

# 3SquaresVT/EBT at VT Farmers Markets

## 2016 Update



- **Every month, over 82,000 Vermonters receive federal 3SquaresVT food benefits**, mainly via Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, to the sum of over \$10 million. In 2015, less than 1% of these benefits were spent at farmers markets, indicating that there is a tremendous opportunity to increase the income of farmers selling at markets by encouraging 3SquaresVT customers to shop at farmers markets.

### Increasing 3SquaresVT/EBT Utilization at Farmers Markets

- The *Vermont EBT at Farmers Market Committee* collaborates to provide funding, technical assistance and promotional support to farmers markets in their efforts to accept federal benefits via EBT machines. **In 2015, 45 farmers markets in Vermont accepted over \$65,000 in 3SquaresVT benefits from nearly 4,000 customers**. In fact, despite a 20% drop in the number of households receiving 3SquaresVT benefits (from 2013 to 2015) Vermont has continued to experience an increase in the percentage of households using their benefits at farmers markets!
- The *Crop Cash Incentive Program*, administered by NOFA-VT, doubles the value of 3SquaresVT purchases at the market for fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs, and is one way to encourage 3SquaresVT recipients to shop at farmers markets. **In 2015, Vermonters redeemed over \$32,500 in incentives**, which allowed them to stretch their food dollars, while supporting VT farmers. This program is funded in partnership with Wholesome Wave through the USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program. From 2015-2018 we anticipate over \$150,000 in incentives being spent at farmers markets in Vermont.
- Over the past several years, the state of Vermont has helped support EBT access at farmers markets by covering the cost of replacement machines and the monthly fees associated with running the machines. In the 2016 FY, these funds are no longer available from the Agency of Agriculture's budget, but they remain integral to keeping EBT accessible at farmers markets. While there are now some federal funding sources to cover these costs, not all markets qualify. **We need state support of \$7,500 in order to ensure that EBT can continue at all 45 VT markets currently accepting EBT. This will enable us to fully utilize the nearly \$500,000 in federal grant funds NOFA-VT has received to promote and incentivize EBT usage at farmers markets over the next three years.**



**Erin Buckwalter**  
**erin@nofavt.org | 434-4122**

The Vermont EBT at Farmers Markets Committee is led by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont and includes the Department for Children and Families, the Agency of Agriculture, and Hunger Free Vermont.