Wholesome Wave’s
Double Value Coupon Program
Increasing Food Access & Local Farm Business Nationwide

2009–2012 Outcomes and Trends

Executive Summary
2012 Double Value Coupon Program Partners

Adelante Mujeres
Agricultural Institute of Marin
Appalachian Sustainable Development
Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture
Billings Forge Community Works
Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness
Brass City Harvest
Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District
Capital City Public Market
City Green
City of Greeley
CitySeed
Columbia Heights Community Marketplace
Countryside Conservancy
Crossroads Community Food Network
Cultivating Community
Day Kimball Hospital
DC Greens
Denver Urban Gardens
Experimental Station
Fair Food
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
The Farmers Market, Co
The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
The Food Project
Fresh Approach
FRESHFARM Markets
Greenmarket/GrowNYC
Greensgrow Farm
GrowMemphis
Hartford Food System
Harvest Home
International Institute of New Hampshire
International Rescue Committee
Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA)
Just Food
Kokua Kalihhi Valley Comprehensive Family Services
Maine Farmland Trust
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Mass Farmers Markets
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)
North End Action Team
Nuestras Raices
Ohio State University Extension, Cuyahoga County
Orleans Farmers Market, Inc.
Palm Springs Cultural Center
The Renaissance Project
Skowhegan Farmers Market
Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles
Sustainable Food Center
Urban Oaks Organic Farm
Urban Oasis Project
Ward 8 Farmers Markets
Washington Hancock Community Agency
Wholesome Wave Georgia

2012 Double Value Coupon Program Supporters

1772 Foundation
American Communities Trust
Anonymous Donor
Betsy & Jesse Fink Foundation
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA
Broad Reach Fund
Cedar Tree Foundation
Connecticut Department of Agriculture
JTG Foundation
Kaiser Permanente
Kashi Company
Kendall Foundation
The Kresge Foundation
Nell Newman Foundation
Newman’s Own Foundation
NoVo Foundation
Organic Valley
RSF Social Finance
Stonyfield
Sur La Table
United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
Wallace Genetic Foundation
Yum-O

The farm stand is great for the community. It brings healthy, quality food. I used to think farmers markets were more expensive, but you can’t beat the prices and the taste!
— DVCP Consumer from Connecticut
Wholesome Wave was founded on the principle that improving the accessibility and affordability of fresh, healthy, locally-grown food for historically underserved communities can create a more vibrant and equitable food system for everyone. Programs such as our Double Value Coupon Program expand the customer base for small and midsize farms by incentivizing vulnerable families living in urban and rural communities to use federal nutrition benefits to buy healthy, fresh, locally-grown food, commonly unavailable or affordable in their communities, at nearby farmers markets and other farm-to-retail businesses. The release of our 2012 outcomes marks another year of unsurpassed success, building on a growing body of evidence, which shows incentive programs are one of the most effective ways to increase healthy food purchases and consumption among limited-income consumers, and boost economic activity for the nation’s most classic small businesses—American family farms.

This executive summary report provides key highlights of the evaluation and data collection efforts undertaken by Wholesome Wave and its partner organizations from 2009 through 2012. Consistent data collection is at the core of the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP). Wholesome Wave works with its partners to study program impacts by surveying participating consumers, market managers and vendors. In addition, dedicated program partners track federal benefit and nutrition incentive sales using our data-collection tools. The results make a powerful case for the impact of nutrition incentives on consumers, communities and local farms and businesses.

Nationwide, our DVCP network experienced rapid growth between 2009 and 2011. In 2012, our partner network leveraged Wholesome Wave funding to raise an estimated additional $4M from private and public sources to support their incentive programs. And this year, our primary focus has been to sustain the impact of the program’s success among our nearly 60 community-based partners and to find ways to ensure the program continues for years to come. In 2012, we saw impressive increases in customer visits—from 93,000 in 2011 to 114,000 in 2012, indicating that customers are returning to the market throughout the season. We are also very excited to see that the number of participating farmers grew by almost 1,000, and the number of participating markets increased by roughly 100.

We are extremely proud and encouraged to see that our data continues to show, from year to year, that DVCP is achieving its primary objectives of: 1) improving the local economy and increasing sales for farmers markets and other farm-to-retail businesses and 2) improving consumption, access and affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables among underserved customers.

Just to highlight a few powerful findings from our 2012 data, we found that as a direct result of DVCP:

- 90% of DVCP customers reported that they increased or greatly increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables
- 66% of farmers participating in DVCP reported increased sales due to DVCP
- Farmers reported expanding their operations and increasing staff
- Market managers reported that on average, 27% of market sales came from federal nutrition benefits and DVCP incentives

In addition to the talent and devotion of our amazing partners, none of this important and meaningful work would be possible without our valued funders, which include private foundations, like-minded corporations, and individual donors. We are proud and humbled to say that these relationships have brought far more than just financial support. We hold up the astonishing cultures of each of our partners and donors, which have added greatly to the value of everything we have been able to accomplish together. We humbly and deeply thank each and every one for their generous support.

