



prchn.org

# Ohio Produce Perks Supermarket Pilot Findings

## Produce Perks: Ohio's Nutrition Incentive Program

Produce Perks is Ohio's nutrition incentive program, which seeks to increase access to fresh and healthy food options for families who use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/EBT) benefits while also strengthening local farms and economies. Produce Perks matches the value of SNAP benefits when they are spent on fruits and vegetables (e.g., for every \$1 in SNAP spent on fruits and vegetables, customers using SNAP/EBT receive an extra \$1 to spend on additional produce at both farmers' markets and grocery stores). This pilot was funded by the Ohio Department of Health and implemented by national nonprofit Wholesome Wave with support from the Ohio Grocers Association and the Ohio Nutrition Incentive Network, a multi-sector statewide coalition led by Produce Perks Midwest.

**Fig. 1 Produce Perks Pilot Coupon at Dave's Mercado**



## Supermarket Pilot

In September 2017, Produce Perks was piloted at Dave's Mercado, a supermarket located in a predominantly Latino neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio. Over the course of five weeks, customers at this store were given a \$5 coupon (Figure 1) redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables every time they paid using SNAP benefits with an Ohio Direction Card. Receipts were collected from all transactions in which coupons were (a) distributed by Dave's or (b) redeemed by SNAP customers. These receipts were analyzed to examine spending behaviors and track customers.

## Customer Brand Recognition

SNAP customers were surveyed after leaving the store to ask about their recognition of the Produce Perks coupon. We screened out non-SNAP customers by asking all customers if they had used an Ohio Direction Card for their purchase that day. Just over half (53%) of customers approached said they had used an Ohio Direction Card indicating that they were SNAP recipients. Of the SNAP customers surveyed, about half (53%) indicated that they had seen or could recognize the coupon. Of these individuals who had seen or recognized it, most (63%) had received it and of those who had received it, nearly 1 in 4 (24%) reported they had used it.

## In-Store Advertising Materials

Bilingual signage was placed in the store after the second week of the pilot. This signage was posted in the produce section and at store registers to prompt customers to use or ask about the Produce Perks coupon. The language of the sign is consistent with the "You SNAP. We Match." campaign materials distributed statewide. It is meant to convey to customers that if they use their SNAP benefits on fresh produce, they qualify for the Produce Perks incentives. For this pilot, SNAP customers were not required to purchase any fruits and vegetables to qualify for the incentive.

**Fig. 2 Bilingual Store Signage Placed in Produce Section and at Registers**



## Incentive Distribution and Redemption Information

In total, 2,964 incentive coupons were distributed and tracked through receipts. Of these, 423 were redeemed (14.3%) at Dave's Mercado. There were 2,103 unique customers who received the coupons. These customers received an average of 1.5 coupons with some receiving as many as 17. Receipt data indicated that 381 unique customers redeemed a coupon. These customers used an average of 1.3 coupons with some using as many as 5. For those customers who could be linked to both a distribution and a redemption transaction, the time between receiving the first coupon and redeeming the first coupon was an average of 18 days.

### Supermarket Pilot Timeline

#### September 2017

9/11: First coupons distributed for week-long test program prior to the pilot  
 9/23: Expiration of coupons distributed in test week  
 9/24: Official pilot begins

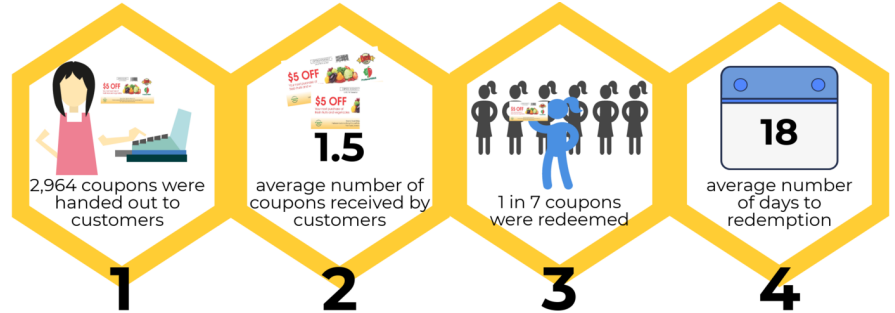
#### October 2017

10/20: Distribution of coupons ended

#### November 2017

11/20: Expiration of all coupons distributed from pilot

**Fig. 3 Produce Perks Coupon Distribution and Usage**



## Fruit & Vegetable Purchasing Patterns

### Transactions where customers received coupon:

On average, customers spent \$50.39 in SNAP dollars for each transaction, with \$4.39 being spent on fresh fruits and vegetables. This means that customers were spending about **8.7%** of their SNAP dollars on produce.

