

improving HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL FOR COLORADANS

Roles for Government Agencies in Increasing Access to SNAP and WIC Authorized Food Vendors.

This issue brief and full report, containing an extensive overview of SNAP/WIC Colorado vendors, are available at www.cofoodsystems.org.



WHY IS IMPROVING FOOD RETAIL IMPORTANT?

Many Coloradoans, especially those in rural and low-income areas, lack convenient access to food vendors that stock nutritious food and accept federal food assistance benefits – SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children). Lack of access to nutritious food contributes to poorer dietary quality, lower educational attainment, higher prevalence of chronic diseases, and higher healthcare costs.^{1,2} Increasing the availability of SNAP and WIC authorized vendors has the potential to increase diet quality and health for program participants as well as the neighboring community. Local economies will also benefit as the influx of federal dollars used to purchase food will result in more money for Colorado farmers, producers and retailers.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INCREASING THE NUMBER OF FOOD VENDORS THAT ACCEPT SNAP AND WIC BENEFITS?

SNAP and WIC Participants

SNAP and WIC provide funds to households that are struggling to afford food. Participation in SNAP and WIC is associated with improved health outcomes and lower healthcare costs.^{3,4} Poor access to vendors accepting the benefits is a hardship and deterrent to participation.

The Local Food Environment

Local food environments have improved with implementation of the SNAP and WIC nutritious food stocking requirements benefiting everyone, not just program participants.⁵

The State and Local Economy

In Colorado, SNAP-authorized vendors redeemed \$707.4 million in SNAP federal benefits in 2017 and WIC channels approximately \$54 million to authorized food vendors in Colorado each year⁷. Food retailers that accept benefits increase their customer base and food purchases. Additionally the incentive program Double Up Food Bucks incentivizes the purchase of Colorado-grown fruits and vegetables, benefiting farmers and ranchers. The state economically benefits when program participation is maximized, as participation is associated with lower Medicaid and Medicare costs.⁴

WHICH FOOD VENDORS CAN BE AUTHORIZED?

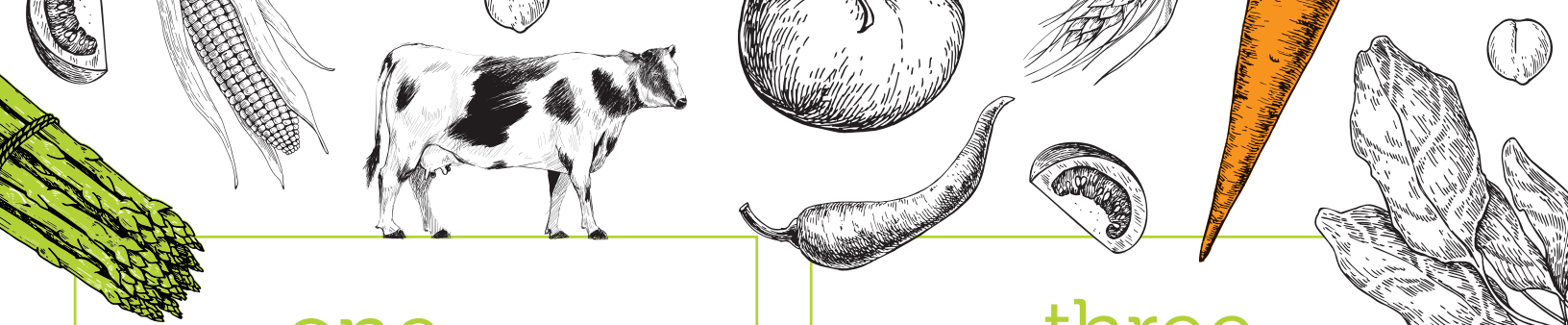
A wide range of retailers can be SNAP and WIC authorized. Both programs require that the vendor have access to an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machine.



