Objective
Objective: To design, implement and pilot-test a comprehensive preschool food education program, in Chile, which used the farmers markets, as one of the main learning strategies for encouraging children to eat more fruits and vegetables (F&V).

Target Audience
Although this program focused on children (n=170, ages 1-6) from the community of Nuñoa, Chile, it also included participation from parents (n=510), teachers (n=25), and farmers markets’ sellers (n=65).

Use of Theory or Research
This program was based on the socio-ecological model, as it focused on strengthening values of healthy life through participatory food ecosystems, which managed to integrate daycares, preschools, students and families with the entire community.

Program Description
The program consisted of the following core components: (1) Weekly food education workshops with children and educators; (2) weekly visits to the farmers market; (3) weekly parent-child cooking workshops; (4) orchards at home and at school; (5) diverse food menus; (6) varied community actions; and (7) food sensory laboratory. All the activities involved the child through art, music, literature and also digital tools such as phone applications, audio and video recording. The latter allowed the continuity during COVID-19.

Evaluation Methods
A triangulation of pre-during-post evaluation methods (i.e., interviews, surveys and focus groups with children, school directors and teachers) were used to assess changes on F&V intake, open markets shopping, ultra processed food consumption, house cooking, and pulses consumption. Children’s nutritional status was obtained from public data from primary healthcare, measured annually by nutritionists.

Results
Results (one-year):
- Children increased F&V intake from 7 to 20 weekly portions
- Daily home-cooking from 15% to 55%
- Decreased ultra-processed food intake from 70% to 20%
- Obesity prevalence from 16.8% to 10.1%

Funding:
Fundación Brotes

Conclusion
The combination of the different program’s components, including the visits to the farmers markets, were well-received by the community of Nuñoa, Chile, and positively influence children’s practices and behaviors.