

As SNAP Funding Decreases Across the Country Berkshire Ag Ventures Steps Up to Support the Community

Great Barrington MA – During the month of March, [Berkshire Agricultural Ventures](#) (BAV) is turning to the community for their participation in BAV's campaign [Double SNAP for a Great\(er\) Impact](#). This month-long crowdfunding campaign supports BAV's Market Match Fund program, but it's part of a larger effort to improve affordable, local food access in the Berkshire area. A timely effort, as SNAP benefits across the country are being reduced to pre-pandemic levels.

BAV launched the Market Match Fund in 2022 as a pilot project to test the effectiveness of centralizing fundraising efforts for SNAP ([Supplemental Nutrition Access Program](#)) matching programs at Berkshire-area farmers markets. This effort was in response to concerns from market managers about the long-term viability of SNAP matching programs due to fundraising challenges. In addition to receiving testimonials from farmers who benefit from SNAP revenue.

The Market Match Fund provides a reliable funding stream to Berkshire-area farmers markets to boost customer SNAP benefits. This enables farmers markets to offer a \$1-for-\$1 SNAP match up to \$30, providing customers \$60 to spend on local, SNAP eligible foods. This helps make SNAP dollars stretch further, and locally produced food becomes more accessible to people with limited income.

BAV's March fundraising campaign is timely in that, beginning in March the federal government will be [decreasing the emergency allotments](#) provided to SNAP recipients due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given this significant decrease, SNAP matching programs at farmers markets will be that much more important and necessary to maintain adequate food access and affordability.

In 2022, BAV was successful in raising and distributing \$116,500 across 10 Berkshire-area farmers markets. Looking ahead to the 2023 farmers market season, BAV hopes to significantly grow the program's impact. Although BAV's March campaign fundraising goal is \$30,000, this isn't the total program budget - only a portion.

BAV Program Manager, Ciana Barnaba states the overall fundraising goal is much larger. "In one year BAV was able to prove this pilot project was effective in both feeding people *and* generating increased sales for local producers", says Barnaba "Now as an established program, and with SNAP allotments now reduced, BAV needs to ensure we can meet the anticipated demand for SNAP matching across all the markets we work with." Barnaba goes on to say, "BAV's hope is that by getting community support this month we can build a legacy of reliable, affordable, local food access, work toward de-stigmatizing SNAP usage, and make farmers markets a welcoming space for everyone."

BAV's tagline for the campaign [Double SNAP for a Great\(er\) Impact](#) is: "Growing the Market Match Fund is a win-win! Boost sales for local farmers and increase food security for our neighbors." Yet, this program is really a triple win. Because of BAV, farmers markets do not need to fundraise for SNAP matching programs, customers can trust their budgets will stretch further and farmers have an additional revenue stream to count on.

In order to reach this year's Market Match Fund budget goal BAV needs the community to join in to ensure this program can live on and grow in the months and years to come. In March, you can take part in the campaign and raise \$30,000 in 30 days! Gifts will be matched dollar for dollar for the first \$15,000 raised thanks to two generous supporters.

BAV is sincerely grateful to all those who have contributed thus far, and thanks in advance all others who will join in this month-long campaign. To make a gift to the Market Match Fund, please visit the March campaign on [Fundrazr](#) or by mail at 321 Main Street #202 Great Barrington, MA 01230.

Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV) is a nonprofit organization working to support the development and viability of local farms and food businesses throughout the Berkshire-Taconic Region, helping to build a thriving local food economy, improve access to fresh food for everyone, and address climate change through regenerative agriculture. For more information on BAV's low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance, please contact us at info@berkshireagventures.org or (413) 645-3594.