

New York City Health Department Farmers' Market Programs



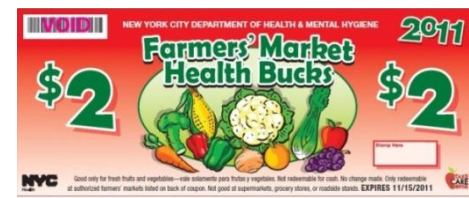
Farmers' Markets in New York City

Since the 1970s, farmers' markets have become an integral component of New York City's retail food environment. What started as a handful of farm stands has grown to more than 120 markets operating in all five boroughs. Farmers' markets link urban and rural communities, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship: city residents gain access to affordable, high-quality local produce and other farm-fresh goods, and regional farmers acquire additional retail outlets and the opportunity to sell directly to consumers.

Access to healthy food is widely understood to be a determinant of health, and lack of access—common in low-income communities—has been linked to higher rates of diet-related diseases, such as obesity and diabetes. Farmers' markets in New York City serve as an important avenue to address these disparities. Unlike conventional retailers, the markets can operate in nontraditional venues, such as in parking lots and on sidewalks, with relatively little capital investment. These characteristics allow markets to serve the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods: the South Bronx, East and Central Harlem, and North and Central Brooklyn.

To improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables and to support the viability of farmers' markets in underserved communities, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) Physical Activity and Nutrition Program (PAN) developed two innovative programs: Health Bucks and Stellar Farmers' Markets. Health Bucks increases the purchasing power of market shoppers while supporting the existence of farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods. Stellar Farmers' Markets teaches consumers to prepare simple, affordable recipes using the farmers' market bounty. The program provides the knowledge and teaches the skills to make healthy meals, while at the same time supporting the livelihood of local farmers.

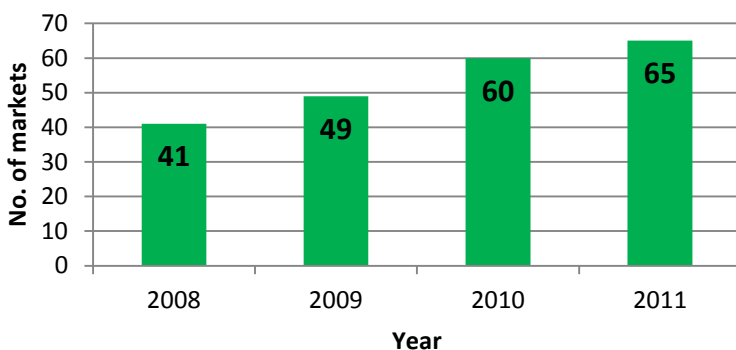
Health Bucks



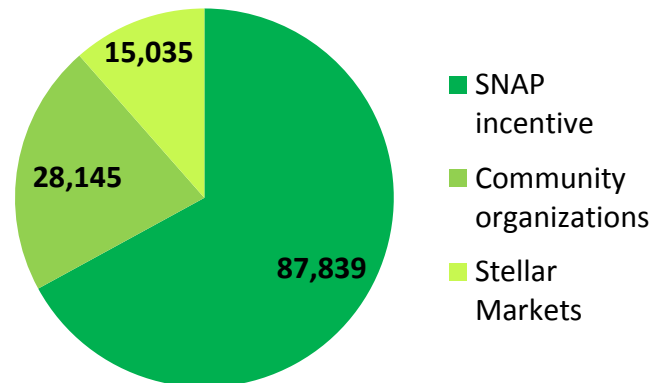
The Health Bucks program, currently funded by both the NYC Health Resources Administration and the Health Department, was launched in 2005. “Health Bucks” are \$2 coupons redeemable for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers’ markets.

Health Bucks are distributed in a variety of ways: as a SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps) incentive, through community-based organizations, and at Stellar Farmers’ Markets workshops.

The number of participating Health Bucks markets has increased every year



More than 130,000 Health Bucks were distributed in 2011

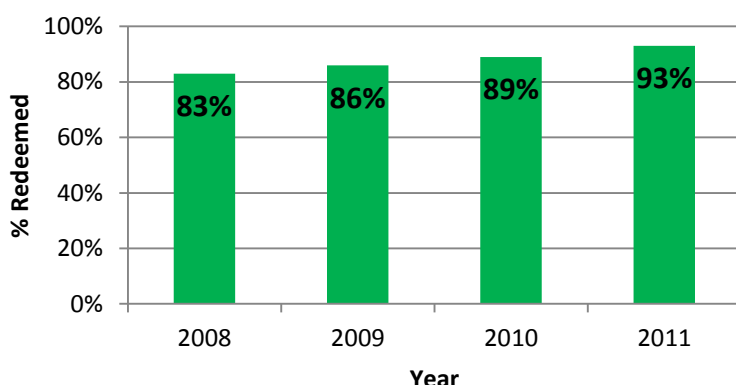


- In just four years, the number of farmers’ markets participating in Health Bucks has grown by 57%, from 41 to 65 markets, benefiting 84 farmers (some of whom sell produce at multiple markets).

