

Ohio Produce Perks

2020 Program Findings

July 2021

Produce Perks: Ohio's Nutrition Incentive Program

In 2010, Ohio launched nutrition incentive programming at farmers' markets and a decade later has expanded to over 95 locations. Produce Perks seeks to increase access to fresh and healthy food options for families shopping with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Produce Perks matches the value of SNAP benefits \$1 for \$1 when purchasing fruit and vegetables, which can then be used to buy more produce. The program is offered at both Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) sites (i.e. farmers' markets) and at grocery stores.

Produce Perks Program Operations

"I just think it's a great opportunity, especially to eat healthier and just be able to get double of what you normally get, 'cause right now it's really hard times. I lost my job to the pandemic, so money is really tight now and it's really hard. I have two kids that I'm trying to take care of, so just hearing I can get double of what I normally get, it's amazing to me."

Ohio SNAP Customer

\$2.5+ M

fruits & vegetables
purchased at grocery
stores in 2020

(when a Produce Perks
coupon was used)

At Grocery Stores

Since the inception of Produce Perks programming at grocery stores in 2018, the program expanded to over 20 sites across Ohio in 2020. Incentive programming at grocery stores varies based on store capacity, produce availability, and in store technology (Point-of-Sales Systems). Incentives distributed at grocery stores increased 115% and incentives redeemed increased 125% from 2019 to 2020.

As part of program evaluation efforts, Swetland Center researchers completed interviews with SNAP customers who shopped at or lived near participating stores and interviews with employees who worked at participating stores in 2019 and 2020. A quote from an interview with a SNAP customer regarding their opinion on the Produce Perks program can be seen to the left.

At Direct-to-Consumer Sites

Farmers' Markets were deemed an essential service in 2020, but many DTC sites required changes in operation procedures or physical location to maintain COVID-19 safety protocols. The unlimited program match offered from March 17th through June 30th, 2020 was utilized by new and returning SNAP customers, and increased SNAP sales and incentives distributed. The map of Ohio (right) displays the amount of SNAP and Produce Perks redeemed by Vendors in 2020, by vendor zip codes.

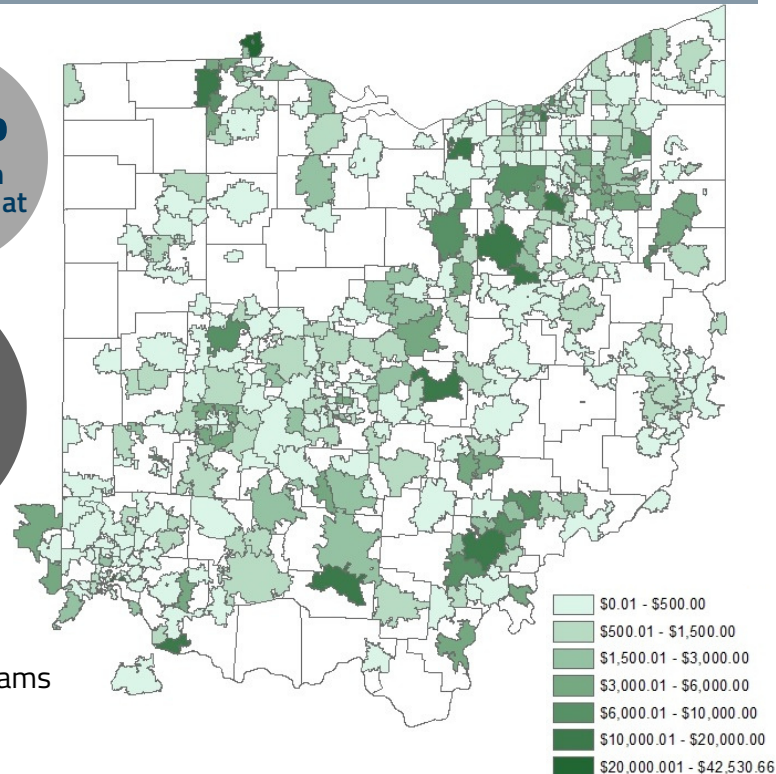
In 2019, the total amount of SNAP and Produce Perks redeemed by vendors was around \$345,000 and in 2020, increased to \$683,000. Offering SNAP and incentive programs at DTC sites supports local agriculture and Ohio farmers.

83%

increase in
SNAP sales at
DTC sites

110%

increase in
Produce Perks
redeemed at DTC
sites



MARY ANN SWETLAND
CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Statewide Programming & Response to COVID-19

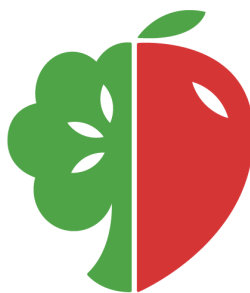
In 2020, Produce Perks was challenged to pivot operations in order to safely continue programming at DTC and grocery stores during the COVID-19 pandemic. Federally mandated increases to monthly SNAP benefits, an influx in SNAP beneficiaries, and Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) were all in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and all contributed to an increase of customers shopping with SNAP across Ohio. The increase in food assistance dollars and recipients had a direct effect on the Produce Perks program in 2020. To further support Ohioans receiving food assistance, the Produce Perks program match was increased to \$50 at grocery stores and was unlimited at DTC sites from March 17th through June 30th, 2020. Starting July 1st, 2020 the Produce Perks match for all sites is at \$25. The table below displays data from both DTC and grocery store sites from 2019 and 2020.

	2019	2020	% Change
Participating Sites	101	96	-5%
SNAP Transactions (Produce Perks Distributed)	41,001	61,089	49%
Produce Perks Earned (Qualifying SNAP Purchases)	\$1,059,019	\$2,251,497	113%
Produce Perks Used	\$380,315	\$785,441	107%

Unique Shoppers at
DTC Sites Increased

39%

from 2019 to 2020



Unique Shoppers
at Grocery Stores*
Increased

66%

from 2019 to 2020

*Only at grocery stores with an automated incentive delivery model.

Suggested Citation: Vargo L, Moore K, Bird A, Freedman DA, (July 2021). Ohio Produce Perks: 2020 Program Findings. Cleveland OH: Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health, Case Western Reserve University.

For more information about the Ohio Produce Perks program, please visit produceperks.org

Data for this brief was retrieved on March 15th, 2021. This research was supported by the USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant (2018-70025- 28154). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.