

Bridging the Gap

Connecting Michigan Families with Local Food and Farmers

2013 SNAP Bridge Card Usage at Michigan Farmers Markets



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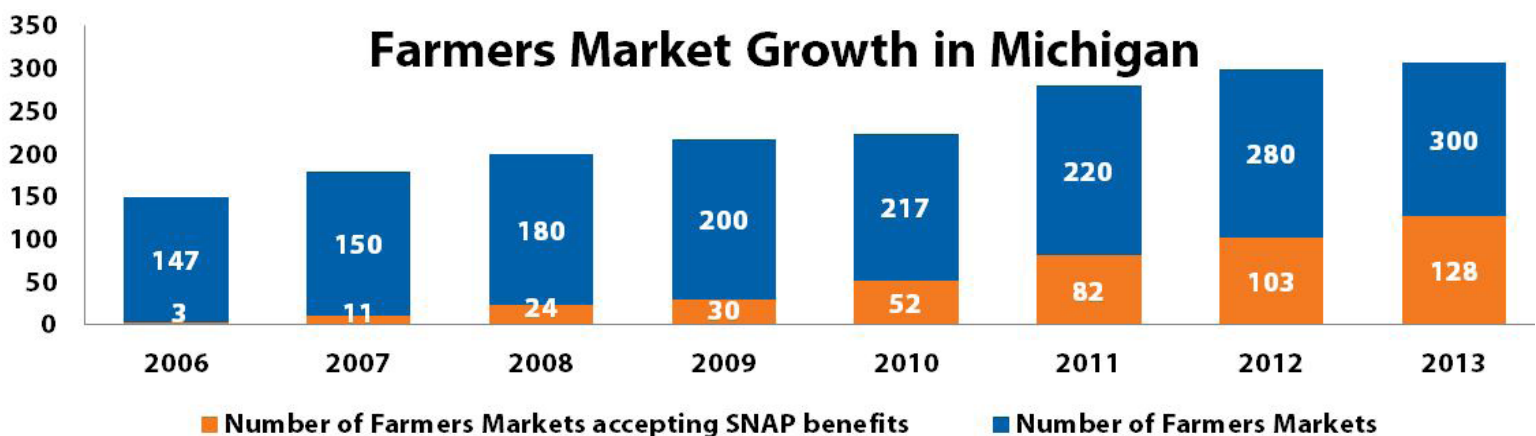


Michigan ranks 2nd nationally in the number of farmers markets that accept SNAP.

In 2006, only three farmers markets here in Michigan accepted SNAP Bridge Cards. In 2013, 128 farmers markets across the state welcomed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits via the Michigan Bridge Card as payment for fresh, healthy, locally grown foods. This effort, coordinated and supported by the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA), during 2013 resulted in:

- More than 42,000 SNAP Bridge Card transactions worth more than \$1.2 million dollars
- Improved access to fresh Michigan foods for lower income Michigan families
- Increased revenue for Michigan farmers

The work engaged hundreds of people across the state and contributed to goals of the Michigan Good Food Charter that Michigan farmers will supply 20% of all Michigan institutional, retailer and consumer food purchases and 80% of Michigan residents (twice the current level) will have easy access to affordable, fresh, healthy food, 20% of which is from Michigan sources by 2020. This report, based on a survey conducted by MIFMA, provides key statistics and illustrations of both accomplishments and challenges to farmers markets' acceptance of SNAP benefits.



How many SNAP Bridge Card transactions occurred at farmers markets during 2013?

Eighty-four farmers markets reported 42,435 SNAP Bridge Card transactions during 2013. One market accounted for 14,496 or 34% of all the reported transactions. There were 544 transactions per market on average and a median of 124 transactions per market.

What does that mean in dollars?

During 2013, one hundred eleven Michigan farmers markets reported \$1,207,522 in SNAP Bridge Card sales. SNAP sales at individual markets ranged from \$0 in sales to \$296,404. Mean sales per market were \$10,977 and median sales were \$2,102.

How did 2013 sales compare to the past?

Overall, SNAP sales reported by farmers markets were up in 2013 from 2012 by about 10 percent. This follows the trend of annual sales increases since 2009, when MIFMA first conducted this survey. The average dollar amount per transaction decreased from \$21 in 2012 to \$16 in 2013, which is about the same level as in 2010 and 2011. The mean number of transactions per market at 544 compared to 734 in 2012.

