



200 North Spring Street
City Hall
M125
Los Angeles, CA 90012
goodfoodla.org

February 9, 2016

Councilwoman Nury Martinez, Chair - Entertainment and Facilities Committee
200 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Item 8: Motion (Huizar-Martinez 15-1511) instructing the Department of Public Works, with the assistance of the City Attorney to report of the feasibility of requiring that all Certified Farmers' Markets within the City of Los Angeles accept Electronic Benefit Transfer cards.

Dear Councilmember Martinez,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC), I write in support of Item 8 (Council File #15-1511), which seeks to establish EBT access at our City's farmers markets. We believe this motion is stepping in the right direction of increasing fresh food access to some of our City's most vulnerable residents, while also supporting the vibrancy of our local farmers markets.

LAFPC is a collective impact initiative, representing over 1,000 organizations, working to make Southern California a Good Food region for everyone—where food is healthy, affordable, fair and sustainable. Key objectives are to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly in disadvantaged communities; develop a thriving "Good Food" economy; and strengthen agricultural and environmental stewardship throughout the region. We convene a Farmers Markets for All Working Group made up of farmers, market managers, health and food security advocates, local residents and government representatives, that have worked together diligently to prioritize universal EBT access at all of our City's farmers markets.

Improving the accessibility and affordability of fresh food for residents of all income levels through farmers markets will guarantee that all Angelenos have access to good nutrition, increase a markets customer base, and economically support our local farmers. We see this policy as a "win-win" for all, where EBT sales at a farmers market will not only help that market thrive, but will support the local economy of the surrounding community.

We are here as a resource to answer any questions regarding EBT access at farmers markets and look forward to collaborating with Bureau of Street Services and City Attorney to assist in a clear, well-thought through report back.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Fox". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Clare Fox
Executive Director
Los Angeles Food Policy Council

CC:

Councilmember Paul Krekorian
Councilmember Joe Buscaino
Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell
Councilmember David Ryu

WHY EBT AT FARMERS' MARKETS?



1

NUTRITION FOR ALL

Farmers markets play an important role in making fresh healthy produce available to community members of all incomes. CalFresh benefits are issued electronically via EBT; increasing the availability of EBT equipment would improve farmers markets ability to serve CalFresh participants.

2

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Implementing EBT ensures that CalFresh recipients have access to the nutritious food available at farmers' markets while improving the income of local farm vendors. EBT sales at a farmers' market have not only helped many markets thrive, but also stimulate the local economy of that community. For every \$5 of CalFresh sales spent, up to \$9 is generated in local economic activity.

3

NEW CUSTOMERS

EBT helps with the sustainability of a farmers market. The implementation of EBT can attract new customers and is a significant factor in the longer term viability and success of a farmers market. Additionally, when Market Match, a healthy food incentive program which matches customers' federal nutrition assistance benefits, like CalFresh and WIC, is utilized, there is a reported increased CalFresh spending of 15% to 40%.

4

FEDERAL SUPPORT

It is a USDA priority to implement CalFresh at farmers markets. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has a fundamental interest in ensuring that CalFresh households have access to the fresh, nutritious foods available at farmers markets.

5

IT'S A WIN/WIN

Adopting the EBT technology to accept CalFresh benefits can help markets tap into a larger customer base by providing an easy and convenient way for recipients to redeem their CalFresh benefits on eligible food items. For vendors selling eligible food items, the potential for increased sales from CalFresh redemptions can be substantial.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1 WHAT IS EBT?

EBT is an “electronic benefits transfer,” an electronic system in which CalFresh benefits can be accessed. CalFresh is California’s name for the program formally known as food stamps and nationally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

2 HOW DOES EBT AT A FARMERS MARKET WORK?

EBT users can swipe their card at a Point of Sale (POS) terminal at a market. Recipients can then purchase eligible food products from market farmers and vendors. Eligible food products include: fruits and vegetables, breads, cereals, meats, fish, poultry, and dairy products.

3 DOES EACH VENDOR AT A FARMERS MARKET HAVE A POS?

No, there is just one POS terminal at a farmers market. It is operated by the farmers market manager or appropriate staff. Market signage “We Accept EBT” directs EBT cardholders to the location of the POS device.

4 IF THERE’S ONE TERMINAL AND EACH VENDOR DOES NOT HAVE AN EBT MACHINE, HOW DOES THE CUSTOMER BUY THEIR PRODUCE FROM A SPECIFIC VENDOR?

When at the EBT POS, the market manager/staff person asks the recipient how much of his/her food or cash benefits they would like to use. Then the EBT card is swiped, and the amount is debited from the balance stored on the card. (This amount is transferred from the recipient’s account to the market or association bank account.) The staff person then issues “scrip” in the amount requested by the customer. Scrip can be either tokens or paper. This is a representation of the EBT money debited, one for one. The recipient can use the scrip with vendors selling eligible food. At the end of the market day, the vendors trade the scrip for cash, checks, or receipts for future payment from the market operator.

6 WHAT IS THE COST OF POS DEVICE?

The POS devices are state-provided and FREE to FNS-authorized farmers markets, direct marketing and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). For technical assistance and to obtain a free POS device, contact Dianne Padilla-Bates at the CA Department of Social Services: Dianne.padilla-bates@dss.ca.gov or call 916-654-1396.

7 DOES A FARMERS MARKET NEED TO BE A CERTIFIED FARMERS MARKET TO ACCEPT EBT? No.

9 DO THE POINT OF SALE (POS) MACHINES NEED ELECTRICITY AND/OR LAND LINE?

No, they are wireless.

10 HOW CAN A MARKET APPLY TO ACCEPT EBT?

The USDA FNS authorization is easy. Markets can fill out an on-line application: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/store-farmers-market-application>.

Once the farmers market has been approved, the state of California has several websites where the farmers market or direct farmer’s location will be identified as accepting EBT. To locate a farmers market, visit: www.ebt.ca.gov.

The State has also linked the Ecology Center’s farmers’ market finder to our EBT website to provide our clients with farmers’ markets that accept EBT. To download a EBT posters: <http://www.ebtproject.ca.gov/CommercialInformation/poster.s.html>

The Ecology Center provides a list of farmers markets that accept EBT. They can also assist with the FNS application, POS procurement, provide materials, signage, CalFresh EBT scrip assistance and bookkeeping tools, all free of charge. For more information, email ebt@ecologycenter.org or call 415-763-5856.

Sources

1. Feasibility of Implementing Electronic Benefit Transfer Systems in Farmers’ Markets <http://www.fns.usda.gov/multimedia/Kohl--Feasibility.pdf>
2. SNAP at Farmers Markets: A How-To Handbook <http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SNAPat%20Farmers%20Markets%20Handbook.pdf>
3. Ecology Center: http://ecologycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Simple-Guide_Reduced_12.09.2014.pdf
4. USDA Economic Service Report (2010)
5. Hunger Action Los Angeles (HALA)