Health Bucks: The Largest City-Operated SNAP Incentive Program in the Nation

The majority of Health Bucks are distributed directly to consumers at farmers’ markets as a SNAP incentive. Participating markets dispense one Health Buck coupon for every \$5 SNAP beneficiaries spend using electronic benefits transfer (EBT)—thereby **increasing their purchasing power by 40%.**

Redemption rates of SNAP incentive Health Bucks have increased every year



The 2011 market season was the most successful to date:

- DOHMH distributed nearly 90,000 Health Bucks to SNAP beneficiaries at 65 markets, making it the largest city-operated SNAP incentive program in the country.
- Health Bucks used as an SNAP incentive had a 93% redemption rate, resulting in more fruits and vegetables consumed by SNAP beneficiaries and more money in the pockets of the region’s farmers.

DOHMH Equipped 34 Farmers' Markets to Accept EBT

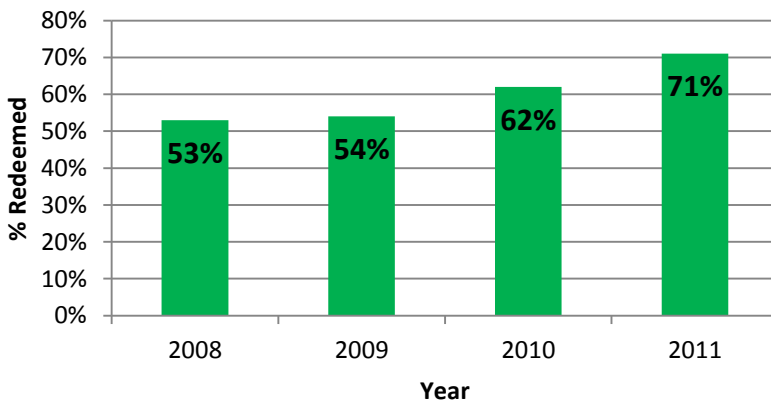
In the 2010 and 2011 market seasons, DOHMH used federal funding from the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant to ensure SNAP beneficiaries could access their benefits at markets:

- DOHMH distributed \$172,000 to hire 56 EBT terminal operators to accept and promote SNAP at 34 farmers' markets in high-need areas.
- Today, nearly 85% of the city's 125 farmers' markets accept EBT, and more than half of those (65) also accept Health Bucks.

Health Bucks Connects New Yorkers to Neighborhood Farmers' Markets

The NYC Health Department issues Health Bucks to community-based organizations in low-income neighborhoods, both to encourage more first-time shoppers to purchase produce from their local farmers' market and to support community efforts to improve health. These community groups distribute the coupons to their members as an incentive to attend nutrition workshops or health and fitness programs. This distribution method promotes the program to neighborhood residents who may not have otherwise learned of the initiative.

Redemption rates of Health Bucks distributed by community organizations have increased every year



- In 2011, the Health Department distributed more than 28,000 Health Bucks to over 150 community-based organizations in high-poverty areas.
- Redemption rates have steadily increased since the program's inception and topped 70% in 2011.

The Added Value of Health Bucks

One participating community organization, The Harlem Family Center, attested to the benefits of Health Bucks, noting that "patients state they are eating more variety of vegetables, naming arugula and bok choy as favorites. Health Bucks has made it possible for our patients to try new vegetables."



Farmers' Markets that Provided Health Bucks Doubled Their EBT Sales

Health Bucks increase the use of EBT and make markets more profitable. Average daily EBT sales more than doubled, from \$237 to \$597, after markets began providing Health Bucks as a SNAP incentive, according to a 2010 evaluation using data from Greenmarket, the largest outdoor urban farmers' market network in the country. Even when controlling for income level of the neighborhood where the market was located and for the year in which data were collected, Health Bucks markets averaged \$170 more in daily EBT sales than non-Health Bucks markets.

