



Bipartisan Policy Center

Making Food and Nutrition Security a SNAP: Recommendations for the 2023 Farm Bill

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DISCLAIMER

This brief is a product of BPC's Food and Nutrition Security Task Force. The findings expressed herein are those solely of the Task Force, though no member may be satisfied with every recommendation in the report. The report does not necessarily reflect the official views or opinions of any Task Force member's employer, institution, or organization, or of BPC, its founders, or its board of directors.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ABAWD	Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents	GusNIP	Gus Schumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program
ACP	Affordable Connectivity Program	HEI	Healthy Eating Index
ACS	American Community Survey	HFFI	Healthy Food Financing Initiative
AE	Adjunctive Eligibility	HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
BAH	Basic Allowance for Housing	ITO	Indian Tribal Organization
BBCE	Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility	LFPA	Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program	MOE	Maintenance of Effort
CBO	Congressional Budget Office	NAC	National Accuracy Clearinghouse
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	NAP	Nutrition Assistance Program
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision	NASEM	National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
CNR	Child Nutrition Reauthorization	NHANES	National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
CORD	Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration	NSLP	National School Lunch Program
CMS	Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services	OIG	USDA Office of Inspector General
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture Program	OMB	Office of Management and Budget
CSFP	Commodity Supplemental Food Program	PARIS	Public Assistance Reporting Information System
CVB	Cash Value Benefit	PHE	Public Health Emergency
DGA	Dietary Guidelines for Americans	SFA	School Food Authorities
D-SNAP	Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	SFMNP	Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer	SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
EFC	Expected Family Contribution	SNAP-Ed	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program)
EFNEP	Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program	SNAP E&T	SNAP Employment and Training Programs
FDA	U.S. Food and Drug Administration	SSI	Social Security Income
FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations	TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
FFCRA	Families First Coronavirus Response Act	TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
FFFB	Farmers to Families Food Box Program	TFP	Thrifty Food Plan
FFVP	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
FINI	Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program	USDA ERS	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service
FNSTF	Food and Nutrition Security Task Force	USDA FNS	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service
FPL	Federal Poverty Level	WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children
GAO	Government Accountability Office		
GOALS	Generating Opportunities to Attain Lifelong Success Program		

Executive Summary

The 2023 Farm Bill gives Congress an opportunity to improve food and nutrition security through federal nutrition assistance programs by expanding access, reducing costs through improved efficiencies and program integrity, and promoting workforce participation. The legislation also is an opportunity to increase the intake of foods recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and to enhance benefits to ensure eligible households can access, afford, and have sufficient knowledge to purchase and prepare a nutritious, balanced diet. The major federal nutrition assistance programs authorized in the farm bill are:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the food stamp program
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)
- Community Food Projects

The farm bill is an omnibus, multiyear law that governs an array of food and agricultural programs. Although farm bills originally focused on farm commodity revenue supports, the legislation's programs have become increasingly expansive in nature, particularly when the nutrition title was first included in 1973. Typically reauthorized about every five years, the most recent farm bill, the \$428 billion Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), was signed into law in December 2018 and expires on September 30, 2023. The 2018 Farm Bill consisted of 12 titles, including the nutrition title, which reauthorized the programs listed above. The nutrition title composed 76% of total 2018 Farm Bill spending, making it the costliest title by far, with most of the funds going to SNAP.¹ According to the Congressional Budget Office's May 2022 baseline for the legislation's major programs, the 2023 Farm Bill is estimated to cost \$1.295 trillion over 10 years, making it the first ever farm bill to exceed \$1 trillion.² The nutrition title is projected to make up 84% of total 2023 Farm Bill spending.³ This increase reflects COVID-19 pandemic assistance, growth in participation, and adjustments to SNAP benefit calculations.⁴