Of the farmers markets that compared 2013 sales to 2012 sales, 45% reported that SNAP sales had increased, 39% reported that SNAP sales had decreased and 14% reported steady SNAP sales or lack of data to compare sales. Respondents speculated on many possible reasons for SNAP sales increases including more/better marketing efforts, more customers, better technology support/systems, increased word of mouth, more/better vendors, effective and welcoming staff members, increased resources, longer season, more/different sites, better weather, more crops, transportation to market and participating in Double Up Food Bucks. Those who reported sales declines also attributed the declines to many possible causes: increased competition from other markets, inadequate marketing activity, lack of grant funding to support program implementation, technology problems, weather, lower SNAP funding, construction and unknown reasons.

Table 1, SNAP at Farmers Markets by the Numbers, displays many quantitative indicators that describe and measure progress over five years as Michigan farmers markets have taken on SNAP Bridge Card acceptance.

How did SNAP Bridge Card sales work at farmers markets?

For 2013, seventy-two percent of markets reported using an alternative redemption system such as market scrip or tokens to assist their vendors in accepting SNAP Bridge Card payments. Use of an alternative redemption system means that SNAP customers scan their Michigan Bridge Cards at a central point-of-sale device to purchase tokens or paper scrip. They spend the tokens or paper scrip in the market to purchase eligible foods from vendors. The vendors then submit the tokens or paper scrip to the market for reimbursement.

What technology did farmers markets use for SNAP Bridge Card sales?

During 2013, most markets used a central point-of-sale device plus scrip or tokens to facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales, with 48% using a hard-wired device and 42% a wireless device. In 8% of markets, each farmer/vendor had his or her own i-device (an i-Pod or i-Phone), and in 2% of markets, each vendor had his or her own wireless point-of-sale device.

Where were the farmers markets that welcomed SNAP Bridge Card sales?

In 2013, the markets that reported accepting SNAP payments were located in 49 of Michigan's 83 counties (59%) with one to 12 participating markets located in each county. SNAP sales varied greatly from county to county, with greater sales where population is higher.



How many weeks of the year could SNAP Bridge Card users shop at Michigan farmers markets?

The number of weeks during 2013 in which markets accepted SNAP Bridge Cards ranged from a low of four weeks to all year long – 52 weeks. The average was 24 weeks, with many of the state’s seasonal markets open from May or June through October.

How many SNAP customers were new to farmers market shopping?

The 74 markets that reported the number of 2013 first-time SNAP Bridge Card customers counted 10,994 first-time users. The range was from 0 to 2,934 new SNAP customers per market.

What did farmers markets think about accepting SNAP Bridge Card benefits?

Most markets like SNAP – a lot! When asked to rate their experience in 2013 with the SNAP Bridge Card program, 79% of the 111 respondents for this item rated their experience positive or very positive, 14% rated it neutral and only 8% rated it negative.

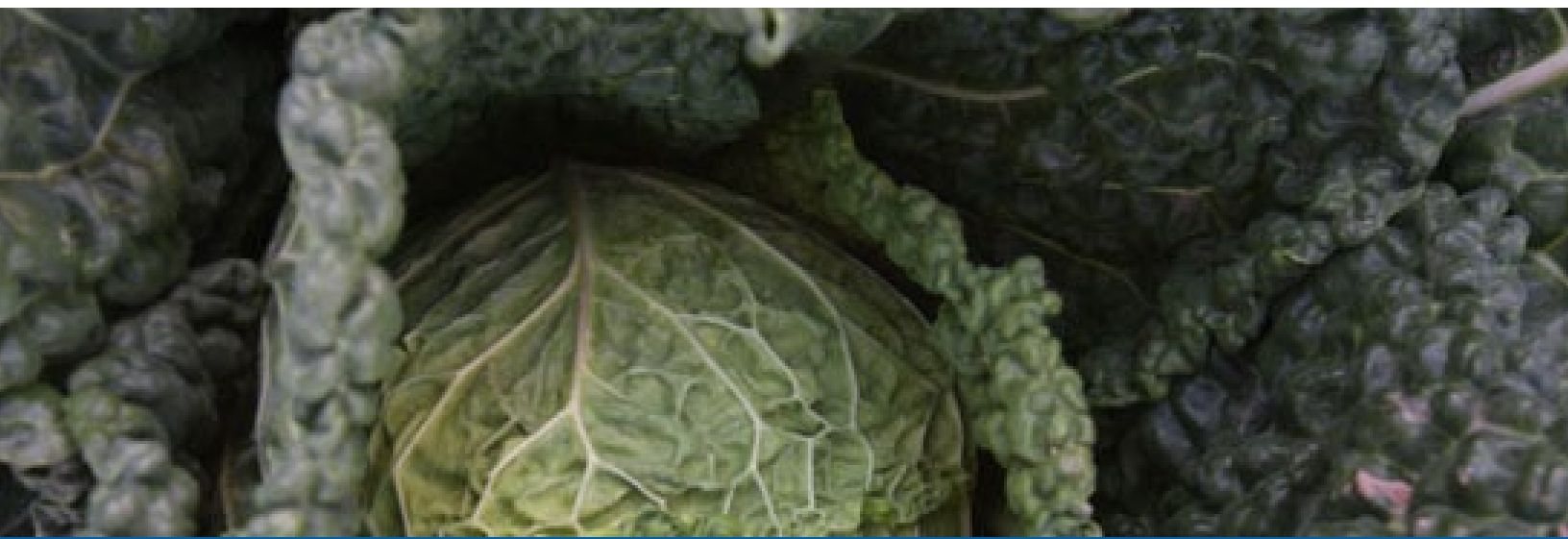
Who facilitated SNAP programs at farmers markets?