Average daily EBT sales at markets before and after introduction of Health Bucks

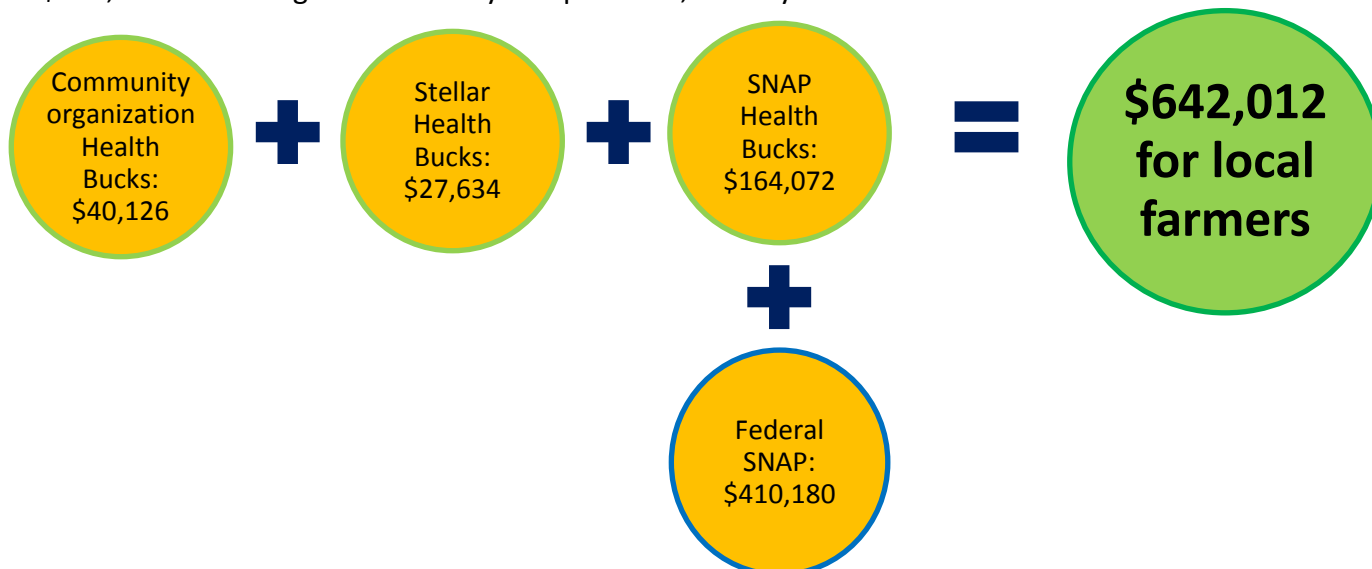
	Before	After
Market A	\$340.67	\$1,607.88
Market B	\$18.00	\$66.53
Market C	\$48.33	\$213.62
Market D	\$190.17	\$448.71

Values are mean EBT sales per market day. All Greenmarkets that met the criteria of accepting EBT both before and after Health Bucks were introduced were included in the study.



Health Bucks Added \$642,012 in Revenue for Farmers in One Market Season

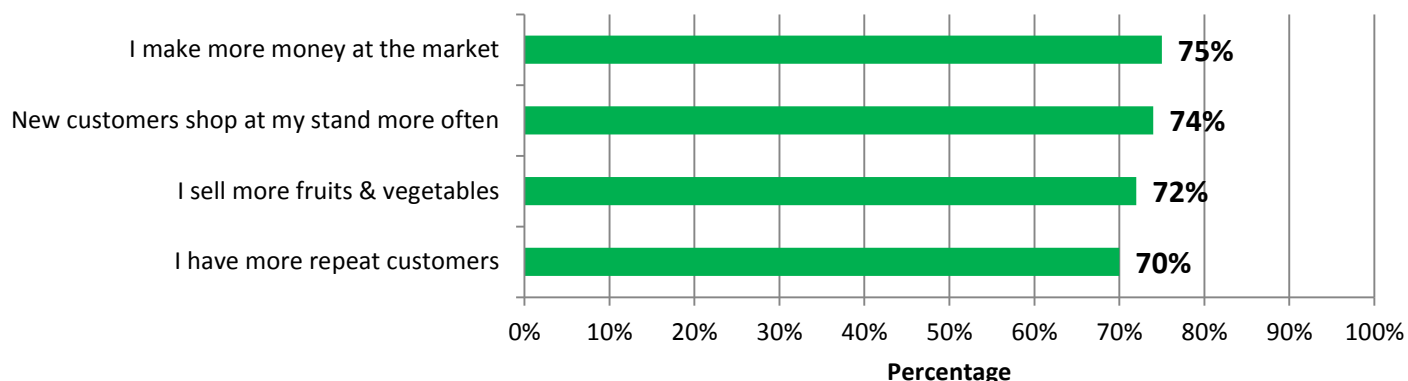
High redemption rates mean more fruits and vegetables for low-income consumers *and* additional revenue for local farmers. In 2011, more than 115,000 Health Bucks (distributed through community-based organizations, at Stellar Farmers' Markets, and as SNAP incentives) were redeemed. The monetary value of the redeemed coupons, plus the federal SNAP funds garnered from Health Bucks used as SNAP incentives, generated more than \$642,000 for the regional economy and put fresh, healthy food onto the dinner tables of New Yorkers.



In a 2011 analysis of 84 participating Health Bucks farmers, per farmer income from Health Bucks averaged \$2,760

Farmers Agree: Health Bucks Attracts Customers and Benefit the Bottom Line

% of Farmers Who Strongly/Somewhat Agree that "Because of Health Bucks..."



