



WIRELESS EBT PROJECT

January 2013 Newsletter



From the Editor – Tracy Penick

Total Transactions	EBT Transactions	Total Sales on Wireless
2011 Total: 42,748	7,286 (17.0%)	\$1,002,550
2012 Totals:		
January 471	88 (18.7%)	\$ 14,977
February 639	75 (11.7%)	\$ 14,733
March 1,300	94 (7.2%)	\$ 26,134
April 1,848	74 (4.0%)	\$ 67,561
May 6,226	637 (10.2%)	\$192,253
June 5,227	1032 (19.7%)	\$ 96,219
July 6,175	1504 (24.3%)	\$ 90,708
August 5,547	1379 (24.9%)	\$ 87,350
September 5,306	1210 (22.8%)	\$101,899
October 7,001	673 (9.6%)	\$166,145
November 1,937	119 (6.1%)	\$ 51,381
December 2,077	131 (6.3%)	\$ 49,205
YTD		
2012 Total 43,754	7,016 (16.0%)	\$958,565

2012 has come to a close and the figures are in. Total sales on the wireless machines for 2012 were \$958,565.00. Iowa experienced a severe drought with a lot of farmers having to plant their crops multiple times. Although our numbers are slightly down from 2011, I am very impressed with the severe conditions in Iowa that the sales look so good. I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your dedication to the Wireless EBT Project. Because of your dedication and hard work, Iowa's low income families are able to shop at their local Farmers Markets and purchase the freshest food possible.

Year End Facts:

Total year to date sales for 2012 were \$958,565 compared to 1,002,550 in 2011. Total EBT sales for 2012 were \$82,142 compared to \$85,282 in 2011. The number of EBT transactions for 2012 were 7,016 compared to 7,286 in 2011.

In December 2012, there were 197,540 Food Assistance/EBT families in Iowa. \$48,637,977 in benefits were issued in December to these families.

Here are other interesting facts regarding December sales:

There were 51 farmers who were active in December and 24 of those had EBT sales. The farmers with the highest number of EBT transactions were:

- ❖ DeMoss Pumpkin Farm (29) Ames
- ❖ Fitkin Popcorn Co. (17) Cedar Falls
- ❖ Yoder's Natural Farm (14) Bloomfield
- ❖ Oak Hill Acres (11) Atalissa
- ❖ R & B Farms (9) Nevada

❖ Allen's Grove Greenhouse (12) Donahue

Congratulations go out to DeMoss Pumpkin Farm for having the highest number of EBT transactions and for having the highest amount in EBT sales. Great job!

Help Us Recruit New Farmers!

It is that time of year where we need to begin recruiting new farmers for the Wireless EBT Project. Do you know of any farmers in your farmers market that would benefit by being a part of the Wireless EBT Project? If so, please let Tracy or Kim know so that we can reach out to them.

Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Annual Conference

The annual conference for the Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association will be held on January 24 & 25 at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny. Tracy will be hosting a booth at this conference to promote the Wireless EBT Project and hopefully will gain some new farmers for the project. There are some great topics on the agenda as well as WIC, Senior's and Cash Value Voucher Training/Recertification on Friday from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Please be sure to stop by and say hi if you are planning on attending this very worthwhile conference!

Results from Farmers Annual Survey

82 farmers completed the annual survey form this year, 63 completed online and 19 sent in a hard copy to DHS. Thanks so much to those that took the time to complete this survey. This information is compiled and shared with our federal partners, other states, and non-profit groups.

Listed below is the wireless sales history for 2012 (does not include cash, checks, WIC or FMNP sales).

	\$0 - \$500	\$501 - \$1,000	\$1001 - \$3,000	\$3001 - \$5,000	\$5,001 - \$10,000	\$10,001 - \$20,000	\$20,001 - \$60,000	\$60,001 - \$75,000	\$75,001 or greater \$
# of farmers with this amt of sales	52	21	33	17	15	12	10	0	2

Are you certified for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and /or WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program or both?

- Both FMNP/WIC – 67.5%
- FMNP – 3.75%
- WIC – 3.75%
- N/A – 25%

Do you take your wireless machine to every market that you attend?

- Yes – 89%
- No – 11%

If no, please explain why?

- We sometimes have 3 markets a day and only one machine.
You always have the choice to rent another machine. The additional fees of renting a 2nd machine would be the farmer's responsibility.

- Am only doing a roadside stand now.

Please check which months out of the year that you used your wireless machine?

- January – 12 farmers
- February – 13 farmers
- March – 18 farmers
- April – 25 farmers
- May – 62 farmers
- June – 76 farmers
- July – 74 farmers
- August – 76 farmers
- September – 73 farmers
- October 64 – farmers
- November – 34 farmers
- December – 32 farmers

How many days a week did you use your wireless machine at a Farmers Market, roadside stand or at a farm stand?

- 1 – 19%
- 2-3 – 53%
- 4-5 – 17%
- 6 or more – 11 %

Did you experience any issues with your wireless machine this year?

- Yes – 39%
- No – 61%

If so, what issue did you experience?

