

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Incentive Structures and Purchasing Patterns at Farmers Markets (FM)



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Introduction

Fruits and vegetables (FV) are part of a healthy diet, yet cost is a barrier for people with limited income. In Washington State, 12% of households are food insecure, which is the limited availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, negatively impacting their health. With the help of a Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant, Washington State Department of Health funds FM SNAP incentive programs in six distinct regions. These programs use variations of matching SNAP spending (\$) with incentive vouchers (Match ratio) – with or without a Cap on the total incentive provided – to encourage purchase of FV.



Objectives

- Determine which incentive structures promote SNAP spending per market visit.
- Determine which incentive structure component influences SNAP spending more: Cap on incentives or Match ratio?

Methods

Compare incentive structures using:

- Quantitative data: SNAP transaction records of ~80 FM, specifically SNAP food benefits spending per market visit.
- Qualitative data: market manager interviews, SNAP participant (customer) feedback cards.

Incentive Structures (Match ratio)	
SNAP spending (\$) : Incentive (vouchers-\$) - Cap (\$)	
Catholic Charities of Spokane	5:2 - No
MultiCare	1:1 - 10
Seattle OSE	1:1 - 10
Skagit Valley FM	1:1 - No
West Sound FM	5:2 - No
WSU Clark County Ext	1:1 - 5

Results

Cap on Incentives

SNAP Spending per Market Visit

	2015	2016				2017		
	Q2-Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
No Cap	\$ 19.48		\$ 18.39	\$ 20.56	\$ 23.35	\$ 20.79	\$ 20.21	\$ 20.46
Cap	\$ 13.12	\$ 12.43	\$ 8.49	\$ 11.83	\$ 13.06	\$ 11.38	\$ 12.88	\$ 12.34
Difference	\$ 6.35		\$ 9.90	\$ 8.73	\$ 10.29	\$ 9.40	\$ 7.33	\$ 8.11

Match Ratio (No Cap)

SNAP Spending per Market Visit

	2016		2017		
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
5:2	\$ 20.38	\$ 22.48	\$ 19.47	\$ 21.12	\$ 20.85
1:1	\$ 21.00	\$ 26.67	\$ 22.56	\$ 17.06	\$ 19.30
Difference	\$ (0.62)	\$ (4.19)	\$ (3.09)	\$ 4.06	\$ 1.55

Qualitative data

- Market manager interviews confirmed that the Cap incentive level influences SNAP spending at farmers markets.
- Customer feedback cards – Total responses: 98.

Typical customer response:

“It levels the playing fields so that I can afford healthy food too. It ensures that my children don't grow up not knowing what fresh..... vegetables taste like. It stretches my dollars farther...with a promotion healthier than 2/5\$ lays chips. Thank you!!”

Conclusions

- SNAP spending per market visit is consistently higher when incentive structures do not contain a Cap on incentives.
- The Match ratio is less influential on SNAP spending than whether or not there is a Cap on incentive vouchers provided.
- A 1:1 Match ratio results in higher total FV purchase (i.e., more incentives) than 5:2 Match ratio with similar SNAP spending.

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