

Demand side incentives for fruit and veg consumption

Seminar summary

Seminar question: What are the best uses of public funds to help people to eat more fruit and veg?

Two specific US programmes were presented by Gus Schumacher, Founder Board Chair of Wholesome Wave: www.wholesomewave.org

Double Value Coupon Programme (DCVP) National Nutrition Incentive Network

This Wholesome Wave National Nutrition Incentive Network Initiative is a programme which provides coupons for low income households to purchase fruit and vegetables from farmers markets and some retail outlets. Those receiving food stamps (delivered through the SNAP (Food Stamp) programme) are eligible if they choose to spend these stamps on fruit and vegetables. The amount they spend on fruits and vegetables is often doubled up to \$10 per transaction with the matching coupon.

Some network partners match \$5 for every \$10 spent on SNAP food stamp cards, other partners will match \$10 SNAP card each week, with \$15 and in some cases, some network partners match \$20 a week of nutrition vouchers for each \$10 swiped on their SNAP EBT card at farmers markets.

www.wholesomewave.org/our-initiatives/nationalnutritionincentivenetwork/

The current Wholesome Wave nutrition incentive programme focuses on farmers markets but is also expanding into the retail setting. Farmers markets in the US are rapidly rising in number (there are currently about 8,300 nationwide, a four fold increase in the last 20 years) and are a source of fruit and vegetables (including many types of fruit and vegetables suitable for a range of international cuisines) produced by local farmers. Electronic access systems and readable “cards” are now increasingly being tested to operationalise and simplify coupon redemptions.

The partners in the incentive network are funded through a \$100 million federal nutrition incentives programme legislated within the 2014 Farm Act. This funding can only be accessed if it is matched by other donors thus providing a combined total of \$200 million of nutritional investments from 2015 to 2018.

There are estimated to be nearly 50,000 SNAP food stamps annually that are doubling their Federal nutrition benefits. Wholesome Wave is also further expanding its funding models to engage retailers, both larger supermarket operations such as Kroger and Safeway and also small rural and urban “convenience” stores.

Programmes have been set up with Kroger Supermarkets in Mississippi and Tennessee where for every dollar spent on fruit and veg in a store, using Food Stamps, a further \$10

coupon for free fruit and veg is provided for the next shopping visit. The retailer, a national health insurer, United Health Care and a national senior advocacy entity and AARP are providing the matched funding required to unlock the federal funding. Safeway supermarkets in Washington State is also engaging in a similar way. Both retailers are finding that the programme is increasing fruit and veg sales and in some cases improving their overall market share.

At farmers markets, the Federal matching requirement is being met by national and local foundations, state and local governments and funds raised in the local community from local businesses and citizen donations.

For both retail based and farmers market SNAP incentive programs, an extensive randomised control trial is underway to evaluate their impact.

The Fruit and Veg Prescription Programme (FVRx)

This new Wholesome Wave programme identifies people who are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes and provides them with a package including nutrition education, health checks and coupons for free fruit and vegetables purchased at local farmers markets over a period of 20 weeks. It is funded by Wholesome Wave and local governments and health care organisations. A critical element of the FVRx program is evaluation—with measurements underway of the health impact of various levels of FVRx weekly fruit and vegetable benefits, the duration of FRVx benefits and the impact on longer term dietary behaviour once the core FVRx ends for participating families.

<http://www.wholesomewave.org/our-initiatives/nationalnutritionincentivenetwork/currentprojects/fruit-and-vegetable-prescription-projects/>

Federal funding (US Farm Bill)-2014-2018.

Farming subsidies and nutrition incentives are all funded through the same 2014-2018 legislative act (Farm Bill of 2014). 80% of the \$489 billion five year investments programmed through this act are for nutrition related programmes. Federal funding for SNAP (food stamps) (now \$70 billion annually), school feeding programs, Women and Infant children's vouchers, Senior farmers market vouchers, nutrition education and the \$100m nutrition incentives (the Double Voucher Coupon programme) requiring a \$100 million match.

With the political support for nutrition, congressional agricultural committee members are able to maintain consensus for also funding key farm commodity, crop insurance and critical national conservation programs with this substantial level of commitment to nutrition.

The UK context

1. We currently have the Healthy Start programme which provides vouchers for fruit and vegetables for pregnant women and mothers of young children on a low

income. Currently 72% of those eligible get the vouchers and 90% of vouchers are redeemed. 80% of vouchers are spent in the four major retailers. Approximately 400,000 households benefit and the scheme costs approximately £100million per year. The Alexander Rose charity has a small programme in London for doubling the value of these vouchers if spent in street markets.

2. Birmingham City Council has Birmingham's 'Tackling the Obesogenic Environment' team secured £400K of **Section 106 funding** for a health and wellbeing project in Longbridge. The aim of the project is to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the wider Longbridge area, predominantly Longbridge Ward, Northfield Ward in the Northfield District, Birmingham and Bromsgrove Wards; Rubery South, Rubery North and Cofton. Key elements to focus the funding on includes; reducing sedentary behaviour, increasing uptake of food growing and cooking skills, developing volunteering opportunities, promoting opportunities to change, encouraging active travel and offering an incentive to reward healthy behaviours. The contract will build sustainability by engaging community organisations in programme delivery and developing ongoing sources of funding.
3. The Department of Health and Department for Education funds the **school fruit scheme** in England which provides free fruit to children aged 4-6 in schools in England.
4. Be Enriched are developing a scheme, to which **the local NHS** has contributed, to develop a healthy recipe box scheme for low income families

Areas for follow-up action

1. Go further in documenting the business case used in the USA for the double coupon programme with a view to exploring whether this experience could / should be applied in the UK building on the Health Start programme and Rose vouchers' experience.
2. Explore further the extent to which planning instruments in cities can work harder to make fruit and veg more accessible and affordable on our high streets (including using Section 106/ Community Infrastructure levy funding), and document business models which have achieved this (e.g. Simply Fresh).
3. Develop the business case for fruit and veg prescription / discharge pack for people admitted to hospital with diet-related disease and bring together people who are already working on this with a view to initiating a pilot which could be carefully evaluated.
4. Go further in looking into the extent to which we should be making a case for nutrition goals to be incorporated into the new thinking on public support for agriculture in the context of Brexit, and start to construct the economic arguments for doing this.

Attendees:

Lee	Abbey	National Farmers Union
Mark	Ainsbury	GLA
Kemi	Akinola	Be Enriched
Rosie	Boycott	London Food Board
Laurence	Cockroft	
Justine	Fish	Make it UK
Joseph	Gridley	Kelly Deli Foundation
Abigail	Johnsen	Be Enriched
Nicolas	Mounard	Farm Africa
Jo	Newstead	Department of Health
Jonathan	Pauling	Alexandra Rose Charity
Emma	Pawson	Public Health England
Gus	Schumacher	Wholesome Wave
Anna	Taylor	Food Foundation
Matthew	Waite	Greater London Authority
Alex	Ward	Food Foundation
Liam	Weeks	GLA
Teresa	Wickham	CGMA
Edward	Woodall	Association of Convenience Stores