Both paid and volunteer staff members made it possible for farmers markets to welcome SNAP Bridge Card customers during 2013. In 71% of markets, the person primarily responsible for accepting food assistance benefits at their market was paid, while in the remaining 29%, a volunteer was primarily responsible. One hundred twelve markets reported a total of 183 paid and 172 volunteer staff members contributing 3,960 paid hours and 1,405 volunteer hours – 5,365 hours each month.

At \$22.55 per hour, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013 estimated value of volunteer time in the U.S., those 1,405 volunteer hours are worth \$31,682 per month. With the average market season of 24 weeks or about six months, a conservative estimate of the value of volunteer time to facilitate SNAP Bridge Card acceptance at Michigan farmers markets during 2013 is \$190,096. Volunteers are an essential part of the mix even for the markets that pay the primary person. These volunteers come from AmeriCorps VISTA, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), churches, vendors and elsewhere. Such heavy use of volunteers underlines the importance of markets having uniform and written procedures available for all to follow and adequate training for each person involved.

“The Partnership and all of the resources, tools and connections it offers have been instrumental in the establishment and success of our market’s food assistance programs. Without MIFMA, we would have had no idea where to even start, let alone how to successfully implement these programs. We are so grateful and so proud to be a MIFMA member!”

- Emily Beutel, Texas Township Farmers’ Market



Why does facilitating SNAP acceptance at farmers markets take so much time?

For a farmers market to accept SNAP Bridge Card payments, one or more person must learn to operate and troubleshoot a point-of-sale device, staff that device during each market day, explain to first-time users how the system works, train vendors on how to use the system, secure and manage market scrip or tokens, track each day's sales, reimburse vendors for their SNAP sales, develop and conduct an effective outreach program to let SNAP customers know that they are welcome, monitor third party processor charges, and raise money to support their work year after year. Many markets are using pencil-and-paper recordkeeping systems. Some of the markets find that once they get past start-up challenges, they can find ways to be more efficient.

What other forms of payment did farmers markets accept?

Most farmers markets in Michigan accepted several forms of payment beyond cash and checks during 2013. In addition to SNAP Bridge Cards, WIC Project FRESH was most commonly accepted at 79%. Tied for second were Market FRESH (formerly Senior Project FRESH) and Double Up Food Bucks at 77%. Nearly half (46%) of markets reported accepting credit cards and 43% reported accepting debit cards. Finally, 14% of markets reported accepting WIC Cash Value Benefits and Summer EBT for Children, via a Kent County pilot project. Other forms of payment reported included health department/Prescriptions for Health, Hoophouses for Health, market-issued coupons/gift certificates, Wise Women (a Michigan Department of Community Health program), Downtown Dollars, hospital ID and health reward cards, tribal elder coupons and children's program coupons.



What difference did Double Up Food Bucks make?

The Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) incentive program matched SNAP purchases up to \$20 per day at participating farmers markets. Of the markets responding to this survey, 77% participated in DUFb, and they reported a very positive experience. Many markets credited DUFb as a key factor in their increased 2013 SNAP sales and acknowledged the DUFb program's assistance with outreach. The average dollar amount for each consumer transaction at farmers markets that accept DUFb was \$16, nearly the same as the \$15 average consumer transaction at markets not accepting DUFb.

What outreach methods were most effective for markets to reach families that use SNAP?

Markets ranked their five most effective outreach strategies during 2013 as: 1) word of mouth, 2) working with community partners, 3) signs and banners, 4) flyers and posters and 5) newspapers. Ranked lower were: 6) social media, 7) market newsletter, 8) educational events at market, 9) website and 10) radio. Respondents also listed new or innovative outreach strategies that they had tried during 2013, including direct mailings, cross-marketing with other food assistance programs, joint advertising with other nearby farmers markets, and hosting cooking demonstrations or other educational events.



Word of mouth gains in importance as markets develop a history with SNAP and it is no longer a new program. It is important to understand that markets cannot generate word of mouth directly or automatically. It is an outcome resulting from an effective combination of outreach methods PLUS customers' positive experiences using their SNAP benefits at that farmers market. Community partners can help tremendously in generating word of mouth. Many markets have found community partners who are already connected to families who use SNAP. When respondents were asked to identify and list their new or innovative outreach strategies, the range and diversity of community partners were impressive and comprised by far the largest category of strategies.

Signs, banners, posters and flyers provide important on-the-spot reminders, with their design, distribution and placement critical factors in determining their effectiveness. Newspapers may provide opportunities for feature articles and even photo coverage in addition to ads. Social media is both affordable and growing in use; however, there was little mention of it in the open-ended question about outreach strategies. Newspapers and social media are likely to reach different parts of the SNAP target market, so it makes sense for markets to use both.



What do farmers market representatives still want to learn about managing food assistance programs?

When respondents were asked what topics they would like MIFMA to help them explore related to food assistance programs, many provided suggestions. Outreach and marketing education and assistance requests comprised the largest category of responses, with a range of specific requests. Other requests touched on aspects of recordkeeping, assisting and welcoming customers, technology, legalities and other topics. A number of respondents prefer hearing from and exchanging ideas and best practices with other farmers market representatives.

How did we gather the information in this report?

Every year since 2009, the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) has surveyed all the Michigan farmers markets that accept SNAP Bridge Card payments. The rate of survey completion and return is very good, but not 100%. For 2013, full or partial responses were received from 111 farmers markets and/or groups that manage farmers markets. Most of the responses represented a single market each, but six responses represented two markets each and one represented three markets. The markets/associations that provided full or partial responses are listed in Table 2. Respondents represented about 93% of the Michigan farmers markets that accepted SNAP Bridge Card payment during 2013. Some of the markets that responded were unable or unwilling to respond to all the survey questions. Some markets do an amazing job documenting their SNAP Bridge Card sales; others have not yet developed a system that is effective and accurate. Therefore, the numbers reported here are conservative and do not include all the activity in the state. For example, although the dollar amount of SNAP sales reported here is based on reports from 110 respondents and should be quite accurate, only 84 of those respondents reported the number of SNAP transactions, so that figure under-represents the actual metric.

"I just want to thank MIFMA for everything you have done. You make our market more vibrant with your support, your programs, and with your commitment to providing fair access to local, healthy food. THANK YOU!"

-Sara DeWitt, Ann Arbor Farmers Market

Michigan farmers markets are extremely diverse. For many of the indicators included in the report, means, medians and ranges are included in an attempt to show this diversity. It is nearly impossible to portray the "typical" farmers market experience with SNAP; this report attempts to provide a sense of the diversity and to identify some common themes.

What does all this mean?

Farmers markets in Michigan are national leaders in their acceptance of SNAP benefits and they have worked hard for their leadership position. As the data show, markets continue to grow the program, with benefits to Michigan families, farmers and communities. But significant challenges exist:

