

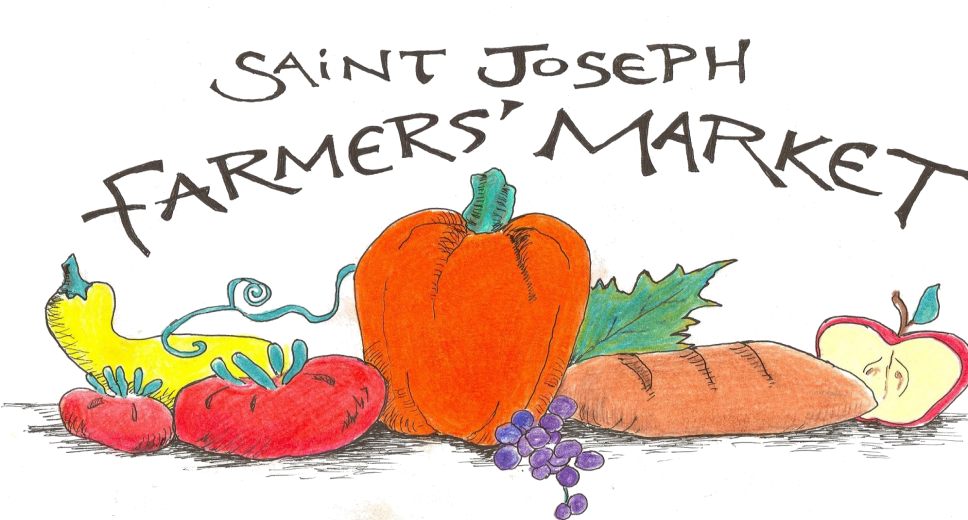
FARM TO FORK FOR ALL: FARMERS MARKETS, SNAP AND FOOD PRIVILEGE

Katie Spoden • College of Saint Benedict and St. John's University Environmental Studies Department • Advisors: Dr. Troy Knight and Dr. Diane Veale Jones

RESEARCH QUESTION: Why should farmers markets accept SNAP benefits in the form of EBT?

INTRODUCTION

The rise in farmers markets over the last twenty years can be attributed to the popularity of the local foods movement spurred by a greater emphasis on nutritious and environmentally friendly foods from outreach campaigns from schools, nonprofits, health care and government institutions. However, there are significant economic and social barriers preventing many individuals from eating healthfully. Providing opportunities for farmers markets to accept Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), the means of payment for individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is **one** effective solution for removing an economic barrier for farmers' market customers. This strategy is being proposed at the St. Joseph Farmers Market, as one element of a holistic strategy that incorporates the proper payment structure, transportation opportunities, public outreach to the community and education for vendors.



ORIGINAL RESEARCH

To show how farmers markets can improve access to healthy eating, I have created a strategy for the St. Joseph Farmers Market by consulting academic research, case studies of farmers markets that accept EBT, and mainly, conversations with members of the St. Joseph community. A holistic strategy is necessary for farmers markets to become agents of change and ensure that their farmers market makes healthy eating an option for the entire community of St. Joseph, Minnesota, regardless of income.

ST. JOSEPH FARMERS MARKET: A FOUR-PRONGED APPROACH TO A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

DEMAND: INCLUSION OF TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC

- **46 households** in St. Joseph (or roughly 3 percent) participate in SNAP
- **32.5 percent** of St. Joseph households have an income that could qualify for some form of food assistance

ACCESSIBILITY: ANALYSIS OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- No public transportation
- **Bus stop and carpools** for potential new customers based on community knowledge and partnerships

TECHNOLOGY: ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER INFRASTRUCTURE

- A **free centrally located point-of-sale machine** capable of accepting EBT, paid for from state and federal grants

EDUCATION: PUBLIC OUTREACH TO CONSUMERS

- **Partnerships** with the St. Joe Community Meal, Catholic Charities, St. Joseph Food Shelf and CSB Community Kitchen

EDUCATION: VENDOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Vendors receive **100 percent of earnings** from EBT
- All edible products can be bought with EBT, including cooking oils

METHODS

Based on the literature, many sources establish that farmers markets can serve as key actors in providing solutions for food insecurity due to farmers markets' environmental, economic, and social values that support holistic community development. The United States Department of Agriculture, the main institution governing farmers markets, has implemented substantial changes in how the **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)** is administered in order to take advantage of the services already being provided to communities by local farmers. In 2008, the Food Stamp Program became SNAP in order to connote a greater priority on nutrition for participating families. With this change came the implementation of **ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT)**. This new debit card-like form of payment given to families allowed for greater convenience and greater oversight over how benefits are spent. The drive for these changes in nutrition was fueled by a growing movement to acknowledge **FOOD PRIVILEGE**. This is the belief that advantages are typically given to higher-income individuals who have greater opportunity to eat healthy without the barriers of affordability, accessibility, and availability. The larger social context of food privilege is the ever-present **OBESITY-POVERTY PARADOX**. This paradox represents the correlation between low income individuals and obesity-related disease due to poorer eating habits based on lack of availability and affordability of healthy foods. It is important to note that these health concerns go beyond the individual level. Health care costs affect all taxpayers, whether they eat healthfully or not. Guaranteeing that everyone has a spot at the community table guarantees a healthier, stronger and more sustainable St. Joseph and when the proper accessibility solutions are put universally into place, a healthier, stronger and more sustainable United States with farmers markets as a key agent of change.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Thank you to Danielle Taylor of the St. Joseph Farmers Market for her support and collaboration