Michel Nischan
CEO, President & Founder
DVCP Enhances Viability of Local Economies, Markets and Small Farms

Data gathered from markets from 2009 through 2011 show SNAP redemption generally doubles at markets after DVCP implementation and some markets experience much larger increases, often continuing into following years. This can have a ripple effect on the local economy; research has shown that every $5 in new SNAP benefits generates as much as $9 of economic activity. Federal nutrition benefits and nutrition incentive sales increased from $331,000 in 2009 to over $2.3 million in 2012 (Fig 1).

More than 3,200 farmers were able to benefit from DVCP in 2012 (Fig 2), and over 1,000 other vendors at participating markets may have experienced increased sales due to their expanding customer base. Surveys of participating vendors and market managers demonstrate DVCP is increasing sales for farmers and having positive economic impacts on markets and surrounding businesses.

- Market managers reported an estimated average of 27% of market sales came from federal nutrition benefits & DVCP.
- Both farmers participating in DVCP and other market vendors reported increased sales (66% and 41% respectively) due to DVCP at their markets.
- 13% of farmers reported increasing their farm or market staff as a direct result of DVCP.
- Farmers also reported expanding operations due to DVCP: 23% diversified their product offerings, almost 15% added hoop houses or greenhouses, and 12% increased production or acreage.
- Almost a third (30%) of DVCP consumers said they planned to spend an average of $28.95 at nearby businesses on market day. This resulted in over $1 million spent by DVCP consumers at nearby local businesses in 2012.
- Mid-season surveys of DVCP consumers reveal that the majority reported coming to the market one or two times per month (28%) or 3 or more times per month (44%) during the market season.

“This program has changed our community and their eating habits and preferences. Thank you for easing access to local, nutritious food and bolstering our local economy.”

— Farmer from Maine
DVCP is Increasing Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

In a peer-reviewed study conducted by Wholesome Wave, New York University, and the University of California San Diego during 2011, research demonstrated DVCP participation led to increased fruit and vegetable consumption. The DVCP not only led to increased fruit and vegetable consumption during the 16-week session, vegetable consumption also remained higher in participants two months following the end of DVCP.

In surveys of DVCP consumers nationwide during 2012, 90% of DVCP consumers reported increasing or greatly increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

DVCP is Expanding Access to Affordable Healthful, Local Foods

In 2012, Wholesome Wave reached nearly 40,000 participating consumers, resulting in 114,000 visits to the participating DVCP markets.

Farmers markets, and other farm-to-retail markets, have attracted a great deal of attention for their potential to provide consumers in low-income rural and urban “food desert” areas with nutritious foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. The establishment of these markets can be a quicker and more flexible solution to increasing the supply of fresh food in areas lacking brick and mortar grocery stores.

Surveys of DVCP consumers show that of those who find it difficult or very difficult to purchase quality fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood, 84% report getting half or more of their fresh fruit and vegetables at the participating markets during market season, with over one fifth saying they get all of their fruits and vegetable at the market. This suggests these markets can be an important and valued component in ameliorating issues of affordable access.

Over 95% of DVCP consumers agreed or strongly agreed that it was easier to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables as a result of shopping at the markets. In addition, almost 70% of DVCP consumers said the DVCP incentives were very important in getting them to spend their federal nutrition benefits at the farmers markets instead of elsewhere (i.e. they wouldn’t have come without them).

The barrier to reaching at-risk populations and changing their food shopping habits is the perception that fresh foods and farmers markets are more expensive than the bulk offered by junk and mainstream commodity foods. Offering Bonus Bucks allows us to breach that barrier and is essential to long term success and real change in eating habits.

— Market Manager from Rhode Island
DVCP Helps Strengthen Community Connections

Surveys of DVCP consumers have consistently shown they are interested in taking part in the market community and seek out the attributes of markets that make them unique—quality and selection of produce, as well as a connection to local farmers (Fig 4).

FIG. 4  
DVCP Consumers Value Many Aspects of Markets

In addition to running DVCP, markets are providing activities and information for DVCP consumers, special programming for children, and conducting SNAP outreach and sign-up at the market (Fig 5). They are also building connections with other organizations and governmental entities to undertake outreach to federal nutrition benefit recipients (Fig 6).

FIG. 5  
Markets Provide Information and Activities to DVCP Customers

Wholesome Wave is a national 501(c)3 organization dedicated to supporting small and midsize farms, and making fresh, healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables available to all people, regardless of income. For more information about Wholesome Wave, visit www.wholesomewave.org, email info@wholesomewave.org, or call 203-226-1112. To view the DVCP Full Report and Fact Sheet, please visit http://wholesomewave.org/wholesomewaveresearch/.

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I just wanted to write with tears in my eyes how powerfully effective [this program] is in my life. After dramatic life changes I am still able to feed my son and me local, organic food, giving us the vibrancy to go on and fulfill our purpose in the world. This unexpected support created and given from your aspirations for good have an amazing galvanizing power for change. Thank you.

— DVCP Consumer