



Building resilient & equitable  
food systems in West Virginia

304-926-0567

3820 MacCorkle Ave SE  
Charleston, WV 25304

[wvfoodandfarm.org](http://wvfoodandfarm.org)

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Contact: Spencer Moss, Executive Director

WV Food and Farm Coalition

[smoss@wvfoodandfarm.org](mailto:smoss@wvfoodandfarm.org)

(304) 926-0567

### **SNAP Stretch Program Seeks CARES Act Funding**

Charleston, WV - The West Virginia SNAP Stretch program has seen its most successful season and is in need of additional funding. SNAP Stretch, a program of the West Virginia Food & Farm Coalition (the Coalition), has been operating since August of 2018 which doubles and triples SNAP/EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/Electronic Benefits Transfer) dollars at West Virginia farmers markets, on-farm stands, mobile markets, CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture Programs), and local retailers.

In past years, the program has been successful, but no one could have imagined how successful the program would be this season. SNAP Stretch has experienced a 661% increase from this point in the season in comparison to last year. Last year in total, \$53,000 in SNAP Stretch dollars was utilized; expecting an increase in use this year, the Coalition fundraised for almost three times this amount for the 2020 season. As of August, the Coalition has utilized the entirety of the \$150,000 available for this season and are seeking \$300,000 in CARES Act funding from Governor Jim Justice's office in order to continue to the program throughout this pandemic, which has provided access to fresh produce, meat, dairy, and eggs for 2,000 seniors and families with children.

The Coalition works to build the local food and agriculture system in West Virginia in a way that provides viable incomes for farmers and local foods businesses and ensures all residents have access to locally produced food. In line with this mission, the SNAP Stretch program is a triple bottom-line win for West Virginia. First, SNAP/EBT recipients are incentivized to purchase nutritious foods to feed their families, which helps stave off health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Secondly, this program captures both federal food dollars and philanthropy dollars in West Virginia's food economy. For every \$1 spent at big box stores, only \$0.40 will remain in West Virginia's local economy. By comparison, shopping at a local business, for every \$1 spent *at least* \$0.70 remains in the local economy. Finally, this program is helping to grow West Virginia's agricultural sector, as these funds go directly to West Virginia farmers and grocers to purchase their goods.

The program works simply; at a participating farmers market, a SNAP/EBT user will bring their card to the managers booth and ask to use their SNAP/EBT card on purchases. Typically, the market manager will issue market script, such as tokens. Then, the market manager will also issue SNAP Stretch dollars in the form of script. For example, if the user asks to use \$20 from their SNAP/EBT card, they will receive \$20 in SNAP tokens and \$20 in SNAP Stretch tokens. If the user has children or they are a senior citizen, they will receive



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an additional \$20. For example, a family with seniors or children would have \$60 to spend at the farmers market. The Coalition then reimburses the market for the \$40 in SNAP Stretch dollars.

In many of West Virginia's smaller communities, the farmers market is the single point of fresh produce access. These local farmers markets, on-farm stands, CSAs, and local retailers provide safer access to fresh food that has been handled by just a few hands in the food chain. Additionally, they help residents overcome food desert access issues that many communities face whether due to transportation or availability.

In addition to the requested \$300,000 in CARES Act funding, the Coalition and its 42 participating SNAP Stretch sites are seeking funding from philanthropic resources and has launched a crowdsourcing campaign in order to continue capturing federal food dollars in our state's economy and feeding hungry West Virginians through the 2020 season.

To donate to the SNAP Stretch crowdsourcing campaign, visit [SNAPStretch.com/donate](https://SNAPStretch.com/donate). For more information or to share your experience with the SNAP Stretch program, contact organizers at [SNAPStretch@wvfoodandfarm.org](mailto:SNAPStretch@wvfoodandfarm.org).



*Children take part in a scavenger hunt activity at the Linwood Farmers Market of Pocahontas County, which is one of 42 sites participating in SNAP Stretch in 2020.*