



ecology center • California Farmers' Markets EBT Project

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Stockton & Tracy Farmers' Markets Welcome Back Food Stamp Customers With Wireless High Tech

*Addition of Food Stamp's EBT at Stockton Certified Farmers' Markets
Improves Access for Recipients of Food Assistance*

Stockton, CA, June 14, 2005 – Stockton Certified Farmers' Markets announced today that they are now accepting Food Stamp Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, also known as the Golden State Advantage Card or the “food stamp card”, as a convenient method of payment. The effort is part of a statewide campaign to improve health through nutrition education and lifestyle changes, particularly among socioeconomic and ethnic groups that suffer disproportionate rates of hunger, obesity and chronic disease.

The Stockton Farmers' Markets averaged more than \$600,000 a year of paper food stamp sales, more than any other farmers' market in California, until the paper stamps were phased out in 2003. The new electronic transfer technology which replaced paper food stamps presented a unique challenge to the busy cash-only markets, which lack access to electricity and phone lines. Overcoming this obstacle, with the help of state and county Departments of Social Services and community advocates, allows the markets to once again provide fresh fruits and vegetables to all income levels.

The EBT card is now used in all of California's 58 counties to manage the food assistance accounts of food stamp participants. The system utilizes a card similar to a bank account debit card to process participants' purchases electronically. Utilizing one wireless point-of-sale device provided by the state's Department of Social Services, farmers' market staff can swipe a food stamp participant's Advantage Card and deduct a chosen amount from his or her account and issue scrip. Participants can then shop the market using the market dollars or scrip equivalent to the deducted amount. Stockton and Tracy markets are using bright green plastic tokens worth \$1 each for scrip. Any unused scrip may be used at a later date, or returned to the market staff to be credited back to the participant's Advantage Card.

EBT at Farmers' Market

Farmers' markets adhere to the same rules as grocery stores when it comes to what products are eligible for purchase with the EBT card. Fortunately, most items found at farmers' markets are allowable purchases according to U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines. EBT may be used to purchase fruits, vegetables, herbs, eggs, fish and bread as well as plants that produce food.

The Ecology Center, funded by the California Nutrition Network of the California Department of Health Services, is working with market managers and community partners throughout California to promote use of the EBT cards at farmers' markets in an effort to help food stamp participants meet the recommended minimum of 5 to 9 servings of fruit and vegetables every day. Through this campaign, brochures in 7 languages informing food benefits recipients of the new farmers' market access will be distributed by the San Joaquin County Department of Public Social Services as well as by local food bank agencies, WIC offices, and other community partners.

Advocates for the use of EBT point out that the benefits of the new program extend far beyond convenience. "This program promotes access to, and consumption of, fruits and vegetables, as well as the sustainable agricultural practices utilized by our farmers," said Penny Leff, project coordinator and former manager of Berkeley Farmers' Markets. "This is the real thing. Our farmers' markets offer fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables that are locally grown, picked from the fields, and taken straight to the market. By using EBT at a farmers' market we're investing those food stamp dollars right back into our local family farms."

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) hopes outreach campaigns touting the new convenience of the farmers' market EBT program will also help increase food stamp participation among eligible families in San Joaquin.

"From the participant's point of view using EBT at farmers' markets is about convenience and providing for a healthy family," said Frank Buck, associate health program advisor with the CDHS' *California Nutrition Network*. "We need to do everything we can to make sure food stamp households are utilizing all of the nutrition assistance available to them and obtain the most nutritious food possible."

About the Ecology Center

The Ecology Center addresses the public need for unbiased, non-commercial information about household products, ecologically-sensitive methods of living, and large toxic threats to society and alternatives to those threats. The Ecology Center operates Berkeley Farmers' Markets and has been a Berkeley institution [since 1969](#).

For more information about the Ecology Center's Farmers' Market EBT Project, see www.ecologycenter.org/ebt

EBT at Farmers' Market

The California Nutrition Network and the California 5 a Day Campaign work in cooperation with the National 5 A Day Program and more than 300 organizational partners in California to promote good health and reduce the risks of serious chronic diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. The goal is to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables to 5 to 9 servings or more daily as part of a lowfat, high-fiber diet and physically active lifestyle. The *Network* and *Campaign* are principally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Stamp Program. For more information about the California Food Stamp Program, please call 1-800-952-5253. For more information about the *Network* and *5 a Day*, please visit www.ca5aday.com or call 1-888-EAT-FIVE.

Stockton Certified Farmers' Markets:

Tuesdays

Stockton Farmers' Market, 8 am to 1:30 pm
Kaiser Hospital, West Lane & Tommydon (May – Dec)
209-943-1830

Wednesdays

Tracy Farmers' Market, 3 pm to 7 pm
10th & Central St., Tracy (April – Dec)
209-943-1830

Thursdays

Stockton Farmers' Market, 8:30 am to 1 pm
Dillards Parking Lot, Pacific & March (May – Dec)
209-943-1830

Fridays

Stockton Farmers' Market, 9 am to 2 pm
242 E. Main St., Stockton (May – Dec)
209-943-1830

Saturdays

Stockton Farmers' Market, 7 am to 10 am, year round
Under the Crosstown Freeway, between El Dorado & San Joaquin
209-943-1830 (Jan – Dec)

Sundays

Stockton Farmers' Market, 8:30 am to 1 pm
Dillards Parking Lot, Pacific & March (May – Dec)
209-943-1830

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