



## **Increasing Access and Collaboration at Maryland Farmers' Markets: Implementing a New EBT Food Desert Project & Supporting Existing EBT Projects through the Eat Fresh MD Network**

USDA has awarded a Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant to Future Harvest CASA to implement a project to expand food access at farmers' markets in Maryland food deserts and increase collaboration amongst markets accepting federal nutrition program benefits statewide. This project has two main goals: 1.) to increase access to local produce in Maryland by supporting the establishment of 6 new Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) programs in farmers markets located in food deserts and 2.) the expansion of existing EBT projects through the Eat Fresh Maryland network. The combination of these will not only aid in pooling resources to lower the costs of planning for, implementing, and running EBT programs at market but will also increase revenues for producers.

Piloted in the 2011 market season, the Eat Fresh Maryland Network is a program of the Crossroads Community Food Network based in Takoma Park. It is a public-private partnership currently comprised of more than 20 stakeholders who are committed to increasing access to local food for all Marylanders.

In 2012, Future Harvest CASA and the Crossroads Community Food Network will work to support the establishment of 6 new EBT programs at Maryland farmers markets in food deserts as well as continue to strengthen collaboration and joint marketing efforts.

If you are a market manager seeking to begin accepting or expand redemption of federal nutrition benefits to increase your customer base and revenue for your producers, please consider participating in this exciting new FMPP project. There are many ways to get involved:

- *If your market is in a food desert and you want to start an EBT program:* your market qualifies to be one of the 6 new EBT programs supported by this grant.
- *If your market is not in food desert and you want to start an EBT program:* you can join the Eat Fresh Maryland Network and gain access to in-person workshops, marketing materials, best practices, and support to get your program up and running .
- *If your market has an EBT program already:* you can join the Eat Fresh Maryland Network and utilize marketing materials, workshops, and support to strengthen and grow your established program.

This project aims to create a replicable model for nationwide use – join us and help Maryland be a national leader in farmers' markets innovations!

For more information, contact: [crossroadsmarket@gmail.com](mailto:crossroadsmarket@gmail.com) or (301) 891-7244  
<http://eatfreshmd.wordpress.com/>