



Alemany Farmers' Market Bonus Bucks Program 2011 Final Report

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Colleen Kavanagh
Campaign for Better Nutrition

Summary

The goals of the 2011 Alemany Bonus Bucks Program were threefold: (1) to increase the number of people on the CalFresh (Food Stamps) program purchasing the low-cost, fresh produce at the Alemany Farmers' Market in San Francisco, (2) to increase the total amount of fresh produce those CalFresh clients purchased for their households, and (3) to assess the expansion of the program into a permanent, year-round benefit for CalFresh recipients. To accomplish this, the Alemany Bonus Bucks Program offered CalFresh clients spending \$10 or more on produce at the market received an additional \$5 in spending power. The program ran in the Spring and Summer of 2011.

During the program, the number of CalFresh clients shopping at Alemany was 102% greater than earlier in the year when no incentive was offered. Independent of the incentive, the total CalFresh sales climbed 83%. A full 82% of CalFresh shoppers said the incentive increased their consumption of produce greatly, and 82% said the Alemany Bonus Bucks were an important factor in their decision to shop at the Alemany Farmers' Market that day. Popular among city employees, advocates, donors and beneficiaries, the program was a success by all measures. Its continuation and expansion into a permanent, year-round benefit to low-income households is fitting with San Francisco community values around fresh, healthy food and around helping out those in need. Project expansion is contingent on continued support from the SF Human Services Department for outreach and on raising additional funds to pay for the \$5 incentive through public and private sources. This could be done with continued and increased investment by the SF Real Estate Department and a broadened private donor base through the Combined Charities Campaign for City employees

Background

Food Stamps and Farmers Markets. In 2011, a record 15% of Americans relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The program, known as CalFresh in California, currently helps approximately 44,000 San Franciscans buy the food they and their families need. The maximum benefit is \$200 monthly per person and \$668 for a household of four.

Historically, SNAP clients could not use their benefits at farmers' markets. However, SNAP purchasing has been brought to many farmers' markets over the past several years. Through the leadership of the Department of Public Health and Department of Human Services in San Francisco, all farmers' markets in the city now are required to accept payment with CalFresh benefits.

Alemanya Farmers Market and CalFresh Shoppers. Alemany Farmers' Market is run by the Real Estate Department and serves thousands of customers every Saturday of the year. In addition to vendors selling prepared foods, the market has eighty-one farmers who sell value-priced produce and other foods in a thriving community atmosphere. The market is packed every weekend, drawing shoppers interested in obtaining quality food at a low price. In 2009 the market was drawing on average 51 CalFresh shoppers per month.

Alemanya Bonus Bucks Program

Origin. To encourage more CalFresh clients to shop at farmers' markets, in 2010 a collaborative San Francisco public and nonprofit agencies (Real Estate Department, Department of Public Health, Human Services Agency, Campaign for Better Nutrition, and Roots of Change) piloted a Bonus Bucks program at several farmers' markets in San Francisco. CalFresh shoppers were given an extra \$5 or \$10 to spend at the market when they spent at least double that amount on produce with their CalFresh benefits. In the pilot year, the number of CalFresh shoppers at Alemany climbed from 48 to 148 at the \$5 incentive level (July data). When the incentive was raised to \$10, the number of CalFresh shoppers climbed to 196. Though other markets participated in the pilot, none came anywhere near this level of participation, bringing in 25 clients or fewer per month at both the \$5 and \$10 incentive level.

