



**WIC Fruits And Vegetables Pilot Project  
Angel's Camp, Calaveras County, California  
June 2001-Ongoing**

**SAVE MART SUPERMARKET'S RETAIL COLLABORATION**

The "Healthier Choices for WIC" pilot program has been, and continues to be, a positive experience for Save Mart. Allowing WIC participants to redeem \$5 vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables each month has proven beneficial to both sides.

**SUPERMARKET'S "TOOL BOX" FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- **Variety:** In most stores, over 200 different fresh fruits and vegetables include organics, convenience packs, bulk, and value-added packages.
- **Value:** Competitively priced produce allows larger sales (as compared to farmer's markets and other produce venues)
- **Convenience:** Supermarkets already redeem current food instruments, with great attention to accuracy and detail in reporting, thereby affording fewer "trips to market" for those transportation-challenged.
- **Accessibility:** Every day of the year (some exceptions) high quality produce can be purchased at a supermarket.
- **Quality:** Produce departments are top-draw factors in choice of supermarket, according to market research.
- **Safety:** In California, every retailer must have an employee trained and certified in Food Safety and Sanitation. Save Mart strengthens this regulation through our policy of having each department manager so trained.
- **Culturally Diverse Selections:** Supermarkets choose their products lines to reflect the ethnicity and demographics of the surrounding neighborhood.

**BENEFITS-POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL:**

- **Incremental sales:** Vouchers were redeemed right on the \$5 mark, OR more produce was purchased. For this relatively small store, this represented \$8000-\$10,000 extra produce sales per year for the past 5 years.
- **Profitability:** Produce profit margins are as attractive, or more so, than grocery, milk and dairy items, depending on category, of course.
- **Redemption:** 88% redemption infers a population very "hungry" for nutrient dense foods for their families!
- **Customer Count:** Higher customer counts and numbers of shopping trips due to perishable nature of produce and "draw" of this program.
- **"Stakeholding":** Bettering the health of the community and our own employees. Checkers/department managers became more nutritionally aware of the benefits of adding fruits and vegetables to the diet through this project.
- **Childhood Obesity:** Represents one part of the retail solution to this epidemic; by familiarizing children with fruits and vegetables early, this might engrain good food choices throughout the life cycle.

NEUTRALITIES:

- **Training:** No extra training needed; clerks were familiar with accepting standard WIC vouchers, and these were written with clarity and definition.
- **Fraud:** None was encountered in the 5-year project; carbon copy stapled to receipt sent to issuing agency, then forwarded for inclusion in IOM evaluations and recommendation study. Original kept for store's reimbursement.
- **Checkstand transaction time:** less than that of verifying a check.
- **Corporate pricing issues:** None noted; easy to flag fresh, canned, or frozen F/Vs as WIC eligible, even with "middle of the road" technology. Accurate retails and WIC attributes were maintained in the item database during this time.

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