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CDFA Awarded \$6.3 Million Grant from USDA to Help Low-Income Californians & Small Farms Recover from COVID-19 Pandemic

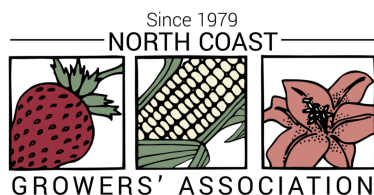
HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CA—The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced in August that the California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) is one of several awardees of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program COVID Relief and Response (GusCRR) grants program. This grant of \$6,325,464 will bolster the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP) through the continuing economic effects of the pandemic. [Click here](#) to view USDA's news release.

CDFA's GusCRR grant will address California SNAP shoppers' heightened need for food assistance due to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as SNAP, provides low-income households with a monthly benefit to spend on food. Nutrition incentives, such as those funded by CNIP, match those benefits, typically dollar-for-dollar, to help low-income shoppers include more fruits and vegetables in their diet. The GusCRR grant includes working with the Ecology Center-run California Market Match program to expand nutrition incentives for fresh, California grown fruits and vegetables at 95 farmers' markets and farm stands and one mobile market, allowing markets to meet demand for incentives due to increased food insecurity statewide. The funding will allow the program to continue through December 2022. Market Match sites across the state had been limited to matching customers' SNAP dollars up to \$10, but can now increase their daily maximum to \$15.

Humboldt County's North Coast Growers' Association (NCGA) is a subcontractor under the Berkeley Ecology Center which is a subgrantee of CDFA and leads the California Market Match program, California's largest nutrition incentive program that matches SNAP benefits up to a daily maximum at nearly 300 participating farmers' markets, farm stands, mobile markets, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs—supporting both low-income families as well as small and mid-sized California farmers.

All Humboldt County Farmers Markets operated by NCGA have now increased the Market Match benefit from \$10 to \$15. This includes the markets in Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, Garberville, McKinleyville, and Miranda.

The NCGA has been accepting what is now known as CalFresh since the early 1980's (when the program was still referred to as "food stamps") and in 2005 became one of the 1st farmers' markets



in California to begin accepting electronic benefits. NCGA has been a Market Match partner for over 10 years. NCGA's long history with CalFresh has given the organization a deep level of connection between the farmers and the CalFresh community. Humboldt family farms have seen real and impactful increases in their customer base and annual income from these increases in Federal benefits.

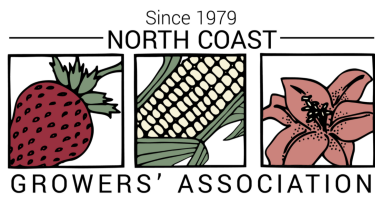
"Humboldt County can be especially vulnerable in times of crisis (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) due high pre-existing poverty levels and rates of food insecurity, limited medical facilities and unreliable road infrastructure, to name just a few factors. The continual increase in funding for our Market Match program provides significant nutritional support to our community and at the same time supports our small family farmers, local economy and positively impacts overall the resiliency of our food system".

"The real and direct impact of this new funding is that we can now offer each farmers' market CalFresh customer a dollar-for-dollar-match of up to \$15 (up from \$10) per day to buy more fruits and vegetables. For example, if a customer spends \$15 on their CalFresh card, we will provide a free match to their spending to give them a total of \$30. With this match, quality local produce is often even less expensive than conventional produce purchased in a grocery store. While we can calculate the large financial impacts of this program, the health benefits it provides to our shoppers is truly beyond measure," says Ivy North, Director of Programs for the North Coast Growers' Association.

In 2020, over 385,000 customers matched their benefits with Market Match across California, representing an almost 46% increase over 2019. Moreover, the amount of Market Match dollars distributed increased by about 45% from 2019 (\$2.2M) to 2020 (\$3.15M.) Typical program growth is usually around 10% annually. Thanks to the GusCRR funds, the program can meet current demands, expand to new sites, and increase the amount given to SNAP participants.

"We have seen tremendous growth in the number of local CalFresh recipients participating in the Market Match program at our farmers' markets since the start of the pandemic. This increase in Market Match funding and the daily match increase to \$15 per shopper per visit has a huge economic benefit to our local farmers and food system. Each dollar benefits both the shopper and the farmer. The Market Match program growth has contributed significantly to the resiliency of our farmers' markets during what has otherwise been 2 quite challenging seasons." -Portia Bramble, Executive Director, North Coast Growers Association.

NCGA is proud to be a leader in California Market Match, operated by a consortium of over 50 [partner organizations](#) that run nearly 300 farm-direct sites across the state. The program was founded in 2009 to increase the purchasing power and access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income households, and to direct more SNAP dollars towards local small and mid-sized farms. To learn more about the Market Match program, visit www.marketmatch.org. To learn more about the North Coast Growers' Association's CalFresh and Market Match programs, visit www.northcoastgrowersassociation.org/ebt



Please find photos attached.