2011 Alemany Bonus Bucks Program. This year, Campaign for Better Nutrition coordinated a smaller collaborative of the San Francisco Real Estate Department, Department of Public Health, and the Human Services Agency to implement a similar program. The project offered CalFresh clients an additional \$5 in purchasing power when they spent at least \$10 of their CalFresh benefits at the Alemany Farmers' Market. The \$10 incentive was not offered. The goal was threefold:

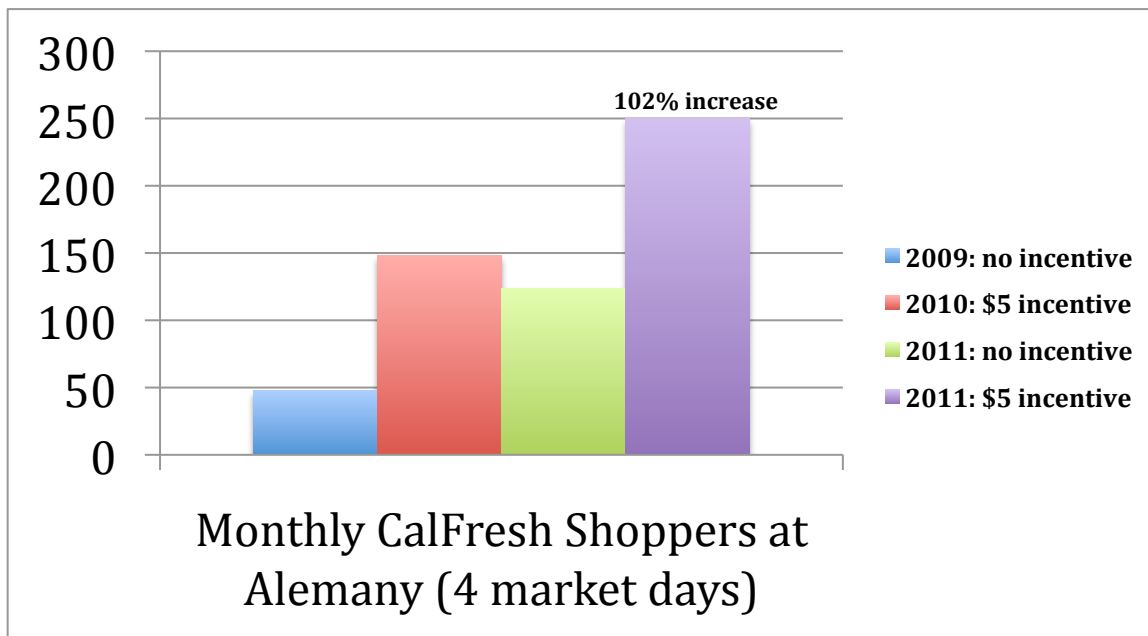
(1) to determine whether renewing the program would further increase the number of CalFresh customers at the market, despite having 90% less funding for outreach and 70% less for project management, and

(2) to determine whether the Bonus Bucks influenced where shoppers spent their CalFresh benefits and if they increased the amount of fresh produce CalFresh shoppers purchased, and

