

Patrick-Murray Administration Announces 22 Grants to Help Farmers' Markets Expand Services for Low Income Customers

BOSTON - March 26, 2010 - With the harvest season approaching, the Patrick-Murray Administration today announced that 22 organizations have been awarded grants for equipment to help farmers' markets process payments by low-income residents who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

"During these challenging economic times, we're pleased to be able to make fresh, nutritious locally grown food accessible to everyone," said Governor Patrick.

"Our administration understands the fiscal challenges that many families across Massachusetts are still facing," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "By partnering with community organizations and local farmers' markets, we hope to extend SNAP benefits and healthy food to more families in need."

The grants, made possible by a partnership between the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), are for the purchase or rental of wireless point-of-sale terminals capable of processing SNAP benefits through the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system. Grants also fund transaction fees, outreach programs for SNAP participants, promotional flyers and posters, and incentives to encourage SNAP participants to use their benefits at Massachusetts farmers' markets.

"These grants help to ensure that all residents have access to fresh locally grown produce," said Energy and Environment Secretary Ian Bowles, whose office includes DAR.

The grants will be used to purchase or rent 20 terminals and fund outreach or promotional programs serving 16 communities: Beverly, Bernardston, Boston, Cambridge, Dedham, Gloucester, Greenfield, Holyoke, Lawrence, North Adams, Quincy, Salem, Somerville, Springfield, South Hadley, and Worcester.

As a result of DAR and DTA's cooperation, SNAP recipients will be able to use their benefits at 49 markets in Massachusetts - from 31 markets in 2009, an increase of 37 percent. DAR works to foster a direct exchange between farmers and consumers, and increase access to local, healthy food statewide. By utilizing EBT machines, these markets have expanded access to healthy foods within their communities.

"This project provides new opportunities for our farming community as well as community members who can benefit most from access to locally grown fruits and produce, said DAR Commissioner Scott Soares."Farmers' markets provide an ideal venue to enhance direct marketing of locally grown agricultural products."

"In these challenging times, it is especially critical for agencies and community partners to collaborate on creative solutions, said DTA Commissioner Julia Kehoe."Our work with the Department of Agricultural Resources is a perfect example. Expanding SNAP access at farmers' markets stimulates the economy, assists families with eating healthy on a tight budget, and brings business to local growers."

In recent years, the number of farmer's markets has doubled from 101 markets in 2004 to 202 markets in 2009 with more markets planned to launch in 2010. Farmers' markets not only provide shoppers with fresh, healthy, locally grown farm products, they create community gathering spaces in cities and towns across the state. By purchasing products directly from the farmer, customers have the opportunity to learn more about the how the produce was grown, where it comes from, when it was picked, and, more often than not, get helpful tips on how to prepare the produce.

The DTA provided the initial funding of \$50,000 for the grants. To fund the grants listed below and future awards, the Wholesome Wave Foundation, based in Westport, CT, contributed an additional \$20,000 and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation contributed an additional \$5,000. The total of this round of funding is \$64,572.

Organization	City/Town	Award
Community Servings/JP Sundays	Boston	\$2,500
Beverly Farmers' Market	Beverly	\$2,500
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition	Boston	\$2,500
Somerville Health Department	Somerville	\$2,500
Saint Marks Main Streets/Ashmont Farmer's Market	Boston	\$2,500
Dorchester House Farmers' Market	Boston	\$2,500
Food Bank of Western MA (Springfield Mason Square/North Adams Farmers' Market)	Springfield/ North Adams	\$2,940
Regional Environmental Council (Worcester Main South Farmers' Market)	Worcester	\$2,500
Greenfield Farmers' Market	Greenfield	\$2,100
The Food Project	Boston	\$10,000
Roslindale Main Streets/Roslindale Farmers' Market	Boston	\$2,500
Bernardston Farmers' Market	Bernardston	\$1,695
Salem Main Streets/Salem Farmers' Market	Salem	\$2,500
Cape Ann Farmers' Market	Gloucester	\$2,500
Dedham Farmers' Market	Dedham	\$2,500
Quincy Farmers' Market	Quincy	\$2,500
South Hadley Farmers' Market	South Hadley	\$787
Union Square Main Streets (Union Square Farmers' Market)	Somerville	\$2,500
Federation of Massachusetts Farmers' Markets (Copley Square, City Hall and	Boston/	\$7,500

