

## Q & A

### **Opportunities in the 2018 Farm Bill: Federal Efforts to Advance Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems**

The January 2018 webinar, Opportunities in the 2018 Farm Bill: Federal Efforts to Advance Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems, provided a brief overview of the Farm Bill and status of the reauthorization process, as well as highlight four key policy pillars within the legislation. Since speakers were not able to answer all audience questions on the webinar, many of them have been answered below, separated by policy pillar. You can view the recording of the webinar [here](#), along with other related resources to the 2018 Farm Bill.

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## Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI)

### **How could I go about getting Double Up Food Bucks within our state? (New Jersey)**

Thanks for the question, and for your interest in starting an incentive program! First and foremost it is important that FINI is reauthorized in the next Farm Bill. At that point the USDA will release an RFA for another round of grants. At that time I'd encourage you to contact The Food Trust, who already operates the Philly Food Bucks incentives program in Camden, and the Fair Food Network, who is partnering with grocers to pilot Double Up Food Bucks in Northern NJ. Remember that all FINI programs require a 50% fundraising match, so there is always an opportunity to privately fundraise a program without waiting on the Farm Bill, and then use FINI for expansion.

### **In climates, such as Buffalo, NY, with short growing seasons we have been having less success with Double Up Food Bucks with our 1 indoor winter farmers markets. Are there any examples of incentive programs that work well in the winter months? Such as chain grocery stores accepting Double Up Food Bucks.**

Great question and one we get often. Cold weather states like Michigan and Washington (just to name a couple) have indeed partnered with grocery stores, both chain and single-independent to run year-round programs. When applying for FINI funding, they do prioritize programs that incorporate incentivize regional food, but do not require it. So a program in a cold-weather state might include regional produce when available, and move beyond the region in the off-months. It is important to note that FINI is not just a farmers' market program, but one that increases purchase of fruits and vegetables year-round, in many retail forms. There are also many examples of Double Up running at year-round farmers markets, too, and programs like Double Up can accelerate winter production. And finally, Field & Fork Network, which leads the Double Up Food Bucks program in Buffalo, is working to bring the program to area grocery stores. [Contact Margaret Lapp at Field & Fork Network to connect.](#)

### **I'm curious why Double Up Food Bucks has not been taken advantage of in Mississippi, where the percentage of food insecure households is higher than that in many other states.**

There is a SNAP incentives program called "[Fre\\$h Savings](#)" that operates in 17 counties across Mississippi. This program operates similarly to the "Double Up" programs we talked about as examples in other states, and they are also supported by FINI through the Farm Bill. Granting high-need applicants was a priority in the latest Farm Bill, and we need to continue to advocate for that priority in the next one!

### **I believe Philadelphia had a program called Double Dollars, but I do not see Pennsylvania as one of the states that participate in the FINI program. What happened?**

Thanks for the chance to clarify, the [Philly Food Bucks program](#) is going strong! Also with support from FINI in the Farm Bill, Philly Food Bucks is operated by The Food Trust at farmers' markets and grocery

stores across the city, with programs in Pittsburgh, Reading, Norristown and Washington County, too. The map you saw in the webinar was a list of Double Up Food Bucks programs operating around the country, but FINI also supports great programs beyond "Double Up" in places like Tennessee, Florida, Pennsylvania, and many more.

## **How likely do you think it will be that innovative programs without a baseline like FINI will be included in the next farm bill?**

That is a great question, and one nobody really knows the answer to. The groups who presented on the webinar are all working tirelessly to demonstrate all the results coming from these programs and advocate for their continuation in the next Farm Bill. But as Abby Bownas mentioned, and I hope came through loud and clear in the webinar, the Farm Bill has a lot of stakeholders and has to go through several legislative steps before it is signed into law. If you believe in any of these innovative programs without baseline, we encourage you to tell your representatives in congress!

## **How does existing funding support local CSAs? Sorry if this was addressed previously**

In regards to the nutrition programs mentioned in our webinar, SNAP can be used to buy CSA shares, and FINI can help make them more affordable & accessible! There are several other production-based programs that support farmers who might operate CSA programs in the Local FARMS Act and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act. Each of these programs will be a part of the negotiations for the next Farm Bill. [NSAC](#) is a great resource, as well as the [USDA website](#).