In fiscal year 2021, more than 41 million Americans participated in SNAP and the total cost of the program was more than \$113 billion.⁵ In FY2022, SNAP

costs were projected to increase by 18%, largely due to the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) update, which was authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.⁶ Federal nutrition assistance programs, including SNAP, serve 1 in 4 Americans.⁷ Given the broad reach of the federal nutrition assistance programs, it is imperative that they serve families in need, operate efficiently, and provide families with the foods they need to achieve both food and nutrition security.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA ERS), 33.8 million American households experienced food insecurity in 2021, or 1 in 10 households. Black (19.8%) and Hispanic (16.2%) households were disproportionately affected, with food insecurity rates more than double the rate of white households (7%).⁸ In addition to food insecurity, Americans are also experiencing alarming rates of chronic conditions, many of which are nutrition-related. More than 40% of U.S. adults and almost 20% of children and adolescents ages 2-19 have obesity, according to the CDC.^{9,10} Currently, 6 in 10 U.S. adults have a chronic condition, many of which are nutrition-related, and 4 in 10 have more than one, including heart disease, some cancers, stroke, or diabetes.¹¹ These conditions are also costly, as evidenced by a 2019 study finding that unhealthy diets accounted for almost 20% (\$50 billion) of annual U.S. health care costs from heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.¹² At a time when families are still experiencing food and nutrition security challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, food price inflation, and other issues, Congress should consider the health and economic costs of hunger, food insecurity, obesity, and other diet-related diseases as it reauthorizes the farm bill or considers other policy changes to federal nutrition programs.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's Food and Nutrition Security Task Force (FNSTF) makes five key policy recommendations and more than 25 subrecommendations for strengthening SNAP and other federal nutrition assistance programs authorized in the farm bill. In addition to the diverse expertise of the FNSTF, the recommendations were informed by a stakeholder roundtable, focus groups with former and current SNAP participants, and a nationally representative poll on perspectives on SNAP and potential policy changes. The September 2022 poll, which surveyed 2,210 U.S. adults, including 483 SNAP participants, found support for increased SNAP benefit levels; access to the program for additional population groups such as college students; opportunities for online grocery purchasing; and pilot programs aimed at incentivizing the purchase of healthful foods.^a A bipartisan majority of U.S. adults (67%) and a majority of SNAP participants (58%) said that states should be able to operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants, either freely or with USDA approval. Additionally, more than two-thirds of adults across political parties and more than three-quarters of SNAP participants supported providing additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of fruits and vegetables or a

^a Poll findings can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

range of healthful foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, legumes, and whole grains. A majority of U.S. adults and SNAP participants also favored providing these additional benefits even when conditioned on not purchasing or with reduced benefits for purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS^b

SNAP Eligibility, Benefit Levels, and Program Administration:

- Ensure that SNAP benefit levels are adequate to achieve a nutritious diet; that eligibility requirements and employment and training programs promote workforce participation and increased earnings without presenting undue barriers to SNAP participation; and that access to SNAP is expanded to all U.S. territories.

Nutrition and Eligible Foods in SNAP:

- Strengthen nutrition in SNAP by encouraging the consumption of nutritious foods through establishment of a fruit and vegetable cash value benefit (CVB), further expansion of and investment in the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), stronger retailer stocking standards, improvements to the SNAP-Ed program, better data collection, and demonstration projects.

SNAP Integrity, Technology, and Retailer Considerations:

- Use data matching, online purchasing, and other technology enhancements to improve SNAP access, integrity, efficiency, and operations for participants and retailers.

Food Distribution Programs:

- Modernize the food distribution programs, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), to improve nutrition, program access, and program operations.

^b The full list of policy recommendations, including subrecommendations, can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Other Food and Nutrition Programs Authorized Through the Farm Bill:

- Improve food and nutrition security for priority populations through other food and nutrition assistance programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), Public-Private Partnerships Program, and Micro-Grants for Food Security Program.

The Task Force acknowledges that fully implementing its recommendations, which are discussed in more detail below, will increase federal spending. Current estimates from the Congressional Budget Office project a significant decline in SNAP expenditures over the next decade as the economy recovers, the pandemic recedes, and public health emergency (PHE) flexibilities are lifted.¹³ Thus, the Task Force's recommendations related to SNAP's expansion should be considered in the overall context of enhanced economic security, which extends beyond the participants themselves to their local economies, as well as the projected decrease in actual expenditures with improved economic conditions. Long-term improvements in diet quality and nutrition security could also help offset higher spending by reducing costs to the private and public health care sectors. Improving diet quality for all Americans could significantly reduce economic costs related to diet-related chronic conditions.

