

Alaska

Farmers' Market - Quest Program Report 2014



2014 Alaska Farmers' Market-Quest Program Report



April 2015

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This digital publication was produced in Juneau, Alaska by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and cost \$0 to produce.

2014 Alaska Farmers' Market-Quest Program Report

The Alaska Farmers' Market Quest Program (AFMQP) allows low income Alaskans the ability to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or "Food Stamps") benefits to buy fresh, healthy, locally-produced foods. The program also provides new sources of revenue for local farmers and small food businesses.

Since 2011, AFMQP has been administered and funded by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Obesity Prevention and Control Program and Division of Public Assistance. The program provides farmers' markets with grant funding and support to accept SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, known as Quest cards in Alaska. Grants cover the purchase or rental of a wireless EBT machine, monthly associated bank fees, staff to run the program, market tokens, advertising and other start-up items.



Matching Incentive Program

A matching incentive program for Quest customers is an important aspect of AFMQP. On match days, markets match dollar for dollar up to the first \$20 spent with a Quest card to help make healthy, local food more affordable. In 2013, markets provided one "match" day per month. In 2014, every market day was a match day. Matching funds spent by Quest customers increased 30% from 2013 to 2014.

"I appreciate so much being able to buy more as the prices are a bit high. The doubling feels awesome. Feel rich rather than poor for a day! Thank you!"

-Quote from 2014 Quest survey respondent regarding the matching incentive program

2014 participating markets and farm stands:

- ✦ Anchorage Farmers' Market
- ✦ Bethel Farmers' Market
- ✦ Calypso Farms School Garden Stands (Fairbanks)
- ✦ Downtown Market (Fairbanks)
- ✦ Homer Farmers' Market
- ✦ Farragut Farms (Petersburg)
- ✦ Sitka Farmers' Market
- ✦ South Anchorage Farmers' Market
- ✦ Spenard Farmers' Market (Anchorage)
- ✦ Tanana Valley Farmers' Market (Fairbanks)
- ✦ Willow Farmers' Market

Growth of the Alaska Farmers' Market- Quest Program, 2011-2014

	2011	2012	2013	2014
Participating Markets	2	5	10	11
Participating Quest Households*	103	152	534	454
Total Quest Transactions*	224	404	858	954
Quest Benefits Spent at Markets+	\$ 4,830	\$ 6,458	\$ 16,743	\$ 18,273
Matching Incentives+	\$ 937	\$ 2,071	\$ 13,003	\$ 16,863
Debit & Credit Card Expenditures+	\$ 7,524	\$ 42,359	\$ 85,033	\$104,081
Total Quest-Related Revenue for Participating Markets**	\$ 13,291	\$ 50,888	\$114,779	\$139,217

* Data from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Assistance.

+ Data from AFMQP market reports.

** EBT machines provided by AFMQP allow markets the ability to accept debit & credit cards.

Program at a Glance

- ✦ The program has grown from 2 pilot-test markets in 2011 to 11 markets in 2014.
- ✦ In 2014, the program lost two markets (Dillingham & Anchor Point), but gained three new markets (Tanana Valley, Willow and Petersburg).
- ✦ In 2014, the number of Quest households that shopped at the farmers' markets decreased 15% compared to 2013. However, Quest transactions increased 10% in 2014 compared to 2013, indicating that although there were fewer Quest customers shopping at the market in 2014, they shopped more often.
- ✦ Quest customers spent more of their Quest benefits at the markets in 2014 compared to 2013 (9% increase).
- ✦ The EBT machines allow markets the ability to accept Quest, debit and credit cards. The total revenue AFMQP brought in to participating markets (through Quest, matching, debit and credit sales) increased 21% from 2013 to 2014, for nearly \$140,000 in 11 markets in 2014.