- Technology is maturing but continues to be problematic for some markets, especially those in more rural areas. It can be very expensive, it may not be reliable, and most markets represent very small accounts and may find it difficult to get good service. Reliable technology is essential, not only to process customer purchases, but also to facilitate the required recordkeeping.
- Accepting SNAP Bridge Card payments can be a fairly complex program to provide – especially when tasks are shared across a volunteer staff and in markets that manage multiple food assistance programs, each with its own requirements and system. Although some markets enjoy stability in their manager and other helpers, many others are relatively new as markets, not just new to SNAP, and experience many staffing changes.
- There is no question that accepting SNAP costs markets money, money that is extremely difficult for them to find. Most farmers markets in Michigan operate as non-profits or as public entities, and many are operated entirely by volunteers. Few farmers markets in Michigan are organized in a way that provides the market organization a benefit as market sales rise. As SNAP sales increase at farmers markets, the markets attract more customers, and the vendors experience more profits. But, the market management has more work to do and often no additional resources to do it. It is important to examine ways in which the market as a whole can share in its vendors' financial success.
- The educational support and coordination that MIFMA provides is also costly, requiring that funds be raised to continue it. Respondents' comments illustrate how important MIFMA's leadership has been and will be in the future. Training, one-on-one mentoring, seeking funds, developing materials, creating statewide visibility and speaking on behalf of farmers markets are just a few of the key roles that MIFMA has played to support SNAP in farmers markets.

The paradox, of course, is that the more successful SNAP purchasing at farmers markets becomes, the greater the cost to the markets and to MIFMA in finding the time and dollars to support it. Start-up grants won't do the trick; sustainable support is needed to continue and expand this important program.

Table 1: SNAP at Farmers Markets by the Numbers

| Indicator | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Farmers markets accepting SNAP Bridge Cards | 26 | 49 | 77 | 95 | 128 |
| Survey responses | 26 | 48 | 55 | 90 | 111 |
| Number of counties represented by responding markets | 12 | 20 | 27 | 34 | 49 |
| Markets Accepting SNAP for the first time | 6 | 21 | 31 | 27 | 26 |
| Year round markets | 6 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| SNAP sales at Michigan farmers markets | \$297,078 | \$705,969 | \$898,194 | \$1,096,590 | \$1,207,522 |
| SNAP sales at first year markets | \$32,488 | \$35,645 | \$50,030 | \$59,477 | \$58,534 |
| Percent of SNAP sales at first year markets | 11% | 5% | 2% | 5% | 5% |
| Range of SNAP sales per market | \$50 - \$100,000 | \$50 - \$246,791 | \$17 - \$327,674 | 0 - \$323,682 | 0-\$296,404 |
| Average SNAP sales per market | \$12,378 | \$17,219 | \$11,665 | \$12,593 | \$10,977 |
| Median SNAP sales per market | \$3,334 | \$1,146 | \$1,713 | \$1,815 | \$2,102 |
| Average SNAP sales at first year markets | \$5,4145 | \$2,228 | \$1,614 | \$2,203 | \$2,251 |
| Average SNAP sales at experienced markets | \$13,229 | \$23,940 | \$21,632 | \$16,462 | \$13,678 |
| Markets reporting a decrease in SNAP sales from previous year | 0 | 3 | 3 | 16 | 39% |
| Total SNAP transactions | 7,335 | 22,560 | 51,816 | 51,399 | 42,540 |
| Range of number of transactions per market | 33 - 4,175 | 2 - 11,816 | 3 - 16,160 | 0 - 15,953 | 0 - 14,496 |
| Average number of transactions per market | 489 | 683 | 1,080 | 734 | 544 |
| Average number of SNAP transactions at first-year markets | 136 | 134 | 160 | 136 | 151 |
| Average number of SNAP transactions at experienced markets | 617 | 1,149 | 1,631 | 762 | 698 |
| Average SNAP consumer transaction | \$18 | \$16 | \$16 | \$21 | \$16 |
| Average SNAP consumer transaction at first-year markets | \$16 | \$20 | \$17 | \$18 | \$15 |
| Average SNAP consumer transaction at experienced markets | \$18 | \$14 | \$16 | \$22 | \$16 |



| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Average SNAP consumer transaction at markets participating in DUFB | | \$15 | \$16 | \$16 | \$16 |
| Average SNAP consumer transaction at markets not participating in DUFB | | \$17 | \$18 | \$20 | \$15 |
| Indicator | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
| Average number of eligible vendors/market | 31 | 22 | 27 | 24 | 26 |
| Percent of eligible vendors participating at responding markets | 86% | 95% | 87% | 91% | 95% |
| Total number of eligible vendors at responding markets | 517 | 913 | 1,405 | 1,792 | 2,584 |
| Range of number of eligible vendors/market | 10 - 100 | 2 - 125 | 5 - 120 | 2 - 132 | 2 - 100 |
| SNAP sales vendor reimbursement frequency | | | | | |
| Weekly | 58% | 43% | 38% | 29% | 30% |
| Every two weeks | 26% | 20% | 32% | 28% | 32% |
| Monthly | 16% | 17% | 23% | 21% | 21% |
| On demand | 5% | 11% | 4% | 10% | 4% |
| Daily | -- | -- | -- | -- | 5% |
| Other | | | | 10% | 8% |
| Markets that accept debit and credit in addition to SNAP | 58% credit 53% debit | 43% credit 48% debit | 43% credit 46% debit | 45% credit 45% debit | 46% credit 43% debit |
| Markets using wireless point-of-sale devices | 47% | 51% | 53% | 36% | 42% |
| Total time per month reported for accepting SNAP at MI farmers markets | | 1,715 hours per month | 2,947 hours per month | 4,065 hours per month | 5,635 hours per month |
| Average hours/market spent facilitating SNAP Bridge Card acceptance | | 43 hours per month | 61 hours per month | 50 hours per month | 48 hours per month |
| Range of time/market spent facilitating SNAP Bridge Card acceptance | | 3 – 280 hours per month | 2 – 500 hours per month | 2 – 217 hours per month | 0 – 420 hours per month |
| Percent of people who have primary responsibility for managing SNAP Bridge Card sales who are paid (employees, contractors, etc.) | | 81% | 83% | 77% | 71% |
| Average number paid staff/market who help facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 1.7 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 1.6 |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| Average number of volunteers/market who help facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Range of paid staff/market who help facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 0 - 5 | 0 - 6 | 0 - 7 | 0 - 6 |
| Indicator | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
| Range of volunteer staff/market who help facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 0 - 25 | 0 - 6 | 0 - 20 | 0 - 32 |
| Average time/market spent by paid staff to facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 17 hours per month | 24 hours per month | 35 hours per month | 36 hours per month |
| Range of time/market spent by paid staff to facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 1 - 80 hours per month | 1 - 105 hours per month | 1 - 175 hours per month | 0 - 400 hours per month |
| Average time/market spent by volunteers to facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 9 hours per month | 14 hours per month | 15 hours per month | 13 hours per month |
| Range of time/market spent by volunteers to facilitate SNAP Bridge Card sales | | 1 - 60 hours per month | 2 - 96 hours per month | 1 - 80 hours per month | 0 - 200 hours per month |
| Value of volunteer hours spent accepting SNAP Bridge Cards at Michigan farmers markets | | \$49,649 | \$156,577 | \$155,952 (based on \$22.14 * 50 hours/month * 6 months) | \$190,096 (based on \$22.55 * 1405 hours * 6 months) |



Thanks to the following farmers markets for responding to the MIFMA survey!
Without their cooperation and support, this report would not have been possible.

Table 2: Farmers markets that provided full or partial responses to MIFMA 2013 SNAP Survey