VENDOR TYPE	CAN ACCEPT WIC BENEFITS	CAN ACCEPT SNAP BENEFITS
Supermarket (e.g., Safeway)	✓	✓
Large, Medium, and Small Grocers	It depends	✓
Wholesale Grocers (e.g., Costco)		✓
Corner/Convenience Stores (e.g., 7-Eleven)		✓
Franchise Stores		✓
Combination Grocery (e.g., Dollar General)		✓
Farms/Farmstands	✓	✓
Farmers Markets		✓
Community Supported Agriculture (food boxes)		✓
Military Commissaries	✓	

Figure 1





THERE IS **one** WAY GROCERS CAN BE WIC AUTHORIZED:

Grocers must be able to provide an adequate variety and supply of the allowable foods in the WIC package:

Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, whole grains, breakfast cereals, milk, yogurt, soy products including tofu, eggs, cheese, 100% juice, peanut butter, beans, baby foods, canned fish, formula, and specialized medical formulas. Farmers and farm stands have different minimum stocking requirements.



THERE ARE **three** WAYS RETAILERS CAN BE SNAP AUTHORIZED:

They can stock a minimum variety and quantity of staple foods such as vegetables and fruits, dairy products, meat, poultry, fish, breads, and cereals.

Generate more than 50% of their total gross retail sales come from staple foods.

Be direct-market farming operations.



WHICH COLORADO FOOD VENDORS ARE AUTHORIZED?

While there are many more SNAP authorized retailers than there are retailers certified by WIC because of the way WIC is authorized, the bulk of these retailers are corner or convenience stores. There is opportunity to strengthen markets for our Colorado farmers and ranchers, improve distribution of nutritious food items and increase the number of food vendors.

retailers



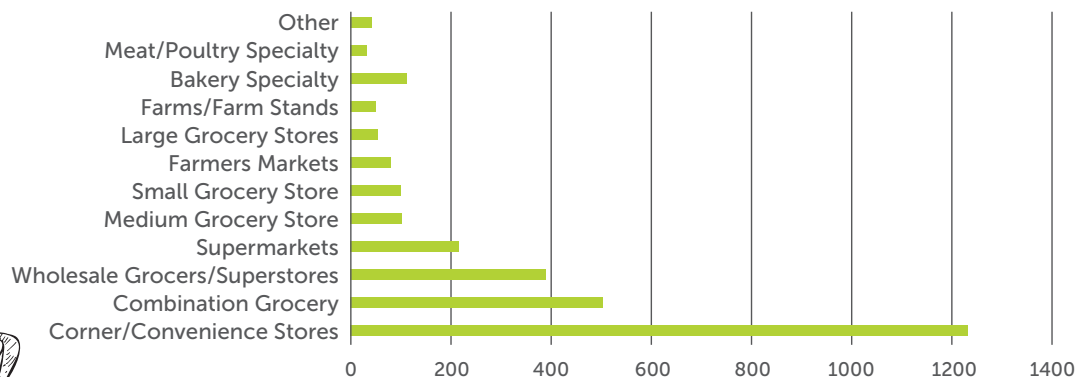
Number of WIC Authorized Retailers by Type

