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Center for an Agricultural Economy (Hardwick, VT)
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The testimony included below was written by one of the Hardwick Farmers Markets' most regular customers & is shared with permission:

"CROP Cash Is A Lifesaver For Us"

As two senior citizens struggling to make ends meet on a very low fixed income due to age and disabilities, we were very relieved to have been found eligible for the SNAP/3 Squares program. However, as grocery prices climbed ever higher (during the COVID emergency and beyond) we worried that it was getting harder and harder to afford the healthier foods which we had relied upon being able to access to help us with the lifestyle and dietary changes we knew were helping us remain as healthy as possible.

Fortunately, there is a local food pantry, The Hardwick Area Food Pantry, which offered us a means to obtain high quality fresh produce while we were in an emergency, but we did not want to take food from what for many of our neighbors might be an emergency rations provider. That consideration caused us to use that service sparingly (even as occasional volunteers).

Imagine our delight to learn of the CROP Cash Program!!

By doubling (and sometimes even tripling) our EBT card's buying power we are able to go to our local farmers market, The Hardwick Farmers Market, and with our EBT benefit, purchase fresh, very high quality, usually organically grown, local produce -- from our neighbors and friends -- in enough quantity that we can even put some of it by to see us through the winter!

We are confident in saying it has saved Alan's life -- as a formerly morbidly obese Type II diabetic with high blood pressure, and now 200 lbs lighter survivor of colon cancer. Though he still has neurological disability, which cannot be reversed, he no longer needs the diabetes and blood pressure medicines which were once prescribed to him. And, at all his recent visits his doctors say, "Whatever you're doing, keep doing it! It's working!"

Please feel free to share our experience with others in any way which might help keep this wonderful program going. (It would be great to see it available at farm stands, for CSAs, etc., if it isn't already.)

With gratitude,

(Name removed to honor the privacy of this community member.)

I am here to help advocate for NOFA-VT's request for \$478,500 to support the Crop Cash PLUS and Farm Share Programs. I also want to express my support for the use of SNAP/3SquaresVT funds on prepared/restaurant meals (especially in relation to Farmers Markets.)

Please reach out to me with any questions you may have. I can be reached at

Hayley@Hardwickagriculture.org or Hardwickfarmersmarket@gmail.com as well as on my cell phone:

(802) 309-5401.

Thank you!

Hayley Williams