Data from an evaluation commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and conducted by Abt Associates: Abt Associates Inc. Data Analysis Summary: Evaluation of Childhood Obesity Prevention and Control Initiative: NYC Health Bucks. Contract No. 200-2008-27954. Task Order No. 2009-LB-14. May 6, 2011.

The Voice of a Farmer

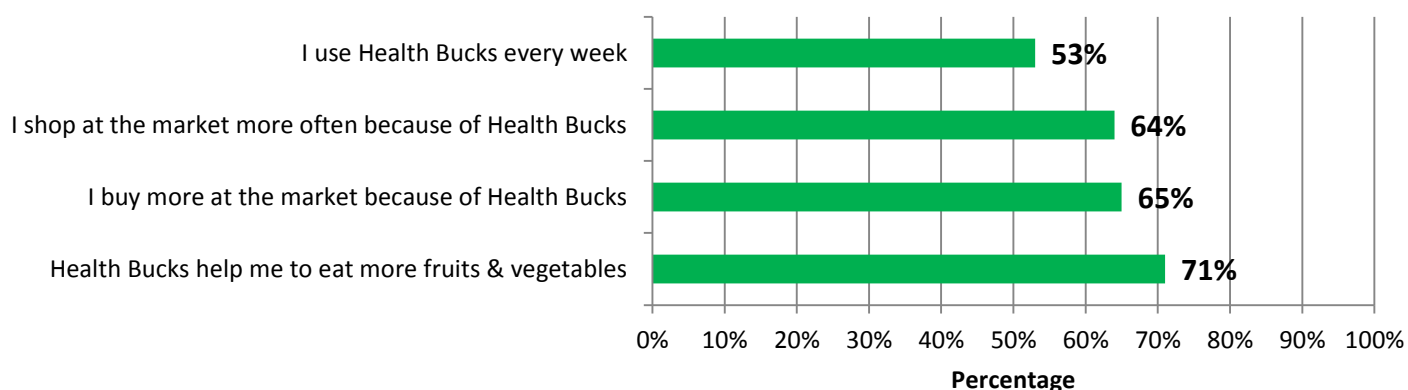
"If I don't collect Health Bucks, I'm not going to sell my produce."

—Danny Morgiewicz, Morgiewicz Farms, Goshen, NY



Consumers Agree: Health Bucks Encourages Healthy Eating

% of Health Bucks Consumers Who Strongly/Somewhat Agree



Data from an evaluation commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and conducted by Abt Associates: Abt Associates Inc. Data Analysis Summary: Evaluation of Childhood Obesity Prevention and Control Initiative: NYC Health Bucks. Contract No. 200-2008-27954. Task Order No. 2009-LB-14. May 6, 2011.

Stellar Farmers' Markets

In 2009 the NYC Health Department, in collaboration with the New York State Health Department's *Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables* program, launched the nation's only SNAP-Ed-funded nutrition education program at farmers' markets: Stellar Farmers' Markets.

Stellar Farmers' Markets provides SNAP-eligible New Yorkers with the knowledge, skills, and resources for a healthier diet. The program offers practical, cost-effective tips for eating more fruits and vegetables through onsite nutrition education and cooking demonstrations using produce purchased that day at the market. The program addresses the barriers that can prevent individuals from shopping at farmers' markets, by exposing participants to a wide variety of locally grown produce and by providing the information and know-how to prepare affordable meals using this produce.

All Stellar Farmers' Markets locations accept Health Bucks and SNAP benefits, and all participants in Stellar Farmers' Markets cooking demos and nutrition workshops receive a Health Buck and/or free cooking equipment and are encouraged to use their SNAP benefits at the market to increase their purchasing power to prepare healthy meals.



Stellar Snapshot 2011

- ✓ Conducted more than **1,300** nutrition workshops and cooking demonstrations at **18** markets, reaching more than **37,000** people
- ✓ Distributed Health Bucks to more than **15,000** workshop participants—with **92%** redeemed

The Voice of a Consumer...

"By having the opportunity to taste your dishes first, I wasn't afraid to then buy the ingredients at the farmer's market...if not for your great workshops, I wouldn't have experimented with so many new ingredients and recipes. Your Health Bucks have provided the incentive, so I no longer have an excuse not to eat healthy. Without the Health Bucks, I would still be buying cheap junk food...Health Bucks have made all the difference, especially in this tight economy, for me to stretch my food dollar. I look forward to your workshops every week, because you have made food shopping and cooking fun."

—Maria Ginsberg, 175th Street Greenmarket, New York, NY



For more information about New York City's farmers' markets initiatives, visit nyc.gov/health/farmersmarkets, email farmersmarkets@health.nyc.gov, or call 311.