

## YOUR FARMERS' MARKET AND THE 2012 FARM BILL



Catholic bishops hold a special place for agriculture "because it touches all our lives, wherever we live or whatever we do. It is about how we feed our own families, and the whole human family. It is about how we treat those who put food on our table and those who do not have enough food. It is about what is happening to food and farming, rural communities and villages, in the face of increasing concentration, new technology, and growing globalization in agriculture." (*USCCB: Pastoral Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*)

Oregonians hold a special place for Farmers' Markets and the fresh, nutritious and often organic foods they discover.

**Here are four additional reasons to shop at your Farmers' Market:**

- 1) Farmers' markets enable farmers to keep approximately 80 cents of each dollar spent by the consumer.** By "Option for the Poor" the U.S. Bishops apply the basic moral test-how our most vulnerable members are faring-and "extend in a special way to those who work in agriculture... Those who farm must have decent wages and a decent life."
- 2) Farmers' Markets help farmers stay in business.** Catholic teaching about the "Dignity of Work" insists that farmers must be able to support themselves and their families through their work. Buying local essentially supports your local economy—the farm.
- 3) At the Farmers' market you can create a special relationship by talking with the local farmer.** Food systems, or supply chains, generally include the grocer as the middleman. "When we go to the supermarket, we rarely think about where our food comes from, who produces it, who harvests it, or what it takes to process, package, and distribute it [food systems]."( *USCCB: Pastoral Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers* )
- 4) Some Farmers' Markets accepts WIC and SNAP, which means that more Oregonians can access healthy, fresh, affordable, sometimes organic, locally-grown food.** Without Farmers' Markets the cheapest foods are often highest in calories and lowest in nutrition but the cheapest foods are what is available when you try to stretch your food stamps (SNAP and WIC).

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The 2012 Farm Bill is an opportunity to make local food more accessible at farmers' markets. Here's how:

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program:** More than 46 million Americans currently rely on USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (formerly known as food stamps) to meet their food needs. SNAP helps feed millions of households; 76 percent of which include a child, senior, or disabled person and many include workers who cannot provide sufficient nutrition for their families.

Farmers' Markets are often the best, least expensive source to purchase fresh, nutritious and organic foods, quality food which most SNAP users do not have access to. Yet only one-third of U.S. farmers' markets are authorized to serve SNAP families. Also, SNAP usage is facilitated when farmers' markets have Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machines.

Facilitating low-income consumers' use of SNAP at farmers' markets adds a cost-free rural economic benefit to existing nutrition programs. One way is to certify more farmers' markets to accept SNAP and



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ensure that wireless EBT machines are provided free of charge to all farmers markets that are certified to accept SNAP.

**Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** provides fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables from Farmers' Markets, Roadside Stands and Community Supported Agriculture programs to low-income seniors. The current Senate Agricultural Committee proposal maintains funding, with no increase, at \$20 million annually to provide assistance to low-income seniors and ensure access to the fresh, local food at farmers' markets.

**Farmers Market Promotion Program** funds marketing proposals for community-supported agriculture programs, farmers' markets, and roadside stands. The current Senate Agricultural Committee proposal maintains funding, with no increase, at \$20 million annually.

**Hunger-Free Community Incentive Grants** funds incentive programs to increase fruit and vegetable purchases by SNAP customers at farmers' markets and other healthy food retailers.

When you see an article or receive an action alert about the 2012 Farm Bill, don't toss it aside. The Farm Bill affects SNAP, rural communities and small and medium-size farms.

And now in June, we are reminded that the Farm Bill is also about our Farmers' Markets.



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