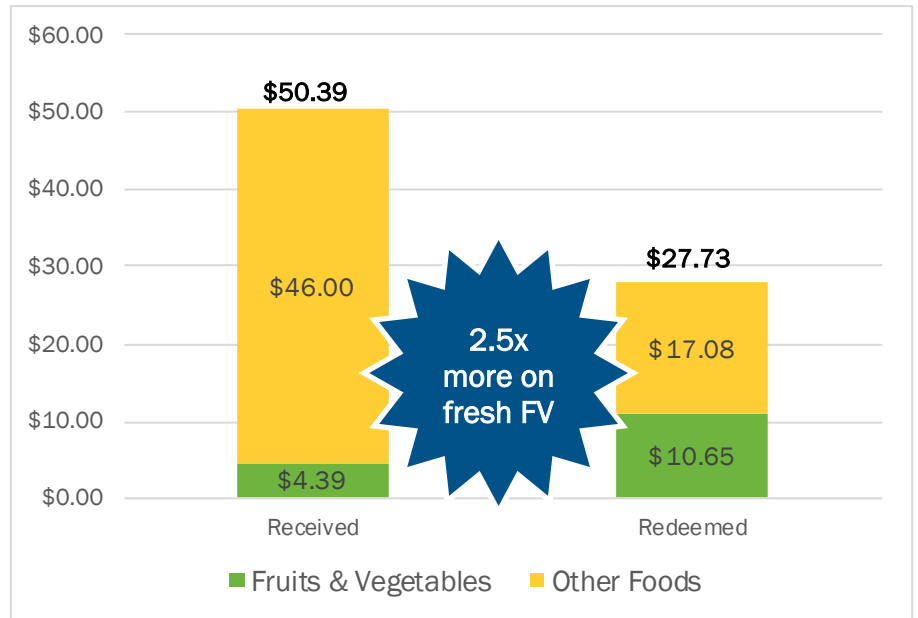
### Transactions where customers used coupon:

On average, customers spent \$27.73 in SNAP dollars for each transaction, \$10.65 of which was spent on fresh fruits and vegetables. This means that customers spent **38.4%** of their total bill on produce.

These findings indicate:

1. Customers may make an extra trip to redeem their coupon, which is illustrated by the average SNAP purchase being nearly **50% less** for customers who redeemed their coupon than the average for those who received the coupon
2. Customers spent **2.5 times** more on fresh fruits and vegetables when shopping with the incentive coupon than the original purchase.

**Fig. 5 Amount of SNAP Dollars Spent on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (FV) and Other Foods When Incentive Coupon Was Received and Redeemed**



**Methods:** The Produce Perks supermarket pilot conducted a soft launch the week of September 11, 2017. Roughly 50 coupons were distributed per day during this time. These coupons were set to expire on September 23, 2017. Following the test week, no coupons were distributed in an effort to address any coupon distribution issues. The program began the full pilot on September 24, 2017, with nearly 100 coupons distributed per day until October 20, 2017, when distribution ceased. Coupons distributed during this period expired on November 20, 2017. Data for this brief reflect all coupons distributed between September 11 and October 20, 2017. A receipt was saved for each transaction in which a coupon was distributed or redeemed. Receipts were examined to identify the amount of money spent on fruits and/or vegetables as well as to identify and track customers using the last four digits of their Ohio Direction card.

Intercept surveys were conducted at three different time points. The first was when coupons were being distributed. The second and third were after all coupons had been distributed but before the coupons had expired. We approached customers as they left the store. Overall, about 10% of these customers agreed to participate (n=96). After screening for those paying with an Ohio Direction Card, our sample size was 51 with 6 surveys being conducted in Spanish. Surveys were geared toward brand awareness and loyalty as well as dietary behaviors.

### Recommended Citation:

Pike SN, Hancock L, Merritt K, Foreman T, Donley G, Fishlin NA, & Freedman DA (April 2018). Ohio Produce Perks: Supermarket Pilot Findings. Cleveland, OH: Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods, Case Western Reserve University.

This research was supported the Ohio Department of Health. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Ohio Department of Health.

