SNAP, WIC, and Nutrition Build Community Based Food Systems and Food Security

Turning community supported agriculture into agriculture-supported community would allow community food security to thrive within the local food movement (Ackerman-Leist 2013). Community food security targets the local population and strives to, "make healthy, fresh food available to individuals, organizations, businesses, and government entities (Ackerman-Leist 2013)."

The food justice movement is present in Austin with organizations like Urban Roots, which targets lower-income families and troubled teens. The Sustainable Food Center (SFC) has created Farmer's Market Incentive Programs (FMIPs) through the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to increase local food access among nutrition assistance beneficiaries (Jeanie Donovan 2013). They have also targeted mobile vending, community-based farm stands and grocery stores to reach beyond the farmers market (Jeanie Donovan 2013).

New policy recommendations include increasing electronic transfer benefits (EBT) availability at local food retail locations and making it mandatory for all farm stands and farmers markets (Jeanie Donovan 2013). This will be one of the biggest challenges because out of seventeen farmer's markets/food stands in Austin only six are EBT equipped. Additionally Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)-enrolled and WIC (woman, infants, and children)

customers must be included in all the programs and locations in order for it to be the most effective (Jeanie Donovan 2013). However in order to be SNAP qualified one must apply to determine their eligibility and TBB (The Benefit Bank) assists our diverse population (Jeanie Donovan 2013). Installing EBT technology with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) program requires excess funding. Targeting public and private sources, available grants, annual reporting and reapplications can help sustain funding possibilities (Jeanie Donovan 2013).

Since other cities show the benefits of increased sales between SNAP customers as a result of FMIPs the SFC believes that this would be a successful program here. SFC doubles the value of SNAP, WIC, and FMNP benefits totaling up to $20 per market per day through the Double Dollar Incentive Program (DDIP), but only for fruits and vegetables (Jeanie Donovan 2013). Consumers can save keep their incentives to use on other days as long as they use them by the end of the year.

By increasing the frequency of access for low-income consumers to obtain locally produced fruits and vegetables, the programs will redirect consumer spending to local agricultural producers (Jeanie Donovan 2013). This could also provide environmental opportunities like reducing food loss in conjunction with local composting programs and gleaning opportunities, as well as turning excess food into animal chow. It will decrease energy output by cutting transportation costs and minimizing distribution beyond a fifty mile radius. Direct market sales and relationship development between consumers and farmers will be socially beneficial. Additional education benefits will help individuals learn new life skills;

understand where their food comes from and empower better nutrition decisions.

Works Cited

Ackerman-Leist, Philip. *Rebuilding the Foodshed.* White River Junction: Chelsea Green, 2013.

Jeanie Donovan, Amy Madore, Megan Randall, Kate Vickery. *Farmers Market Incentive Program.* Policy Recommmendations for Austin, Texas, Austin: Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, 2013.