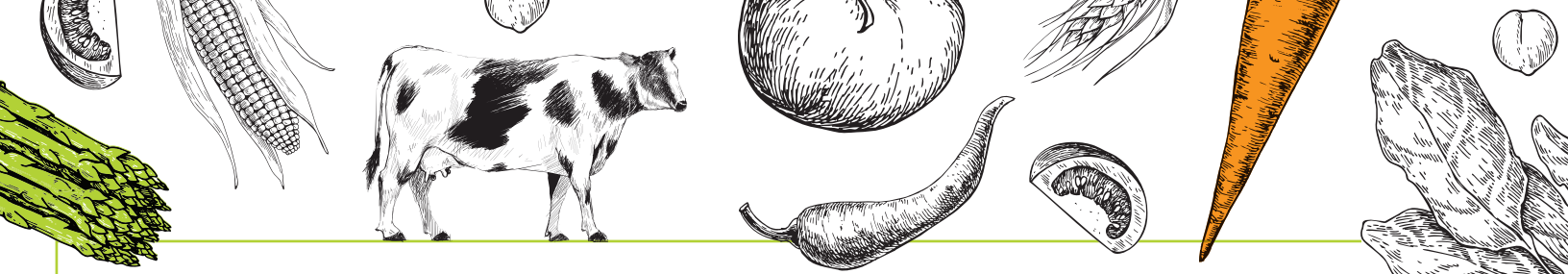


Figure 2

Figure 3

Number of SNAP Authorized Retailers by Type



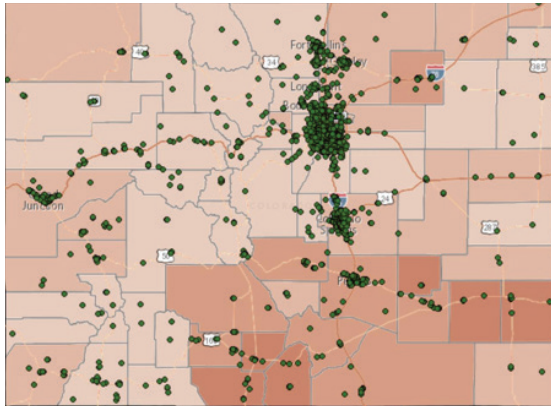


Colorado SNAP-Authorized Food Stores Overlaid Onto Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

Households Receiving SNAP Benefits, Percent by County, ACS 2012-16

- Over 19%
- 14.1-19%
- No Data or Data Suppressed
- 9.1-14%
- Under 9.1%

Colorado SNAP Authorized Food Stores by County, USDA - FNS 2018

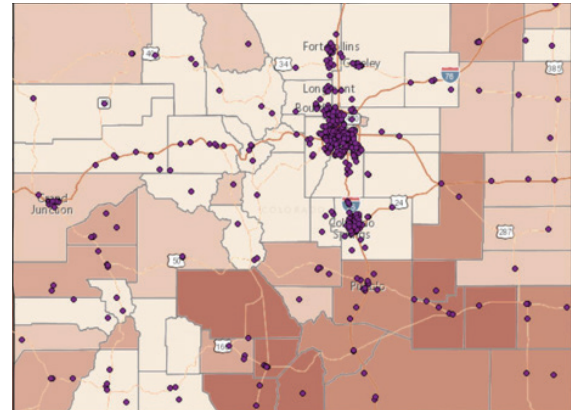


Colorado WIC-Authorized Stores by County Overlaid Onto Population Below the Poverty Level

Population Below the Poverty Level, Percent by County, SAIPE 2016

- Over 22%
- 18.1-22%
- 15.1-18%
- 12.1-15%
- Under 12.1%

Colorado WIC Authorized Stores by County, CDPHE 2018



opportunities

BARRIERS FOR EXPANDED AUTHORIZATION

There are three significant barriers to becoming a SNAP and WIC authorized food vendor: EBT access required for gaining and maintaining authorization, meeting stocking standards, and growing enrollment and authorization simultaneously in the same geography. The **State Blueprint to End Hunger** is coordinating efforts to increase enrollment in these programs. This paper identifies opportunities for government agencies (CDPHE : Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, CDHS : Colorado Department of Human Services, USDA FNS: US Department of Agriculture Food & Nutrition Service) to improve healthy food access and strengthen our state's agricultural economy by:

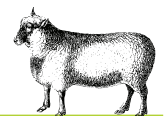
I. Remove Cost and Process Barriers for Food Retailers

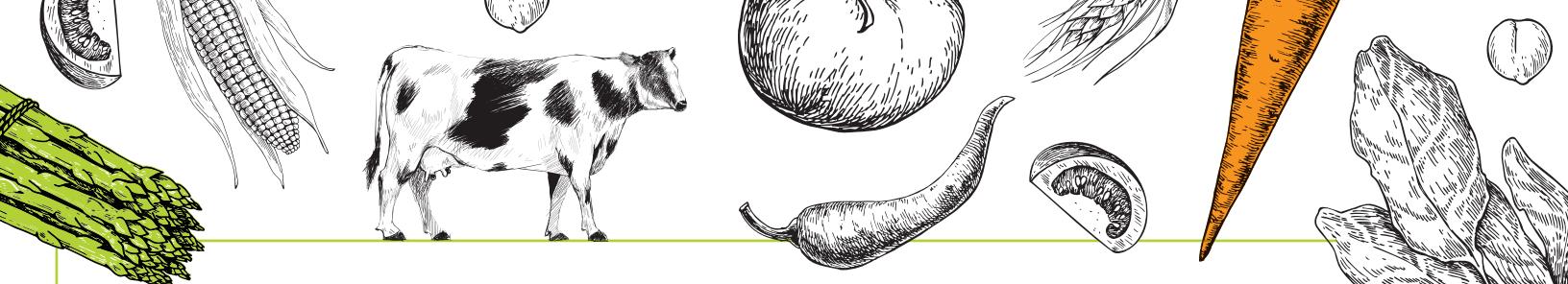
- a. Centralize EBT information for food retailers interested in becoming a SNAP and WIC authorized vendor. CDHS, CDPHE

