

CALIFORNIA NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Impact Summary: 2015-2025



What CNIP Is and Who It Reaches

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP) was established in 2015 through Assembly Bill 1321 to increase purchase and consumption of California-grown fruits and vegetables by CalFresh and nutrition benefit clients. CNIP launched in 2017 through CDFA's Office of Farm to Fork and was funded by a combination of federal and state general funds.

Since then, CNIP has grown into a statewide network operating at more than 320 Certified Farmers' Markets, retail grocery locations, mobile markets, and farm stands across 40+ counties in California, from big cities to small towns. The program prioritizes communities with high percentages of CalFresh recipients, low-income and low-access neighborhoods, and areas with high rates of diet-related disease.



Courtesy of Pacific Coast Farmer's Market Association photo

CNIP has leveraged cumulative funding of \$100 million, including \$70 million in state funding and \$30 million in federal funds, representing a 20-fold increase in annual funding over seven years. In 2022, CNIP brought in \$12.8 million in federal funding, one of the largest federal United States Dept of Agriculture (USDA) matches for any fruit and vegetable incentive program in the nation. In 2023, the state awarded an additional \$35 million to support CNIP, continuing to fund the program through Spring 2027.

CNIP has distributed over \$53.6 million in nutrition incentives since 2017 and plans to distribute over \$16 million in nutrition incentives in 2026. CNIP grantees also provide marketing, outreach, and nutrition education to CNIP shoppers.

How CNIP Works

CNIP operates on an incentive matching model: When a shopper uses CalFresh, Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), or Senior FMNP benefits to buy fresh California-grown produce at authorized locations, they receive a dollar-for-dollar CNIP match up to a daily cap (often \$10–\$15 per day) to purchase additional fruits and vegetables.

At farmers' markets, shoppers use their Electronic Benefit Transaction (EBT) card at a central booth, receive tokens or scrip equal to their CalFresh charge plus an equivalent amount in incentives, and can spend them with farm vendors. In small retailers and groceries, incentives are offered as discounts at the register, vouchers, or credits, for California-grown produce clearly labeled as CNIP-eligible.

This model ensures that incentive dollars flow directly to producers, particularly small- and mid-sized diversified farms that rely on direct-to-consumer sales. CNIP venues include not only traditional farmers' markets but also farm stands, mobile markets, and community-oriented retail stores, allowing the program to reach urban neighborhoods, farmworker communities, and rural towns statewide.



Courtesy of Food Access Los Angeles photo



"This program helps people of all age ranges: college students like myself, senior citizens, families, we're all brought together and given access to good food locally grown."

Courtesy of Butte County Local Food Network Photo

Yancy M, Chico, CA

Outcomes: Economics, Participation, and Health

Research shows: every \$1 invested in CNIP incentives generates \$3 in local economic activity.

The Economic Contributions of Expanding Healthy Food Incentives (2021).

CNIP has a broad reach across California: The Ecology Center, CNIP's largest grantee, runs the Market Match program, which partners with over 50 organizations at more than 290 farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile sites in 38 counties. CNIP currently supports 11 other organizations with various scales, locations, and reach.

CNIP shoppers make more frequent farmers' market visits, value the quality and freshness of produce, and emphasize the dignity and choice the program provides ([Ecology Center, 2018](#)). CNIP has been vital during critical times of food supply chain issues including Covid-19, wildfires in Los Angeles, and changes in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) implementation, ensuring community members can procure healthy produce during times of crisis.

Farmers and vendors report CNIP increases customer traffic and revenue, encourages larger purchases, and helps sustain markets serving low-income communities. Together, the economic and health evidence position CNIP as practical tools to address nutrition security, small farm viability, and resilient food systems.

Studies show: CNIP participants report increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, improved food security, and reduced risks of diet related disease.

CNIP Expansion: WIC and Seniors

Using state funds, CNIP Expansion extended CNIP incentives to WIC and Senior FMNP recipients starting in 2018. CNIP Expansion has awarded \$3.6 million in funding through 2025. Another \$1.7 million was awarded in 2026 to 11 organizations across the state, including those that piloted WIC/SFMNP electronic Farmers' Market Cards in 2024–2025 to streamline usage. These efforts are significant for pregnant women, young children, and older adults, who experience disproportionate rates of food insecurity and diet-related disease.

CNIP Evaluation & Priorities

CNIP has been the subject of multiple evaluations, including federal national evaluations and peer-reviewed studies on participant perceptions, consumption, and food security. **These studies consistently highlight increased fruit and vegetable intake, improved dietary diversity, better food security, and positive experiences with farmers' markets and local producers.**

As CNIP enters its next phase, key priorities include securing state funding and matching federal USDA resources; expanding into more counties across California, with particular emphasis on high-need communities; conducting focus group-based evaluations; and strengthening technical assistance for new and small operators.

“I’m eating better because I can afford to get fresh food, fresh vegetables, and fruit that I wouldn’t get otherwise.”

– CalFresh shopper at a farmers' market answering what they think of CNIP incentives

“People tend to spend more money with Market Match [CNIP], and they buy more from us. It helps us a lot.”

– Farm vendor describing impact of CNIP at a farmers' market



“It’s a great program for everyone involved for the actual customers, and also that money goes directly to our farmers, so it just bolsters the community and the economy all around.”

McKinleyville Farmers’ Market manager,
North Coast Growers Association

