

CDC Study Shows State Health Departments' Role in Supporting Farmers Markets

What is a farmers market?

A farmers market is where farmers sell agricultural products directly to consumers at a central or fixed location. They provide an easy location¹ for people to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and other food items¹ and may help communities get healthier fresh food at a price they can afford.²

Since 2003, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) has provided guidance and funding to state health departments to support activities around farmers markets. A recent CDC study identifies common state farmers market activities supported by DNPAO over an 11-year period.

What was the study?

In a 2016 study, DNPAO analyzed and identified activities commonly used by funded state health departments to support farmers markets across three cooperative agreements: State Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases (2003-2008); the Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program (2008-2013); and Communities Putting Prevention to Work (2010-2013).³

What did the study find?

The analysis found that CDC-funded state health departments engaged in several common activities.



Worked with Existing Markets

Instead of creating new markets, states often partnered with and supported existing markets to make better use of limited funds. For example, states supported existing markets with promotion or farmers market enhancements.



Provided Training and Technical Assistance

States provided training or technical assistance activities, such as workshops, webinars, train-the-trainer programs, or developing resources and tools for farmers market vendors, managers, local health departments or coalitions. Trainings and technical assistance focused on areas such as nutrition assistance benefit programs, marketing, or healthy eating demonstrations and sampling.



Partnered with the Agricultural Sector

States partnered with state Departments of Agriculture, regional Departments of Agriculture, such as United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service regional offices, and agricultural extension offices to provide additional funding, guidance, training and technical assistance to farmers market vendors, managers, local health departments or coalitions.



Partnered with Nutrition Assistance Benefit Programs

States partnered with nutrition assistance programs and worked to provide acceptance and use of benefits at farmers markets, particularly through electronic benefit transfer machines.



What can state health departments do?

To improve access, availability, and affordability of healthier foods at farmers markets, state health departments and partners could consider implementing some of the listed activities and apply guidance outlined by CDC's *Healthier Food Retail: An Action Guide for Public Health Practitioners* when supporting future state-level strategies.

Where can I find more information about the study?

"State-Level Farmers Markets Activities: A Review of CDC-Funded State Public Health Actions that Support Farmers Markets" is found in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*.³

¹ Healthier food retail: An action guide for public health practitioners. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/pdf/healthier-food-retail-guide-full.pdf>. Updated September 18, 2015. Accessed February 2, 2016.

² Jilcott Pitts SB, Gustafson A, Wu Q, et al. Farmers' market use is associated with fruit and vegetable consumption in diverse southern rural communities. *Nutr J*. 2014; 13: 1. doi:10.1186/1475-2891-13-1.

³ Kahin S, Wright D, Pejavara A, Kim S. State-level farmers markets activities: a review of CDC-funded state public health actions that support farmers markets. *J Public Health Manag Pract*. In press.