

## NUTRITION INCENTIVE MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM: HUMBOLDT

The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is a proposal that builds on the evidenced based success of California Market Match, which was founded in 2009 and has been sustained through private donors and foundations on a limited basis up and down the state. This nutrition incentive program has demonstrated a six-fold return on investment by doubling the purchasing power of nutrition assistance benefits such as CalFresh when used to buy fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables at farmers' markets. Market Match is an equitable investment that ensures all Californians benefit from healthy and sustainable food.

### DEMONSTRATED IMPACT OF INCENTIVES IN HUMBOLDT

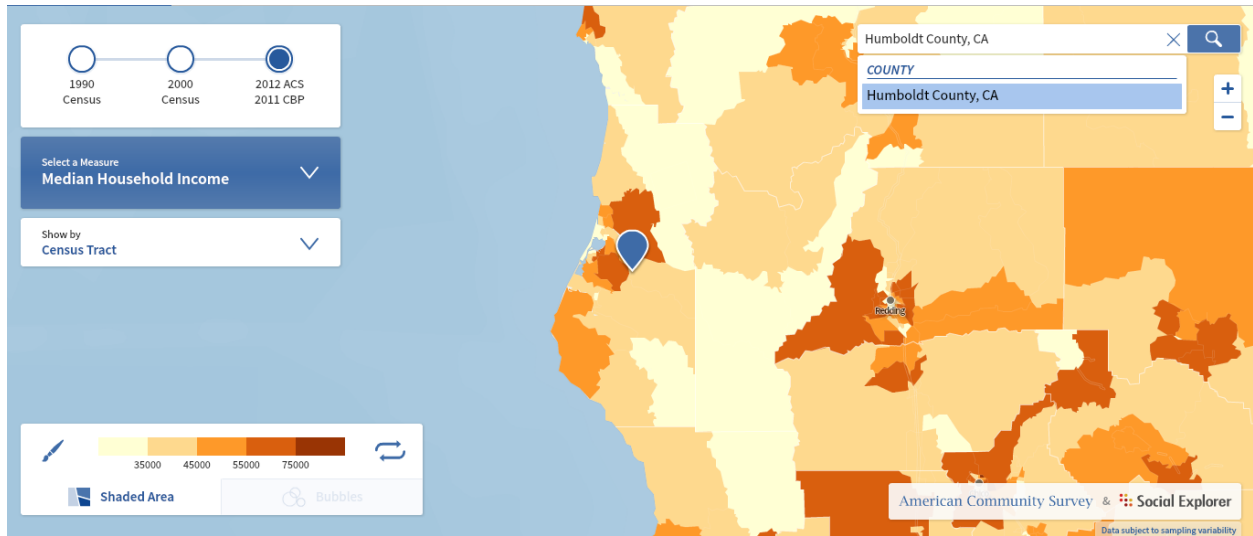
North Coast Growers Association (NCGA) has been in business since 1979, and it runs six farmers' markets in Humboldt County. All of them are seasonal, with the main season market open from April through November. Community members come to buy locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables, plants and meats. There is also live music, educational materials, recipes and more.

NCGA also offers Market Match at its farmers' markets. According to a 2013 study of Market Match, Humboldt County has increased CalFresh enrollment in part due to Market Match. Before NCGA implemented consumer incentives at its farmers' markets, total EBT redemption peaked at \$10,793 in 2010. After joining Market Match, total EBT sales grew to more than \$36,000 in 2012; sales from two Market Match years in 2011 and 2012 tripled the healthy food purchases of low-income residents at farmers' markets compared to the previous two year period. Market Match is a unique program that simultaneously benefits California's low-income communities and local farmers. Direct economic benefits support local California producers who struggle with keeping price points competitive for healthy food, and achieve a win-win for California's people and local businesses.

Market Match supports economic development, but its impact is felt most by the consumers who benefit from it. Kathy, who works for Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, states:

“We value NCGA's contributions to CalFresh outreach in Humboldt County. Collaboration with community partners such as NCGA has significantly increased the reach of the CalFresh message. NCGA's CalFresh outreach efforts reach target demographics such as the senior population, families with young children and the homeless in our communities. In addition, the Market Match program has provided an important opportunity for CalFresh recipients to buy fresh and local fruits and vegetables, ultimately leading to healthier eating. The Market Match program has been very beneficial to our community and we hope to see it continue.”

Financial incentives that support low-income communities' purchase of fresh fruits, nuts and vegetables can be an effective anti-poverty strategy as well. The map on the next page shows that the median household income for Humboldt County ranges from more than \$75,000 a year to less than \$24,000 per year. The growth in EBT expenditures at NCGA farmers' markets once Market Match was implemented shows that it is powerful enough to help bridge the gap in food access between low- and high-income communities. The California Health Interview Survey estimates that 6 percent of low-income people are food insecure, and this program can effectively decrease that number further through nutritious food. Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked, and a statewide Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is an evidence-based intervention for these issues.



## THE OPPORTUNITY TO SCALE UP AN EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAM

With institutional support from the state government, this nutrition incentive model can grow beyond 150 (of 800) certified farmers' markets in California, which only serves 23 counties. A state Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program would also leverage new federal matching funds under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) provision of the 2014 Farm Bill. Only \$69 million of FINI's \$100 million remain and California must maximize its share considering that its farms produce a majority of the nation's fruits and vegetables (i.e. specialty crops), which are the target products for FINI funding.

## CONCLUSION

- The Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program is based on Market Match, which aids more than 984 specialty crop farmers in California and approximately 65,000 EBT customers.
- Consumer nutrition incentives for fresh produce is a common sense, proven model for local economic development and promotes a more nutritious diet among safety net beneficiaries.
- CalFresh clients have a buying power of \$7.8 billion. California can drive more of this money towards local farmers and small businesses using this nutrition incentive model, which generated total project sales of over \$2 million in 2014.

For more information, please contact the organizations coordinating support for the Nutrition Incentive Matching Grant Program:

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