



PACIFIC COAST  
FARMERS' MARKET  
ASSOCIATION

## FARMERS MARKETS UNITE TO SUSTAIN HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS



In May I shared [news](#) that vital state funding for the California Nutrition Incentive Program was missing from Governor Newsom's proposed state budget. I'm excited to share an update that thanks to the leadership of Assemblymember Phil Ting and Senator Nancy Skinner, and a coordinated effort by farmers markets around the state, that funding was restored.

The [California Nutrition Incentive Program](#) (CNIP) operates out of the [Office of Farm to Fork](#) at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Funding allocated by the State of California for CNIP allows CDFA to apply for federal funding through USDA's [Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program](#). In recent years, CDFA has been very successful in leveraging CNIP to secure federal funding. In late 2022, CDFA was awarded \$12.9 million in federal funding through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program. The combination of CNIP and USDA funds directly supports healthy food access in California through several programs; the largest of these programs is [Market Match](#).

PCFMA was one of the founding members of the statewide consortium of farmers markets that over 10 years ago launched the program that is today known as Market Match. The program provides a dollar-for-dollar match – currently up to \$10 per customer per day – to customers who use their CalFresh benefits at a participating farmers market. Today, Market Match is active at over 250 locations statewide through a consortium of over 60 community-based organizations, led by the [Ecology Center](#).

When Governor Newsom first released his budget for the-2023-2024 fiscal year, it contained no CNIP funding. A failure to fund CNIP in this fiscal year would mean CDFA could not apply for USDA funding in the next grant cycle, potentially forcing the program to shut down until new funding could be secured, a gap that could last for over a year.

Recognizing this threat to an essential food access program, the Ecology Center and members of the Market Match Consortium from around the state jumped into action. Farmers markets began to reach out to their local members of the state legislature to educate them about the importance of Market Match to California's small-scale farmers and farmers markets, share the positive impacts of the program in their local communities, and to ask for support for including funding for CNIP in the state budget.

Throughout this process, the Market Match Consortium received guidance and assistance from [Roots of Change](#), the organization that helped to launch this incentive program and that invited PCFMA's participation.

At PCFMA, we sent letters to every member of the state legislature who has a PCFMA farmers market in her or his district. With other farmers market managers who operate markets in those districts, we arranged Zoom calls with staff of those legislators to share data on the positive impacts of Market Match and stories from customers whose access to fresh produce has been vastly improved thanks to the program. PCFMA's farmers market managers also began collecting signatures from farmers market customers who share our commitment to healthy food access at farmers markets.

These efforts and parallel efforts throughout the state had an impact. In the legislature, Assemblymember Phil Ting, who years ago sponsored the legislation that created CNIP, and Senator Nancy Skinner answered our call and advocated for adding CNIP funding to the proposed state budget. The leadership of these members, and the work of countless farmers market managers, farmers market customers, and farmers market allies, was successful in adding \$35 million for CNIP to support Market Match to the California Budget. This funding will be used to pursue federal funding to sustain and expand Market Match in the coming years.

Everyone at PCFMA – our staff, farmers and other vendors, and customers – sends huge thanks to everyone who joined in this effort. Members of the legislature who voted for the funding, legislative staffers who joined Zoom calls, farmers market managers who collected signatures, and farmers market customers who signed petitions were all essential to this effort. Together we have made a difference in the lives of hundreds of California farmers and thousands of California families and working together we can continue to support them for years to come.



Allen Moy  
Executive Director

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