Boosting urban food security, and with it, farms and nutrition

A program called Produce Perks is tackling northeast Ohio’s urban food deserts while boosting small farms and food security. Participating farmers’ markets give two-for-one incentive tokens, or “Produce Perks,” to customers who use an Ohio Direction Card — their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits — to buy food. The program provides a dollar-for-dollar match up to $10 for every dollar spent at the market on fresh produce. The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition — established by local food leaders including Ohio State University Extension’s Cuyahoga County office — runs the program.

“Produce Perks has brought many low-income and food-insecure residents to farmers’ markets for the first time,” said Nico Boyd, community development coordinator in the office and the coalition’s project coordinator. “Not only does it help stretch people’s food dollars to buy more fresh, local produce, it keeps food dollars here in our local economy and helps farmers grow their customer base and their enterprise.”

More: go.osu.edu/ProducePerks

“Families can stretch their food dollars by utilizing Produce Perks to double their whole-food purchases. The relaxed atmosphere at farmers’ markets is perfect for conversations about meal preparation, food storage and preservation, all of which decrease food insecurities.”

— Veronica Walton, farmers’ market manager, Famicos Foundation, Cleveland
WE CONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN ALL STAGES OF LIFE.

We work with families and children, farmers and business owners, and community leaders and elected officials to build better lives, better businesses and better communities that make Ohio great. We do this through a focus on the following impact areas.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

We teach people how to apply research in their daily lives in order for them to make informed choices about everything from finances to healthy living to food safety.

PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

Our 4-H youth development program delivers skills in leadership, communications, math, science and research to 216,000 young Ohioans. Ohio 4-H extends its reach through special in-school, after-school and summer programs.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Ohio’s diverse agricultural, horticultural and forestry industries contribute $105 billion to the state’s economy every year. We assist with technology, marketing and educational support, protecting Ohio’s position in the global marketplace. We also work to enhance the environment, water quality and natural resources in the state — balancing economic progress with environmental sustainability.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

Our economic, small business and job development programs are tailored to local community needs in every county, whether metropolitan, rural or a combination of both.

OSU Extension’s mission

Engaging people to strengthen their lives and communities through research-based educational programming

Locally based, jointly funded

We are the university’s community-based research and outreach arm, delivering knowledge from The Ohio State University to every county in Ohio.

We are jointly funded through a line item in the State of Ohio’s budget, through county funds and through the federal government. We do not receive funding from student tuition.