

Press Release

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Famers and Families Win with Food Stamps and Debit Cards at Farmers' Markets

A total of 10 farmers' markets are now able to accept Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards. That's good news for the more than 55,000 Vermonters that rely on the Cards, which carry food stamp benefits, to assist with grocery bills. The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, Vermont Department for Children and Families, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture today announced the success of the expansion of the EBT and Debit Cards at Farmers' Market Project, expanding the number of markets from 3 to 10 in the 2008 farmers' market season.

The Project's success is measured both by the expansion of market participation from 3 to 10 sites *and* the growth of sales at markets that are in their second year of participation. Second-year markets have documented over \$10,000 worth of EBT and Debit transactions, a dramatic increase over last year's average of \$700 per market.

These numbers illustrate how farmers' market vendors and customers alike are benefitting from this program. Vendors are enjoying access to a broadening customer base including people who have limited cash resources and those customers are benefitting from buying farm, fresh products directly from Vermont producers.

Due to the success of the Project, more and more Vermont farmers' markets and communities are expressing interest in developing the capacity to accept EBT and Debit cards. The Project partners are working to secure state and private funding to support future expansion to include more sites around the state. Expansion efforts will also focus on developing capacity at more winter farmers' markets; at least 3 of the currently participating markets will extend their EBT and Debit programs to their winter markets.