Cambridge/Central Square Farmers' Markets)	Cambridge	
Boston Public Market Association(Dewey Square Farmers' Market)	Boston	\$2,500
Lawrence Grassroots Initiative/Lawrence Farmers' Market	Lawrence	\$2,500
Holyoke Farmers' Market	Holyoke	\$2,500

"This is a vital partnership for the city and for Boston Farmers Markets and I commend the state for funding the initiative," said Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "These grants will allow us to take a significant step forward in ensuring that all of our city's residents have access to locally grown and nutritious food, particularly our low-income residents who rely on the SNAP program to help feed and nourish their families."

"The City of Somerville is extremely thankful to have received this grant that will allow us to meet Shape Up Somerville's and First Lady Michelle Obama's goal of making fresh, locally grown produce available to all members of our community," said Somerville Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone. "Somerville currently hosts two farmers' markets' and an ever-increasing number of community supported agriculture drop off sites. We are proud to support Massachusetts farmers and to promote a healthy, sustainable future for the Commonwealth."

"Not only will the vendors of the Central Square Farmer's Market benefit from this grant, but also Cambridge families will now have the ability to use their SNAP benefits to purchase fresh locally grown produce for their families. The awarding of this grant is great news for both the Cambridge community and for Cambridge families," said Cambridge Mayor David P. Maher.

"The farmers' market is a mainstay here in Quincy during the summer months, and I am happy that more residents will be able to have access to this truly unique market," said Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch.

"Now entering the farmer's market second season, I am thrilled about the grant award in the amount of \$2,500 from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs," stated Salem Mayor Kimberley Driscoll. "This funding will ensure that our farmer's market has another successful season and will allow access to fresh, local produce to promote a healthy lifestyle among our residents."

"Beverly is pleased to receive the \$2,500 grant which will facilitate the use of point-of-purchase equipment at the Beverly Farmers' Market. This equipment will help those in need exchange their SNAP benefits for fresh, healthful locally grown products," said Beverly Mayor William Scanlon.

"An electronic solution that will allow some of citizens who utilize the SNAP program to more readily access locally grown, healthy food options is wonderful. This utilization of technology opens up this venue to what we might traditionally think to be an 'underserved' population that might now regularly attend our North Adams Farmers Market. We truly appreciate this grant from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources," said North Adams Mayor Richard J. Alcombright

"The Farmer's Market plays a strong role in promoting such initiatives as buying locally and healthy in our community. As the warm weather approaches, the people of Lawrence are forever happy with the Farmer's Market adjacent to City Hall in the downtown area of Lawrence," said Lawrence Mayor William Lantigua. "I, as Mayor, will continue to support this program and I'm happy to see this grant award to such a great organization and mission. "

"In two short years, the Dedham Farmer's Market has become a valued resource to the entire community and this award will help broaden the market's reach and provide greater access to locally grown, healthy produce to a diverse

customer base. The town of Dedham is pleased to be a partner with Dedham Square Circle in this effort and others to foster a vibrant and attractive downtown," said William Keegan, Dedham Town Administrator.

"This is a tremendous boost for the Bernardston Farmers' Market. It will make local farmers' products more available to seniors and cash-strapped families in our surrounding communities," stated the Bernardston Agricultural Commission .

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, serves more than 737,000 individuals in Massachusetts - one in nine residents of the Commonwealth - by assisting low-income individuals and families with purchasing healthy food. SNAP households access their benefits by using an EBT card that is similar to a debit card and is accepted at most grocery stores. This program is federally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and serves as the first line of defense against hunger.

Individuals, families with children, seniors, and people with disabilities who are having difficulty meeting their basic needs are encouraged to apply for SNAP by visiting www.mass.gov/dta, calling 1-866-950-FOOD, or visiting their local DTA office.



DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of local agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions - Agricultural Development, Animal Health, Crop and Pest Services, and

Technical Assistance - the DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the Commonwealth's

agricultural community, working to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health

measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and/or follow at twitter.com/MDARCommish