



Interfaith Sustainable
Food Collaborative



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Rally at State Capitol to Defend Vital Food Safety Net Program for Low-Income Families and California Farms, Draws Crowds and Elected Officials

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Sacramento, CA – March 22, 2024 – Amidst proposed state budget cuts, members of the [Save Market Match Coalition](#) rallied on the steps of Sacramento’s Capitol Building on Wednesday to implore California state budget leaders to safeguard funding for the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP), which is in danger of being eliminated from Governor Gavin Newsom’s 2024-25 budget.

CNIP is a food safety net program crucial in combating hunger and bolstering California’s small farms by matching CalFresh SNAP/EBT spending at more than 290 farm-direct sites (farmers’ markets, farm stands, mobile markets CSAs) across 39 counties in the state with vouchers for California-grown fruits and vegetables. Market Match, a program funded by CNIP, led to more than \$19.4 million in combined CalFresh and Market Match benefits distributed at California farmers markets and farm stands in 2023. This represents an estimated 38 million servings of fruits and vegetables to 500,000 low-income California households.

More than 90 individuals, including farmers, food justice advocates, farmers market operators, Market Match shoppers, and elected officials—notably, Assemblymembers Damon Connolly (District 12) and Kevin McCarty (District 6)—joined forces at the rally to amplify the significance of CNIP and Market Match. Constituents from the North Bay included the Agricultural Institute of Marin, Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative, ExtraFood, San Francisco-Marín Food Bank, Marin Food Policy Council, and Roots of Change, to name a few.

With lively speeches, signs, and calls to actions, the coalition advocated for preserving the \$35 million already allocated in the current (2023/24) budget and oppose Governor Newsom’s proposed \$33.2 million cut to the program in next year’s budget cycle.

“The proposed budget cut threatens to strip away essential resources from thousands of Californians who rely on Market Match to access fresh, healthy food,” Assemblymember Damon Connolly said in a speech at the rally. “Market Match has been a lifeline, especially during the pandemic and the ongoing period of inflation. By cutting this program, we’re not just hurting families in need; we’re also jeopardizing the livelihoods of our small-scale farmers who play a crucial role in our state’s agricultural landscape.”

Andy Naja-Riese, chief executive officer of the Agricultural Institute of Marin, a Market Match operator, and one of the organizers of the rally stated that “Cuts to Market Match will only worsen food and nutrition insecurity among families and older adults struggling to put food on the table. In Mr. Connolly’s district of Marin and Southern Sonoma Counties, we estimate that without this program, households who shop with CalFresh would lose out on approximately 855,000 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables grown by local farmers each year.”

The Market Match initiative holds pivotal importance for food-insecure Californians dependent on CalFresh SNAP/EBT to nourish their families with fresh, California-grown fruits and vegetables. By offering EBT shoppers a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$15 per day on local fruits and vegetables at eligible farm-direct outlets like farmers markets and farm stands, CNIP not only amplifies the purchasing power for food-insecure families but also lends crucial support to farmers and rural communities.

Janet Brown, co-owner of All Star Organics, a 14-acre farm growing organic tomatoes and other specialty crops in West Marin, attended the rally. “Market Match is a farm bill as much as a nutrition bill. The money is only spent at certified farmers markets with small family farms on California-grown program.” said Brown. “Market Match is an example of California feeding its own through a valuable program with ramifying benefits to the local food system, the health of all Californians, and stewardship of our rural farmland.”

In remarks shared before the rally, California Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (District 4) emphasized the vital role of CNIP and Market Match: “What began as a pilot program 15 years ago to address food deserts, the CNIP program has now become part of the vibrant fabric of our local communities, farmers markets, and small rural farms. This program hits every single mark, and I am proud to support keeping it on track!”

Governor Newsom's January 2024 budget proposal to slash \$33.2 million from CNIP's three-year \$35 million budget has sparked apprehension among advocates. Such a drastic measure threatens not only the existence of Market Match but also the opportunity for millions in matching federal funds, earmarked to alleviate hunger and bolster local agriculture, to come to California.

The Save Market Match Coalition's rallying cry serves as a unified call to action to preserve this critical program, upholding California's commitment to nutrition, agriculture, and economic vitality. The coalition urges California budget leaders to recognize the invaluable contributions of

CNIP and Market Match to the health and well-being of Californians, as well as California's economy and farmers' livelihoods.

[About Save Market Match Coalition](#)

The Save Market Match Coalition is a collective of organizations and individuals committed to protecting and preserving the California Nutrition Incentive Program (CNIP) and its flagship initiative, Market Match. Through advocacy and community engagement, the coalition strives to ensure equitable access to healthy food, support local farmers, and promote public health across California.