- b. Support expansion of broadband capacity in rural areas to support use of hard-wired EBT machines. Governor's Office
- c. Provide direct market farming operations with no-cost EBT equipment through the state contracts with EBT vendors. CDHS
- d. Establish fee-sharing, grant funds and technical support to support small stores in becoming a SNAP and WIC authorized vendor. USDA FNS, CDHS, CDPHE

II. Assist Food Retailers with Stocking Standards and Produce Incentives

- a. Implement the SNAP stocking standards from the 2014 Farm Bill. USDA FNS, County Public Health
- b. Partner with retail associations to identify opportunities to transport more fresh, healthy foods to vendors so they can meet or exceed SNAP and WIC stocking requirements. Local government.
- c. Identify, promote, and increase financial support for scale- appropriate distribution systems (including farm-to-store and farm cooperatives). Local government





- d. Expand and sustain Double Up Food Bucks with state support. *CDHS, USDA*
- e. Explore funding for “doubling” or produce incentive programs for **WIC** program. *CDPHE, USDA FNS*
- f. Encourage partners to use the Colorado Proud logo to identify foods eligible for the SNAP produce incentive programs: foods grown, raised, or processed in Colorado. *CDA*
- g. Increase reach of food skills by providing integrated **SNAP**- Education and **WIC** education and enrollment at food vendors. *CDHS, CDPHE*

III. Increase Awareness of Benefits and Resources

- a. Increase agricultural partners’ awareness and engagement of **SNAP** and **WIC** and related incentive programs. *CDHS, CDPHE*
- b. Collaborate to make vendor information shared and centralized across **SNAP** and **WIC** EBT, (e.g. website for information on becoming a vendor and troubleshooting problems). *CDHS, CDPHE*

- c. Increase retail-based promotion of **SNAP** and **WIC** programs (e.g., improved identification of **WIC** foods on shelves or other best practices). *USDA FNS, CDHS, CDPHE*
- d. Raise awareness about emerging innovations and potential opportunities in Colorado (e.g., **WIC** in small stores and at farmers markets) to national partners (E.g., **National WIC Association**) to garner support for needed policy change and/or supplemental funding. *CDPHE*

IV. Expand WIC-Authorized Food Vendors and Produce Incentives

- a. Explore expansion to corner stores and farmer’s markets. *CDPHE*
- b. Explore **WIC** incentive programs. *USDA FNS, CDPHE*
- c. Explore potential changes in vendor authorization policies to encourage more eligible vendor locations and types (E.g., expansion to Combination Grocery stores, home delivery, mobile markets, CSAs, and new models like delivery and mobile). *USDA FNS, CDPHE*

references

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2. Tarasuk, Association between household food insecurity and annual health care costs, *CMAJ*. 2015 Oct 6;187(14):E429-36. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.150234. Epub 2015 Aug 10
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5. Havens EK, Martin KS, Yan J, Dauser-Forrest D, Ferris AM (2012). Federal nutrition program changes and healthy food availability. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 43(4):419-422.
6. SNAP is an Important Public-Private Partnership, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 2018.
7. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment WIC Program, March 2018.
8. Benefits, Colorado food assistance program. Retrieved from <https://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1580>.



COLORADO FOOD SYSTEMS ADVISORY COUNCIL

For more information on COFSAC activities and for a list of current members visit: cofoodsystemscouncil.org

