



Local Food as Hope: Community Supported Farmers Markets

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Who we are

- Food AND Medicine
 - Mission: to educate, organize and empower workers and our communities for economic and social justice. We believe that by working together with unions, farmers, community groups, small businesses, and faith-based organizations we will create solutions and positive change.
 - 12 year history of impacting economic and social vitality of Eastern Maine
 - Goals for local agriculture: to support for small farmers to make farming viable career while increasing access to local food for all Eastern Maine residents

What we do

- Local Food for All
 - Greenhouse
 - Education and outreach
 - CSA Fair
 - Community Supported Farmers Markets
- Farmer-Labor Alliance
 - Solidarity Harvest
 - Union Supported Agriculture
 - Farmer-Labor Legislative Breakfast



Local Food for All

- Struggles of farming and finding new customer base and markets in Eastern Maine
- Growing rates of poverty and hunger
- Economic, social, health benefits of local food → How can we get more local food to more Mainers in need?



The Idea: Win-win-win

- Connect low-income families to local food and farmers
- Increase sales for small farmers
- Achieves FAM vision
- Keep federal dollars local



How it works

- FAM partners with market associations, Grange
- Markets and FAM do outreach to SNAP customers
- Local Sponsors commit funds for the discount
 - Customers pay discounted price with SNAP benefits
 - FAM reimburses vendors with funds raised
 - Farmers receive full amount of each sale and increased customer base



And what's more

- Markets as community builder
 - Cooking Classes
 - Taste tests
 - Market Tours
 - Market Kids Club
 - Taste tests, shopping "money" and games
 - Future market shoppers!



Where it works

- Bangor, Brewer, Ohio Street locally
- 31 markets accepting EBT across Maine
- Expansion?



Community Benefits



- SNAP benefits go to local farmers
- \$3 million/month potential in Penobscot County
- Local farmers spend income locally
- Businesses earn more
- Families are healthier

Challenges

- Fundraising locally vs grant support
- Negative stereotypes in community
- Volunteer power/staff time
- Tracking systems
- Farmer buy-in
- Returning customers



Successes



- Supporting small farmers
 - Over \$40,000 in SNAP benefits redeemed by 30 farmers at markets in last two years
- Customer involvement and input
 - Increase of 550 to 2,000 sales in one year
- Strong volunteer commitment
- Community partnerships for programs
- Returning local sponsors
- Building community and mutual understanding

What's Next?

- Increasing support for new Community Supported Farmers Markets
- Statewide initiative
- Creative funding strategies
 - Market support
 - Health care providers
 - Customer donations
- Farm Bill 2014