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Ada Farmers Market | Downtown Saginaw Farmers' Market, Inc. | Kalamazoo Farmers' Market and the 100-Mile Market (2) | Saline Farmers Market |
| Adrian Farmers Market | Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers Market | Lake Orion Farmers' Market | Sara Hardy Farmers Market (Traverse City) |
| Allen Street Farmers Market (Lansing) | Dundee Farmers Market | Lansing City Market | Shelby Farmers Market |
| Ann Arbor Farmers Market | East Lansing Farmer's Market | Lapeer Farmers' Market | Sheridan's Farmers Market |
| Auburn Hills Farmers Market | Eastern Market Farm Stands (Detroit) | Lathrup Village Farmers Market | South Lansing Farmers Market |
| Bath Township Farmers Market | Eastside Farmers Market (Detroit) | Lincoln Park Farmers Market | Southeast Area Farmers' Market (Grand Rapids) |
| Battle Creek Farmers Market Association (Battle Creek, Bellevue, VA) | Eaton Rapids Medical Center Farmers Market | Linden Farmers Market | Sowing Seeds Growing Futures Farmers Market (Detroit) |
| Benton Harbor Farmers Market | Edmore Farmers Market | Manistee Farmers Market | Sparta Farmer's Market |
| Boyer City Farmers Market | Elberta Farmers Market | Menominee Historic Downtown Farmers Market Association | Spectrum Health Medical Center Farmers Market (Grand Rapids) |
| Byron Farmers Market | Escanaba Farmer's Market | Meridian Township Farmers Market | Springfield Farmers Market |
| Cadillac Area Farmers Market | Ewart Farmers' Market | Metro Health Farm Market (Wyoming) | Springfield Farmers Market (Davisburg) |
| Canton Farmers Market | Fenton Farmers Market | Midland Area Farmers Market | Suttons Bay & Lake Leelanau Farmers Markets (2) |
| Caro Farmers Market | Flint Farmers' Market | Milford Farmers Market | Sweetwater Local Foods Market (Muskegon) |
| Charlevoix Farmers Market | Frankenmuth Farmers Market | Monroe Farmers Market | Texas Township Farmers' Market |
| Chelsea Farmers Markets (2) | Frankfort Farmers Market | Mount Clemens Farmers Market | The Green Market at Allegiance Health (Jackson) |
| City of Grand Blanc Farmers Market | Fremont & Newaygo Farmers Markets (2) | Munising Farmers Market | Vantage Point Farmers Market (Port Huron) |
| Dearborn Farmers Artisan Market | Fulton Street Farmers Market (Grand Rapids) | Muskegon Farmers Market | Vicksburg Farmers Market |
| Depot Town Farmers Market (Ypsilanti) | Gaylord Farmers Market | New Baltimore Farmers Market | Warren Farmers Markets (2) |
| Detroit Eastern Market | Gladwin Farmers Market | NE MI Regional Farm Market (East Tawas & Oscoda) (2) | Wayne Farmers Market |
| Dexter Farmer's Market | Grand Rapids Downtown Market | Northwest Detroit Farmers' Market | Wayne State University Farmers Market (Detroit) |
| Dixboro Farmers Market | Greenville Farmers Market | Oakland Avenue Farmers Market (Detroit) | Westland Farmers Market |
| Douglass Farmers' Market (Kalamazoo) | Grow Benzie Farmer's Market (Benzonia) | Oakland County Market | Westside Farmers Market (Lansing) |
| Downtown Allen Park Farmers' Market | Hemlock Farmers Market | Owasso Original Farmers Market | Westside Farmers Market (Ann Arbor) |
| Downtown Bay City Farmers Market | Holland Farmers Market | Pellston Farmers Market | Williamston Farmers Market |
| Downtown Big Rapids Farmers Market | Holt Farmers Market | Plainfield Township Farmer's Market | Wyandotte Farmers Market |
| Downtown Jackson Farmers Market | Howell's Sunday Farmer's Market | Porter School Library Farm Market (Alpha) | YMCA Farmers Market (Grand Rapids) |
| Downtown Marquette Farmers Market | Hudsonville Farmers Market | Richland Farmers' Market | |
| Downtown Owosso Farmers Market | Imlay City Farmers Market | Roscommon Village Market | |
| | Jackson Mine Farmers' and Crafters' Market (Negaunee) | | |

About the Michigan Farmers Market Association

The Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) was started in 2006 as a statewide association to promote local food consumption in Michigan by connecting more farmers to consumers through farmers markets. Today, MIFMA works with its membership to maintain its mission and attain its vision.

Mission: MIFMA advances farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products.

Vision: MIFMA places farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement and works to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support.

MIFMA defines a farmers market as a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling direct-to-consumer food and products which they have produced themselves. In addition, the market may include a variety of vendors as determined by market management. A farmers market is organized for the purpose of facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, vendors, shoppers and communities.

MIFMA focuses its efforts in five areas: organizational development, policy advocacy, professional development, marketing and increasing food access. MIFMA's work to increase food access is lead by its Food Assistance Partnership.

About the Food Assistance Partnership

The Food Assistance Partnership is led by the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) and is aligned with MIFMA's vision to ensure that all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food. Members of the Food Assistance Partnership believe that everyone should have access to fresh, healthy, local food through farmers markets and that farmers markets are a great place to purchase fresh, healthy food and to connect with local farmers and the community.

The Food Assistance Partnership is currently working towards the following goals:

- To have 50% of Michigan farmers markets accepting SNAP Bridge Cards by 2014.
- To have farmers markets accepting SNAP Bridge Cards in 75% of Michigan counties by 2015.
- In 2013, 43% of Michigan farmers markets accepted SNAP Bridge Cards and there was at least one farmers market accepting SNAP Bridge Cards in 59% of Michigan counties.

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