## **What is the incentive for FINI to be adopted as part of SNAP (i.e., is there a ROI from the perspective of congress)?**

The goals of the program, as prescribed by congress in the last Farm Bill are to increase produce consumption among SNAP program participants to improve health while also stimulating demand for regionally-grown fruits and vegetables. While the program is relatively new, there are several peer-reviewed studies in respected scientific journals that show positive results toward those goals. Understanding the ROI will undoubtedly be important for Congress, and independent studies can help see it.

## **In the last couple years, the USDA piloted a handful of programs to allow for online food purchases and deliveries of SNAP. What is the outlook for an expansion of allowing SNAP to be used for online food purchases?**

The USDA is still ironing out several details around using SNAP online. Pilots are planned to begin later in 2018 with select retailers in 10 geographies and we are all interested to see how it goes once it does.

## **What has been roll-out for Double-up? Why hasn't it been implemented in Philadelphia-- or statewide in PA?**

Double Up Food Bucks is a model for SNAP incentives being implemented in many states, and there are other programs receiving FINI support too, including The Food Trust's Philly Food Bucks. You can learn

more about Philly Food Bucks [here](#), and note the program has expanded to Pittsburgh, Reading, Norristown and Washington County, too.

**Would HFFI support initiatives like incentive programs (e.g. the double dollar) for SNAP at farmers markets?**

The primary goal of HFFI is to increase availability of healthy food through opening and expanding a variety of retail formats, and that it would be duplicative with FINI to also fund incentives. But that the two programs complement each other really nicely. FINI programs work better when there are healthy stores accessible, and stores sell more healthy items when they offer an incentive program.

**For FINI, could you distinguish between Double Up, which is Fair Food's branded program, and FINI more comprehensively? Is there a current summary of FINI in farmers' markets, small stores, supermarkets, health centers/doctors' offices (FV Rx), and other innovations? By how much does nutrition education increase redemption? (I've heard that redemption rates are not as high as the 91% that was quoted.)**

Double Up Food Bucks is a network of incentive programs in 23 states and FINI is a very important source of funding those programs. The USDA administers the FINI program, as authorized through the 2014 Farm Bill and here is the [USDA page](#) which describes the program. Unfortunately a comprehensive review will likely not be available for some time. Based on my own informal census of the program, FINI has provided financial support for about 90 different programs operating in 45 states (including DC), with 9 projects being only in conventional grocery stores, 49 projects being only in farm-direct retail, and 32 projects operating a mix of both. I am not sure how many operate prescription programs. Depending on where you are in the country, FINI may fund programs named Double Up, Philly Food Bucks, Produce Perks, Fresh Access Bucks, and there are many other names. Contact me if you'd like to talk through further details, and I hope the USDA is able to produce an official comprehensive summary soon. In regards to your question about education, I've read almost all the peer-reviewed literature on incentives and while there is no specifically measured finding of an effect of nutrition education on an incentives program, there are studies that show positive signals. We've also seen the benefits that nutrition education can have on increasing use of Double Up programs. Finally, you're right that redemption number is high. As I mentioned in the webinar, these were preliminary pulled data from 2017, and included some grocery stores where the incentive is automatically "redeemed" at the register, which would be a 100%. The formal FINI evaluation will hopefully share redemption rates for all types of healthy food incentive programs.

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**Can you expand on what a produce prescription program might look like?**

I'd defer to some of the experts; both of the following examples are also supported by FINI and provide excellent prescription descriptions - [Washington statewide program](#) and [Wholesome Wave](#).

**What is the latest figure of how many of the total farmers' markets accept EBT?**

In 2017 7,377 markets processed SNAP, a 129% increase since 2012! This number includes mobile-markets and other forms of direct-marketing farmers like CSA's.

## Sustainable Agriculture

**Why is 100 million acres of farm land going to change hands? Is this due to aging farmers or another reason?**

Yes, it is due to the ageing farm population.