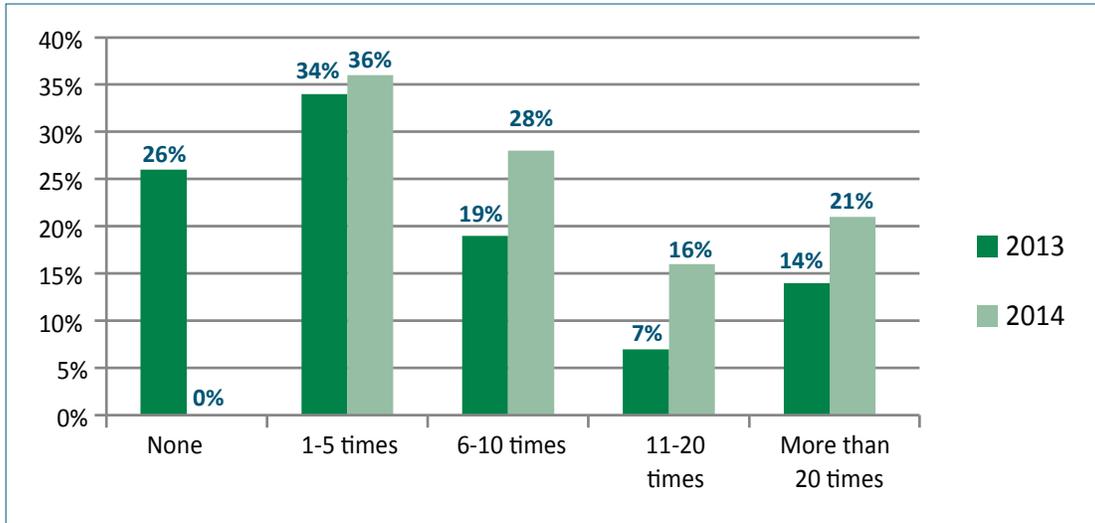
Quest Customer Surveys

To learn about the shopping experiences of Quest card users at Alaska farmers' markets, a survey was distributed to Quest shoppers during three weekends in August, 2014. Sixty Quest customers responded to the survey (37% response rate). Some of the Quest survey findings include:

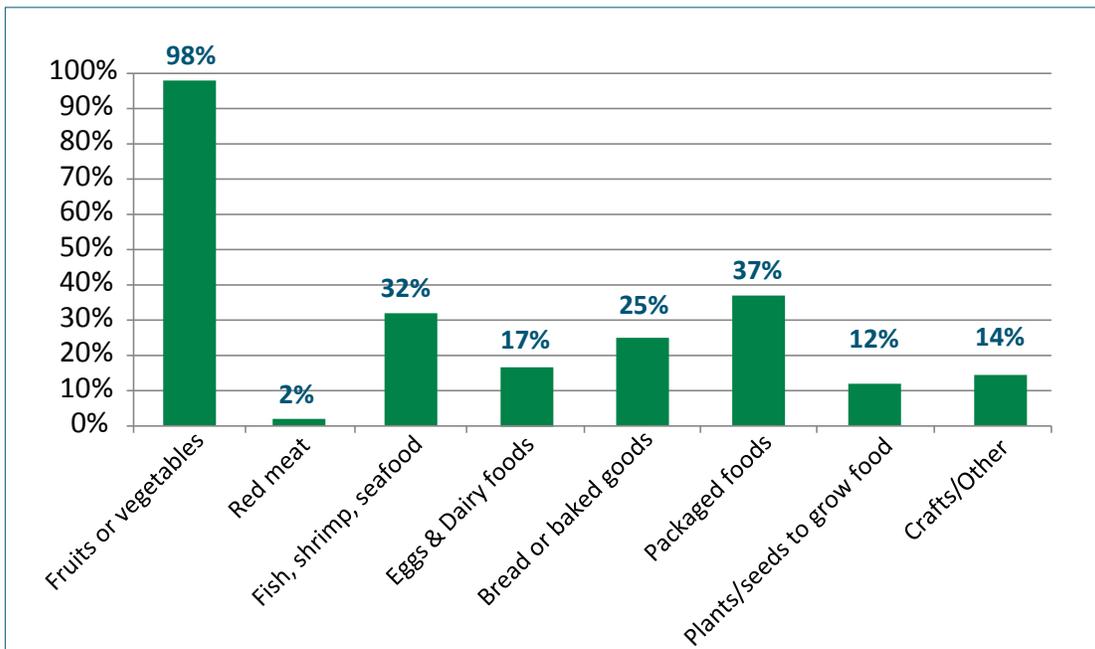
- ✦ Over one-quarter (26%) of the respondents had not shopped at a farmers' market in 2013.
- ✦ Nearly all of the respondents (98%) purchased fresh fruits and vegetables with their Quest card at the farmers' market on the survey day.
- ✦ Respondents said they bought "a lot more" (73%) or "somewhat more" (21%) fresh fruits and vegetables per month because they could use their Quest card at the farmers' market.
- ✦ Most of the respondents (95%) stated the matching program was "very important" in their decision to shop at the farmers' market.
- ✦ Many of the respondents (62%) also purchased items at the farmers' market using another type of payment, such as cash or check (33%), Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons (12%), or WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons (8%).



Number of Times Quest Survey Respondents Reported Shopping at a Farmers' Market in 2013 and Anticipated Shopping in 2014



Percent of Quest Survey Respondents Who Purchased Each Item at a Farmers' Market, 2014



The Alaska Farmers' Market-Quest Program is a win-win program, increasing access to and affordability of fresh, healthy foods for low income Alaskans and increasing revenue for local farmers and small food businesses.

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