- Would not connect – 19 farmers
- Would not batch – 5 farmers
- Went to sleep – 8 farmers
Instructions on how to correct this issue printed in the monthly newsletter.
- Would not print out two receipts – 5 farmers
Instructions on how to correct this issue printed in the monthly newsletter
- Would not run transactions – 6 farmers
- Battery won't hold a charge – 2 farmers
If your battery won't hold a charge, please contact DHS for a new battery.
- Other – 17 farmers

If you experienced issues with your wireless machine, who did you call for assistance?

- DHS Staff – 38%
- Total Merchant Services Tech Support (TMS) – 43%
- TSYS Representative (Jason or Chris) – 19%

Where did you use your wireless machine?

- Farmers Markets – 62%
- Roadside Stand – 8%
- On the Farm – 17%
- Craft Shows – 7%
- Other – 6%

With the current economy, do you feel that your customers were buying more or less this year?

- More – 46%
- Less – 54%

Do you find the DHS monthly newsletter helpful?

- Yes – 88%
- No – 12%

Is there anything that you would like to see added to the newsletter?

- We appreciate the Newsletter
- Seems fine as it is

DHS is planning to order new signage for the 2013 market season. What would you like to see on the new signage?

- Good bright colors. Not a lot of information. No one reads if too much.
- Same information as before.
- Very clear EBT signage and large lettering.
- More full color graphics

Do you accept EBT, MasterCard, VISA and Discover?

- All cards – 54%
- EBT – 13%
- MasterCard – 13%
- VISA – 13%
- Discover – 7%

Did you have more sales this year because you accepted EBT cards?

- Yes – 71%
- No – 29%

Were your EBT sales higher or lower this year than 2011?

- Higher – 62%
- Lower – 38%

Were your credit & debit sales higher or lower this year than 2011?

- Higher – 77%
- Lower – 23%

Did you know that DHS provides paper rolls for your wireless machine?

- Yes – 98%
- No – 2%

What could DHS do to help you promote EBT at the Farmers Markets?

- More advertising.
- I think you are doing a great job promoting the program.
- Make sure all participants know they can use their EBT at the market.
- Flyers or postcards to hand out.
- Radio ads like what has been done in previous years. Especially on Friday's during the late afternoon/early evening drive time.

Please tell us what you think would improve the Wireless EBT Project for the 2013 season?

- Keep advertising. Still a lot of people don't know about it.
- More advertising and promotions. More handouts for the early part of farmers markets.
- It's an awesome program and Tracy and Kim do a fantastic job of keeping us as vendors stocked and knowledgeable about the program and how it supports local vendors and our US economy.

Please share any ideas, comments or concerns you may have.

- I am happy with how it works. Thank you!
- Inform EBT clients when they receive their cards that the farmers market is a great place to use it.

- Thanks for allowing vendors to use wireless.
- We appreciate having the Wireless EBT Project capabilities. It benefits both our customers and us. We could really see a difference this year in sales. Thank you for this opportunity.

If you are interested in reading the entire report, contact Tracy Penick.

Paper for your wireless machine

Just a reminder that DHS supplies the paper rolls for your wireless machines. It is imperative that you use thermal paper or it could ruin your machine. Please do not use any other type of paper in your wireless machine other than the paper that DHS supplies. If you are running low on paper, please give either Tracy or Kim a call.

Upcoming Events

IA Farmers Market Association Conference – Saturday, February 9th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the First Christian Church in Des Moines.

Reminders:

1. **Remember that you cannot ring up a sale for another vendor. You could lose your Food Stamp certification and be terminated from the Wireless Project.**
2. **Since you are paying for the commercial transaction fees, be sure to keep track of what you are paying so you can use those expenses as a tax deduction.**
3. **You cannot set a minimum purchase amount. If an EBT household wishes to purchase \$.50 in onions, you do need to process the transaction. Same for any debit or credit transaction.**
4. **Hot foods and hot drinks (cocoa, coffee, and tea) cannot be purchased with SNAP EBT benefits.**
5. **If your Nurit machine quits working, you need to call TMS Tech Support at 1-888-848-6825. This is the phone number on the side of your machine. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.**
6. **If your VeriFone machine quits working, you will need to call Jason Butts at 402-574-7086 or Chris Shanahan at 402-574-7016. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.**
7. **Call Kim if you need any supplies such as paper rolls, power cords, or battery.**
8. **The second battery that we provide to you was purchased by DHS. If you ever need to return your wireless machine, be sure to keep one battery, carrying case and signs.**
9. **Charge your batteries before market. You should always have a charged battery, ready to go for market. If a battery is not holding a charge, contact Kim for a replacement.**
10. **Please make sure to keep the original box that your machine came in as it contains the Sim card, which is needed to identify your machine if you have to call TMS.**

Help Desk

We are here to help you!

When you have questions about:

- **Participating in the Wireless project or reimbursement questions? Call Tracy Penick at 515-281-4935.**
- **What you can sell to EBT customers, or being authorized to accept EBT? Call USDA/FNS at 515-421-3248.**
- **Food Assistance eligibility? Call Kari Lind at 515-281-7000.**
- **Supplies – call Kim Jones at (515) 281-5410.**