**The National Young Farmers Coalition Survey showed the access to health care is one of the barriers young farmers face. Do any of the marker bills address health care access for farmers?**

Unfortunately, no they do not include anything related to health care access for farmers. Healthcare policy is outside the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. Because of that healthcare policy is by and large not germane to the farm bill and by extension farm bill marker bills. With that said, the farm bill does include numerous programs in the Rural Development title that partially addresses access to health care in rural communities. In particular, the Community Facilities Program that is authorized in the Farm Bill and then funded through annual appropriations provides funding for essential community facilities in rural communities and essential facilities include healthcare related facilities. However, I believe the NYFC's access to affordable healthcare findings from the survey has more to do with affordable health insurance, and health insurance is outside the scope of the Farm Bill and the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committees

**How can we safeguard the rights and opportunities that urban farming expansion for urban dwellers be included in the new farm bill?**

Protecting the rights of urban farms is nothing something that would be within the scope of the Farm Bill, however there are a number of efforts underway to expand opportunities and programs to better serve the needs of urban agriculture in the next Farm Bill. Primarily those ideas are captured in the Urban Agriculture marker bill introduced by ranking member Senator Stabenow. Whether or not the Farm Bill includes any support for Urban Agriculture is primarily dependent on getting Republican support for it. Learn more about Senator Stabenow's Urban Ag Bill [here](#).

**Would the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (BFROA) be available for currently running Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) programs if it is implemented?**

Yes! One of the provisions of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (BFROA) is to reauthorize the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and increase funding for the program. You can learn more about that provision of BFROA and the other provisions of it [here](#).

**Does the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (BFROA) reference the Community Reinvestment Act and its emphasis on small farm lending?**

The short answer is no. The credit/financing pieces are related mostly to FSA loans, and CRA deals more with private banks and CDFIs. That said, BFROA does include funding for IDAs (individual development accounts) which would, if funded, be managed by mostly CDFIs, but the linkage to CRA is not explicit.

## Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

**How many retail establishments have been assisted or built from scratch in the 35 HFFI states since 2011?**

Since 2011, a total of 958 healthy food retail projects have been funded through the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative investments. An additional 250 projects have been funded through state and local programs. You can read more about the impacts of HFFI across the country in the [HFFI Impacts Report](#).

**I operate a nonprofit organization that involves preparing healthy meals, food education, and gardening. Is this something HFFI would support in a grant?**

HFFI supports healthy food retail projects. You can learn more about HFFI criteria and other financing opportunities on [healthyfoodaccess.org](http://healthyfoodaccess.org).

**Does HFFI make available subordinated debt in participation with bank loans?**

HFFI is often used as a more flexible type of funding, and can be used with bank loans for subordinated debt.

**Is there any work being done around HFFI and/or food distribution with Indian Reservations?**

There is HFFI work being done with Indian Reservations. One example of this is [First Nations Oweesta Corporation](#), a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), working to provide training, technical assistance, investments, research, and policy advocacy to help Native communities develop an integrated range of asset-building products and services, including financial education and financial products. Similarly, [First Nations Development Institute](#) works to invest in and create innovative institutions and models that strengthen asset control and support economic development for American Indian people and their communities. Recently, Seeds of Native Health commissioned a report by the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative that talks more about the present and future of food policy in Native Communities in the context of the Farm Bill in [Reimagining Our Future](#).

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**Are the 'broader impacts' quantified nationally for HFFI? For example, development, community vitality, jobs, and farmers?**

You can read more about the impacts of HFFI across the country in the [HFFI Impacts Report](#).

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REINVESTMENT FUND

**As a small, family-owned food distributor (with a service area of about 100 miles) who is slowly shifting their focus to local, natural, fresh, sustainable foods- where is the biggest gap in the healthy food access chain where we, distributors, might make the biggest impact? Locally and/or on a larger scale?**

This is a great question, and it's great to know small, family owned distributors are working on this! Distribution is critical. This report, [Healthy Food in Small Stores: Strategies to Close the Distribution Gap in Underserved Communities](#), provides an overview of strategies that may be helpful to you.

**What does HFFI look like on the local level? For example, I live in DC.**

Healthyfoodaccess.org is a great resource to find out about HFFI efforts where you live. You can learn more on the [Policy Efforts by State](#) tool, and click on DC.

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

**Is there a reference for the data of \$1 billion in federal SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 billion in economic activity?**

The USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) has this data, and more pertaining to the economic impact of SNAP, [here](#).

**Do you have a break down on where SNAP dollars are spent in terms of food category? Ex. fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, soft drinks, milk, etc.**

Though it is difficult to track exactly how SNAP dollars are spent in categories, they are generally spent across all food categories. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) [released a study](#) detailing the break down of these categories. The study found that the top 10 categories were the same for SNAP and non-SNAP households.