



For Immediate Release

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## USDA Officials Hold Farmers Market Event to Showcase the MarketLink Program and Unveil a New “Digital” Wallet for Farmers and Farmers Markets

*MarketLink, which Provides Direct-Marketing Farmers and Farmers Markets With App-Based Point-of-Sale Equipment, Is Developing a System for Farmers and Farmers Markets to Accept All Federal Benefits and Incentive Programs*

Alexandria, VA (September 11, 2020) -- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) hosted an event at the State Farmers Market (Raleigh, NC) on September 10 to showcase the achievements of MarketLink, a USDA grant program. Attendees included: Secretary Sonny Perdue, Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump, Congressman David Rouzer, North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, and local farmers and distribution firms working with USDA programs. MarketLink connects direct-market farmers and farmers markets with free app-based SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer processing equipment (TotilPayGo), thereby increasing their sales and profitability. At the event, MarketLink executive director Phil Blalock announced that the program is developing a digital wallet for farmers and farmers markets that will allow them to accept additional federal nutrition benefits that have been paper, voucher, or token-based in the past - such as FMNP (Farmers Market Nutrition Programs) and eWIC (electronic Women Infant Children's Program), and eventually incentive program benefits.

MarketLink is a program of the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) and is funded exclusively by the cooperative agreement with the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA and will continue through September 2022. Through MarketLink, NAFMNP, together with Novo Dia Group (NDG), are using [TotilPay Go](#) (formerly Mobile Market+) to connect farmers and farmers markets with free app-based SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (SNAP/EBT) processing equipment. MarketLink also offers farmers and farmers markets options for integrated credit/debit payment processing through a partnership with Square. "This has been an easy way for us to help the SNAP community and expand our business," shared farmer Ron Lee of Lee's Produce at the event. "It makes things quick and easy."

MarketLink's 2020 achievements are impressive. MarketLink has received applications to provide the TotilPay Go app from farmers and farmers markets in all 50 states plus the U.S. Virgin Islands, and there's active equipment being used by farmers and farmers markets in 46 states. What's more, MarketLink is breaking its past records on SNAP redemption using TotilPay Go. Just last month,

shoppers spent \$1.6 million in SNAP with farmers and farmers markets using TotilPay Go, a 25% increase from MarketLink SNAP redemption in August 2019. And while such spikes in SNAP spending at farmers markets and with farmers point to the severe nature of food insecurity created by the COVID-19 pandemic, they also demonstrate that MarketLink is meeting a need.

MarketLink and NDG's new digital wallet, to be piloted in the fall of 2020, is a continuation of its core mission of creating technological solutions that work for farmers, farmers markets, and consumers. "The majority of all retail transactions are made with some form of electronic payment," noted NAFMNP executive director Phil Blalock. "This new electronic redemption program will open ALL of those customers - from credit card shoppers to federal benefits participants in programs that are not yet electronic - to small farmers nationwide with the use of a smartphone. This is groundbreaking for all of those farmers and the small programs that have been stuck using paper checks, vouchers, or even tokens."

The new technology includes a customer-facing app, MyMarketLink, where the customer can see all their benefits in one place so that they can decide which they want to spend and when. This system allows MarketLink to manage both the distribution and redemption of nutritional benefits and incentives, thus streamlining a complicated system that has unintentionally created access barriers to consumers and deterred farmers and farmers markets from participating in these programs.

These USDA programs are "connecting people that may have never had this kind of great, wholesome local nutritious vegetables and fresh fruit before," noted Secretary Perdue. "SNAP recipients, they can come to places like this, they can come to farmers markets, and USDA has [the MarketLink] project to provide readers ... [where] you can slide your credit card, your debit card, or your EBT card right there to utilize that. So we want our SNAP recipients to know that they can shop here at the farmers market; this is a technology issue that we are solving."

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### **About MarketLink**

MarketLink is a program of the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Program (NAFMNP). In partnership with the USDA and Novo Dia Group, MarketLink assists direct marketing farmers and farmers markets with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Retailer Application and connects them with free app-based SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) processing equipment (TotilPayGo). Marketlink also offers options for integrated credit/debit payment processing. MarketLink has a long-term vision of sustainability for farmers and markets through a broader customer base, increased sales, and profitability. <https://marketlink.org/>

### **About the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs**

NAFMNP is a non-profit organization founded in 1992, with the mission of supporting producers who sell at farmers markets and increasing farmers market sales. This is accomplished through the support of federal nutrition benefits programs, provision of technical assistance, and programs to improve the mechanisms for accepting all federal nutrition benefits, which encompass a variety of tender types. NAFMNP represents 45,000 farmers and 8,000 farmers markets across the country and is the nation's only organization that links States, the District of Columbia, Indian Tribal Organizations, Territories, local fruit and vegetable growers, and low-income families and seniors – all those who have a stake in USDA's Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs and share this mission. <http://www.nafmnp.org/>