



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES DOUBLE VALUE COUPON PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE  
AT 26 FARMERS MARKETS ACROSS CHICAGO**

*Program Allows LINK Customers to Receive Matching Funds for Healthy, Locally Grown Food;  
Program Nearly Doubles in Size to 26 Markets*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon today announced that the USDA is expanding the SNAP program to additional farmers markets in Chicago and across the country. The City is also bringing back and expanding the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP), which allows LINK customers to receive matching funds for fresh fruit, vegetables and other fresh foods purchased at these Farmers' Markets. This year, the City has allocated \$87,000 to nearly double the number of participating Farmers Markets from 15 to 26 markets.

"Ensuring that all Chicago residents have access to fresh, healthy foods today is critical to creating a stronger Chicago for tomorrow," Mayor Emanuel said. "The Double Value Coupon Program is one of the many ways that Chicago is working to provide more opportunities for our residents to live a healthier lifestyle."

The Double Value Coupon Program is provided by the non-profit Experimental Station's *LINK Up Illinois* program, which works with farmers markets throughout the state to offer an incentive for LINK customers to purchase healthy, locally grown food by matching funds for all purchases made with LINK cards. In addition to the 16 City markets that offer DVCP, this year for the first time, 10 non-City markets will receive funding for DVCP to ensure even more Chicago residents have increased access to affordable healthy food options nearby.

Kevin Concannon, USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services said, "We know that offering incentives to purchase healthy products at farmers markets not only helps SNAP recipients consume a healthier diet; it also boosts the local farm economy.

These new partnerships with health care organizations, philanthropies and others are a clear “win-win” for SNAP customers, local farmers and the entire community.”

The City also announced today that it is matching \$25,000 in funding granted to *LINK Up Illinois* by Harmony Health Plan for a total of \$50,000 that will go straight to coupons for LINK customers at Chicago markets. The City will also provide \$50,000 in additional funding to ensure approved, independently-operated markets can also provide coupons, for a total of \$100,000 in coupons citywide.

“The Experimental Station is pleased to partner with the City of Chicago and Harmony Health Plan to expand LINK usage and the availability of Double Value at Chicago farmers markets,” said Connie Spreen, Experimental Station Executive Director. “We have seen in Chicago and statewide the positive impact of Double Value incentives on the food choices that LINK recipients are able to make.”

“Harmony is focused on removing the barriers that make it difficult for our members and those who live in the communities we serve to attain and maintain optimal health,” said Dr. Bobby Hilliard, state president, Harmony Health Plan, A WellCare Company. “One way we are doing this is by supporting programs that make fresh, nutritious food a viable option for everyone, regardless of their income. This particular effort has the added benefit of supporting local farmers and local economies.”

Increasingly, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants are choosing to spend their program benefits at farmers markets. Incentive programs like the Double Value Coupon Program provided through Experimental Station in Chicago are a significant help in boosting SNAP purchases at the markets.

Incentive programs like DVCP are a significant help in boosting SNAP purchases at Farmers Markets. SNAP-authorized farmers markets significantly improve recipients’ access to the fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthful foods that are vital components of a healthy diet. Increasing the number of SNAP farmers markets continues to be a priority for USDA and the City of Chicago, especially in “food desert” areas without sufficient access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

The USDA has been offering grants to purchase wireless point-of-sale equipment in farmers’ markets not currently participating in SNAP. Farmers’ markets and direct marketing farmers can find out how to participate in SNAP and whether they are eligible for a grant at [Marketlink.org](http://Marketlink.org), a one-stop, online center for information. In addition, the 2014 Farm Bill offers a new grant program to support organizations that offer incentives to SNAP participants to purchase fruits and vegetables.

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