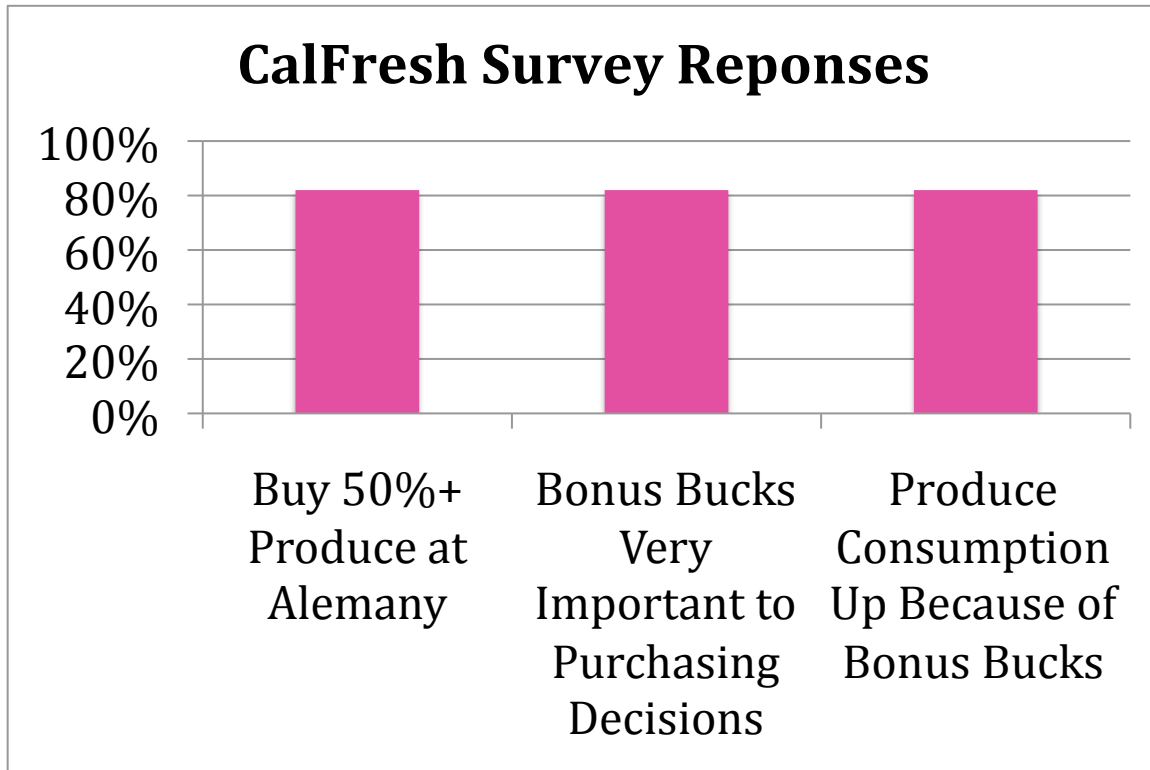
(3) to determine how the program could become a permanent food support for low-income households in San Francisco.

Evaluation—Goal 1: During the first year of this project in 2010, the \$5 incentive brought in 148 CalFresh clients to use their benefits to purchase fresh produce at the market in July. After the pilot ended in January, that number dropped to 124 in February (which had the same number of market days). and remained a consistent average in the post-pilot period. This represented a 139% increase when compared to the period in 2010 before the pilot began, suggesting the pilot resulted in a permanent increase in CalFresh shoppers at Alemany.

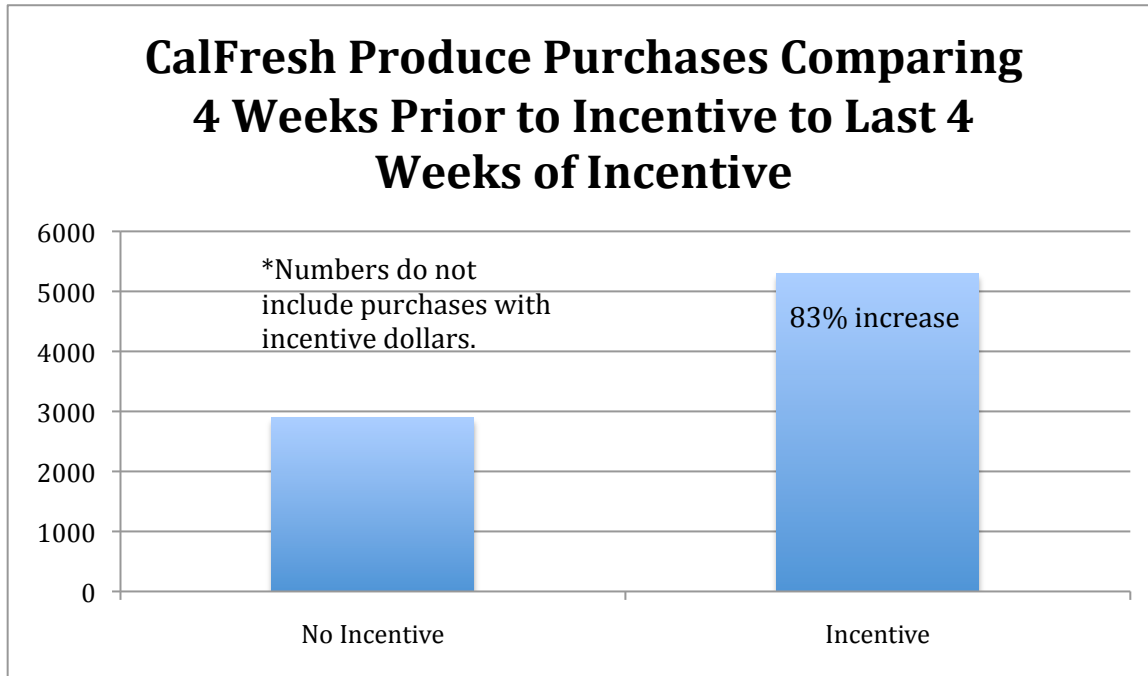
During the last 4 weeks of the 2011 project, the same \$5 incentive brought in 250 CalFresh clients. This is an increase of 69% compared to the pilot (4 week July data) and a 102% increase compared to post-pilot period where no incentive was offered (4 week February data). This success is particularly noteworthy given that the expenditure on outreach materials was 90% less this year compared to last, and staff service expenses were decreased by 70%. Being able to run a successful program with minimal outreach funding was important to assessing the potential to expand the program into a permanent benefit for CalFresh recipients.



