shopped at your market in the past about your new SNAP system (tokenless, drive up, etc.)
- Educating people who have never been on SNAP that your market is open, accepts SNAP, and possibly doubles SNAP.
- Educating your vendors/staff/volunteers/community supporters on your new SNAP system
- Educating customers on how to cook and enjoy local produce
VA Family Nutrition Program

To find the nearest SNAP-Ed agent near you:
https://eatsmartmovemoreva.org/virginia-family-nutrition-program/contact/

To find recipes:
eatsmartmovemoreva.org/recipes

Facebook
Youtube
Instagram
VA Family Nutrition Program

Coming Soon:

- Videos on how to shop at a market using SNAP during COVID-19
- Social marketing campaign to educate SNAP shoppers that farmers markets are open
- Marketing templates for markets to use and adapt
- What else do you need? Let me know!
VA Cooperative Extension Resources

• COVID-19 FAQ for Farmers Markets: Steps for Markets and Market Managers

• Covid-19 Preguntas Frecuentes Para Mercados Locales Agrícolas

Lots more available at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/tags.resource.html/pubs_ext_vt_edu:food-safety