



## Healthy Harvests Abound at Pennsylvania Farmers' Markets

Farmers have been sharing their harvests with neighbors in the commonwealth since the days when William Penn first called Pennsylvania home. Today, there are more reasons than ever to buy fresh local produce. That bounty benefits the people, communities and planet crucial to our physical and environmental health.

Some people are especially interested in buying the nearby food that helps save the fuel and reduce the pollution generated by shipping food from afar. Others are motivated by the knowledge that the money they pay for Pennsylvania produce stays close to home to nourish our state's economy.

The PA Department of Agriculture supports this homegrown purchasing through its PA Preferred program which promotes products grown or made in Pennsylvania. Now, shoppers focused solely on serving the needs of their families can enjoy fresher, better tasting, and healthier food from Pennsylvania's local farmers.



The URL below links to a listing of almost 200 Pennsylvania farmers' markets. One click can put you in touch with the ones in your area. Sharing it with those in your community can be the first step in bringing the fresh, wholesome goodness of

Pennsylvania produce to their daily dinner tables.

<http://www.farmersmarketonline.com/fm/Pennsylvania.htm>



*Everyone should enjoy the pick of Pennsylvania's healthiest crops.*

## **Organic Goodness for Everyone**

A program launched last year and funded by the nation's 2014 Farm Bill aims to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in "SNAP," the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program is funding small pilot projects, multi-year community programs, and multi-year, large-scale initiatives as part of this campaign. (Many of the hardworking Pennsylvanians employed on farms producing fresh SNAP produce are just the type of workers who may now qualify for HealthChoices coverage).

The SNAP program tied to FINI helps put food on the table for millions of underprivileged Americans. More than 60 percent of SNAP participants are children, elderly, or disabled individuals. SNAP benefits are designed as temporary aids to help feed those experiencing hardships, with new applicants averaging 12 months use of the program.



*Pennsylvania's rich farmlands make it ground zero for a new wave of healthy eating.*

## **Pilot Projects Take Root in Southeastern Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania is fortunate to be one of 26 states funded for this project. Four FINI programs have been launched in the southeastern section of the state. Following is an overview of those initiatives. All feature benefits specifically designed to let SNAP users eat fresh while stretching their benefits' buying power.

### **Exton**

The Chester County Food Bank runs The Fresh2You! Mobile Market. This rolling resource travels in the form of a bright yellow truck stocked with seasonal produce from area farms. Its schedule for regular weekly delivery times and locations can be found at the link below. SNAP shoppers receive double SNAP dollars on all produce purchases from the truck, along with reward points for the purchase of highly nutritious produce that can be redeemed for healthy protein foods as well.

<http://chestercountyfoodbank.org/programs/fresh2you>

### **Philadelphia**

The Philly Food Bucks program run by the Philadelphia Food Trust provides another way for SNAP benefit holders to increase their buying power. Members earn a 40 percent bonus through the purchase of fresh local foods; for every \$5 spent using

SNAP at participating markets, they receive a \$2 Filly Food Bucks coupon for fresh fruits and veggies. Hours and locations of Food Trust farmers' markets supporting the program can be found at this link:

<http://thefoodtrust.org/farmers-markets>

### **Allentown**

The SNAP Match for Local, Organic Health Food allows SNAP participants who buy groceries from two organic farmers markets in Allentown to double the amount of fresh produce their SNAP benefits can buy. One market is located at 425 S. 15th St., next to the Allentown YMCA/YWCA, and sells organic produce, cosmetics, coffee, baked goods and other products from now through the fall. The other is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church on N. Seventh Street, Allentown.

<http://stlukeslutheranallentown.com>



*Farmers' Markets like Easton's are taking a fresh approach to affordable food.*

### **Easton**

Our final look at one of these FINI grant programs includes one market manager's thoughts on the combination of personal and communal benefits they yield. The

Easton Farmers' Market was one of the first markets in Pennsylvania to accept SNAP benefits and has grown its SNAP program steadily since its inception in 2010. It provides two open-air markets on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Their weekly Winter Mart provides residents with year-round access to the wholesome goodness of fresh foods.

The FINI grant program has allowed the market to offer DOUBLE SNAP benefits throughout the 2015 season. "Word has really spread and the DOUBLE SNAP program is bringing more awareness to the fact that we accept SNAP," says Market Manager Megan McBride. "We're seeing many new SNAP customers who are really grateful for this opportunity. The market will double any SNAP purchase up to \$30 per day. Seniors on tight, fixed incomes are particularly appreciative of a program that enables them to eat the kind of foods they remember enjoying as children," says McBride.

In addition to SNAP, the market offers \$1 Healthy Food Bucks to residents who attend weekly cooking and nutrition programs at the Easton Community Center. Attendees learn how to make healthy meals using farm-fresh produce and are given \$10 in market bucks that can then be used to purchase items like produce, meat, eggs, dairy, honey and bread. Seniors can redeem FMNP checks with participating farmers and mothers can use their WIC checks to purchase food for their families. "This program grants everyone an opportunity to eat locally grown food," concludes McBride. "It not only provides the nutrition that strengthens them, but builds the economic ties that strengthen our community too."

<http://www.EastonFarmersMarket.com>

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## **Better Health Choices**

*We end this month's newsletter with a snapshot of two resources that can help make it easier for your community members to access the fresh, healthy foods featured above.*

### **Tech Tool Puts Fresh Foods Within Reach**

Finding the most convenient and healthy locations to use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits just became easier for Pennsylvania's SNAP customers. "SnapFresh" is a mobile app that puts users' cell phones to work locating the local fresh foods that are a good fit for all budgets. The app is available in Spanish, Chinese (Simplified) and English, and works not only on smart phones, but

any phone that has mobile web access or the ability to send and receive text messages. Sending a simple text message lists the names and addresses of nearby retailers who accept SNAP benefits. The app can support healthy food choices by identifying the type of retailer (such as grocery stores) found. The same info can be found on the [snapfresh.org](https://snapfresh.org) website. iPhone users can also download the app for free from the iTunes store.

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/id495606148>



*The right recipes can have the whole family reaching for healthy food.*

## **The Cookbook that Makes Healthy Eating a SNAP**

The tool and programs noted above are designed to allow low-income families to put fresh foods into their shopping bags. But keeping costs low can still be a challenge when it comes time to turn those groceries into meals. That was the inspiration for Good and Cheap, a cookbook specifically designed for those in the SNAP program. The free PDF version of this \$4 a day meal planner is available on author Leanne Brown's website.

The recipes in the book center on the fresh fruits and vegetables that can play a key role in the diets that are the best chance for long-term health. The numbers tell the story of how successful Brown's efforts have been to turn her recipes into the hearty meals that allow everyone to enjoy the rich flavors and nutritional benefits of fresh, whole foods. Share the link or print out a copy for your community members, and

you'll be another of the more than 800,000 downloaders who have proven this resource to be a success.

<http://www.leannebrown.com>



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