

What is Food Insecurity?

FACT SHEET

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that 11.1% of U.S. households in 2018 were *food insecure* at some point during the year, meaning they were “unable to acquire adequate food for one or more household members because they had insufficient money and other resources for food.”¹ Food insecurity prevents us from achieving a healthy and well-nourished population, and it affects different types of households disproportionately. Rates of food insecurity are higher for households with children (13.9%), for households with children headed by a single woman (27.8%) or a single man (15.9%), and for Black (21.2%) and Hispanic households (16.2%).¹ According to Feeding America, in 2017 there were 1.6 million children² and 4.3 million people overall³ experiencing food insecurity in California.

Lower food security is associated with a higher probability of several chronic diseases, including hypertension, coronary heart disease, hepatitis, stroke, cancer, asthma, diabetes, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease.⁴ Further, household food insecurity in children is associated with a myriad of negative health indicators and behaviors including 1) a higher BMI and waist circumference, 2) a greater likelihood of being overweight or obese, 3) greater consumption of sugar from sugar sweetened beverages, and 4) eating breakfast and eating dinner with family less frequently.⁵

In an effort to address food insecurity, communities are exploring, implementing, and evaluating various fruit and vegetable incentive programs (F&VIP) that offer low-income shoppers additional funds to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.⁶ These programs have been shown to increase affordability, access, purchase, and consumption of fruits and vegetables.⁶ Two types of these programs offered in CA are Market Match and Double Up Food Bucks, which reach limited segments of the population with great success, but could be scaled up to reach more households across the state struggling with food insecurity.

WHAT IS MARKET MATCH (MM)?

Market Match (MM) is a California F&VIP [founded in 2009](#) designed to match customers’ federal nutrition assistance benefits at farmers’ markets so that customers gain additional resources to purchase fresh produce. All farmers’ markets participating in MM provide customers with a dollar match (Buy \$1, Get \$1) up to a set amount (typically \$10-\$20/person per farmers’ market visit) when they use their CalFresh Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to purchase eligible food items. The MM funds (either a token or voucher) can then only be used to purchase fruits and vegetables. In order to participate in MM, farmers’ markets [must be authorized to accept SNAP](#) (SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) aka CalFresh EBT benefits, formerly known as *food stamps*). Some farmers’ markets participating in MM also elect to match [Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\) Farmers Market Nutrition Program \(FMNP\)](#) vouchers to better meet the needs of the local community. MM is funded by Federal and state grants, as well as local community partners (e.g., private and community foundations, health care systems, local governments, private businesses, etc.). There are over 700 certified farmers’ markets across CA serving over 26,000 households per week. In 2017, MM was offered at 288 sites across the state demonstrating a clear opportunity to scale up MM so that its [benefits](#) become available at every farmers’ market across the state.⁷

WHAT IS DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS (DUFBS)?

Double Up Food Bucks (DUFBS) is a F&VIP similar to MM. The DUFBS program originated in Michigan with five local farmers' markets in 2009 and has since spread to sites across the country, including grocery stores. Unlike MM, where some participating markets extend the benefits to customers using WIC FMNP, DUFBS is limited to customers purchasing eligible foods with their SNAP benefits. Under the [CA DUFBS project](#), CalFresh benefits recipients can use their CalFresh EBT card at participating grocery stores to purchase CA-grown fresh fruits and vegetables. For every \$1 they spend, they will earn \$1 in DUFBS, up to \$10/day, which can be used to purchase additional fresh fruits and vegetables in the same store. One benefit of coupling MM with DUFBS programs across the state is that CalFresh benefits recipients can receive their F&VIP benefits at either farmers' markets or grocery stores, which is important because not all communities are served by farmers' markets, and not all farmers' markets operate year-round. DUFBS in CA is supported by a grant from the USDA, First 5 Santa Clara County, The Health Trust, and others. Currently, DUFBS is offered at five grocery stores in Santa Clara County and one grocery store in Alameda County, pointing to a clear opportunity to scale up the program to offer its [benefits](#) to communities statewide.⁸

POTENTIAL ROLES OF FELLOWS: HELP SCALE UP MM AND/OR DUFBS WITH POLICY & PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

Policy Interventions (Market Match-Specific)

Farmers' markets must be authorized to accept CalFresh EBT benefits in order to participate in MM. Local governments can adopt a [municipal](#) or [zoning](#) ordinance to require that all farmers' markets accept CalFresh EBT benefits, paving the path for more markets to be equipped to participate in MM. It can be paired with [creative solutions](#) to overcome barriers to participation, such as funding for infrastructure.

Programmatic Interventions

Less than half of farmers' markets across the state currently participate in MM and DUFBS is in its pilot stage with very limited geographic reach. Fellows can play a critical role in marketing the opportunity to farmers' markets and grocery store operators and local governments to help increase uptake in program participation. Through partnerships with local health departments and intended beneficiaries of F&VIPs, they can spread awareness of the critical need and opportunity to address food insecurity through the scaling up of MM and DUFBS programs across the state.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [USDA: Household Food Security in the U.S. in 2018](#) (bit.ly/2Vli0a1)
- [County Health Rankings and Roadmaps: Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Programs](#) (bit.ly/3cl0cUh)
- [Market Match CA website](#) (bit.ly/2wAnbeM)
- [Double Up Food Bucks CA website and Annual Report](#) (bit.ly/2VoRiy1)
- [ChangeLab Solutions: Land Use Policies to Protect and Promote Farmers' Markets](#) (bit.ly/3b7x6r0)
- [Ecology Center: Farmers' Market Finder](#) (bit.ly/2XykaGl)

List of references available online at championprovider.ucsf.edu/references.

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