Evaluation—Goal 2: CalFresh shoppers at Alemany were surveyed on two market days in the summer of 2011. Of those surveyed, 82% said that Alemany’s Bonus Bucks Program was a “important” or “very important” reason why they were shopping at the market (62% responding “very important”). Eighty-two percent also said the program “increased” or “greatly increased” their consumption of fresh produce (39% responding “greatly increased” their produce consumption). Eighty-two percent also reported they were buying between half and all of the produce for their household at Alemany.



Independent of the \$5 incentive, the total amount of produce purchased with CalFresh benefits in the last four weeks of the program was 83% higher than the four weeks prior to the program’s launch.



Cost and Future Funding

The Alemany Bonus Bucks Program was coordinated by Campaign for Better Nutrition and funded and supported in-kind by several sources:

SF Department of Public Health/San Francisco Food Systems Outreach and evaluation	\$5555
SF Real Estate Department Bonus Bucks incentive money	\$2000
In-kind staff support (incentive operation at market)	
SF Department of Human Services In-kind staff support and mailing to CalFresh recipients in select zip codes (outreach)	n/a
Campaign for Better Nutrition Bonus Bucks incentive money	\$3630

In the final weeks of the program, the cost was approximately \$300 per week for the \$5 incentive. The permanent staff at the market, who are employees of the Real Estate Department, operate the program within the scope of their employment. Most of the outreach was done by the Department of Human Services CalFresh staff and through a flyer

that department mailed to households in the zip codes surrounding the market. Outreach support was also provided by SF WIC, SF General Hospital, the Department of Public Health ShapeUp Food Guardians in Bayview and other community nonprofits participating in the SF Food Security Coalition.

The estimated annual cost of operating the program on a permanent basis is \$1000 for outreach materials, \$15,000-\$20,000 for incentive money (depending on usage) plus an optional \$2000-\$3000 in additional funds for outside staff support for coordination, evaluation and outreach. In total, depending on usage, the program could operate on an estimated annual budget of \$16,000-24,000. It is also possible to run the program only during the summertime, when children are out of school and the cost of feeding them at home rises significantly for parents. A 12 week, summertime-only program would run \$4600-\$8800.

The Alemany Bonus Bucks Program is a popular and successful by every measure with beneficiaries, public sector employees, advocates, and private donors. The cost of operating it year-round as a permanent benefit to CalFresh shoppers is relatively low given its success in increasing consumption of fresh produce by low-income households but beyond the fundraising capability of the current private donor base. The program could be funded on an ongoing basis through continued and enhanced financial investment by the Real Estate Department and by enlarging the private donor base by allowing and encouraging City employees to donate to the program through the Combined Charities Campaign. Also key to its success is the continued outreach support by the Department of Human Services and the members of the SF Food Security Coalition.