Not taking action to improve SNAP and other federal nutrition programs, as well as the diets of all people in the United States, will lead to premature deaths and disability, and to continued increases in health care costs. Such outcomes will disrupt the U.S. economy and reduce quality of life for millions. By strengthening SNAP and other federal nutrition programs authorized in the farm bill, the recommendations in this report can reverse these harmful trends and lead to a future of healthful living for all.

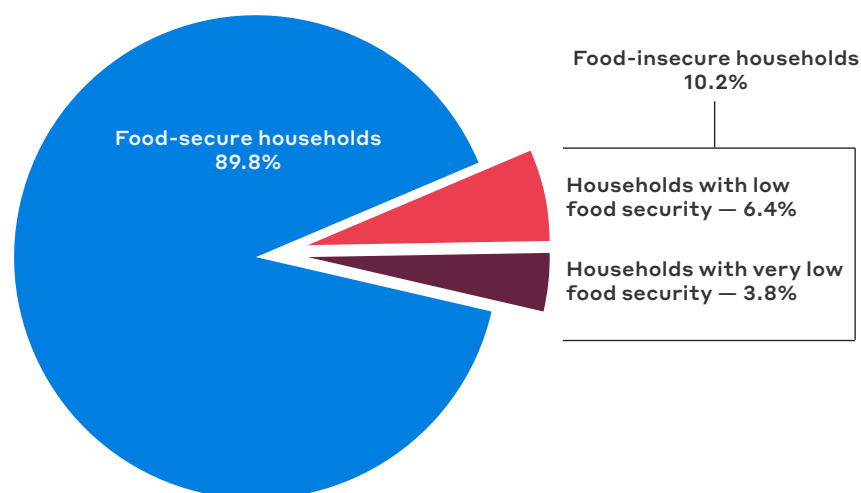
Introduction

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Ensuring that all Americans have equitable access to affordable, nutritious foods is foundational to our nation’s health, education, national security, and economic priorities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life,” and food insecurity as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”¹⁴ Food insecurity is associated with a range of adverse outcomes, including poor diet quality and chronic disease management, underuse of prescribed medications, increased hospitalizations, prolonged periods of stress, developmental delays, and higher costs of care.¹⁵

USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) found that 89.8% of U.S. households were food secure throughout 2021.¹⁶ However, the remaining 10.2% (13.5 million households) experienced food insecurity at some point that year.¹⁷ About 6.4% (8.4 million households) had low food insecurity, and 3.8% (5.1 million households) had very low food security.¹⁸ “Low food security” is defined as households reducing the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns are not substantially disrupted.¹⁹ This category is distinct from “very low food security,” which is defined as, at any time in a year, the eating patterns of at least one household member are disrupted and the quantity of food intake reduced, because the household lacks the resources for food.²⁰ In other words, in close to 4% of U.S. households, one or more household members do not eat enough food at some time in a year because of lack of money or resources. This is the most severe type of food insecurity measured by USDA. *See* Figure 1.²¹

Figure 1. U.S. Households by Food Security Status, 2021



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2021 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Although the overall prevalence of food insecurity remained unchanged from 2019 to 2021, food security across demographic and geographic subgroups varied considerably.²² For example, in 2021, the prevalence of food insecurity for Black (19.8%) and Hispanic (16.2%) households was significantly higher than the national average (10.2%), and more than double the rates of white households (7%).²³ Additionally, households with children (12.5%), single-parent households headed by women (24.3%), single-parent households headed by men (16.2%), households with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (26.5%), and households in the country's southern region (11.4%) had higher rates of food insecurity than the national average.²⁴

Although strengthening purchasing power to buy food can achieve food security, ensuring access to nutritious food is foundational to achieving nutrition security and promoting better health outcomes. In March 2022, USDA defined nutrition security as “consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe and affordable foods that promote optimal health and well-being.”²⁵ Nutrition security builds on food security by reaffirming the strong association between food insecurity, poor nutrition, and diet-related diseases, particularly among historically underserved communities.²⁶ The Food and Nutrition Security Task Force recommended that USDA develop a standard federal definition for nutrition security in its first report, [Improving Food and Nutrition Security During COVID-19, the Economic Recovery, and Beyond](#), released in September 2021.

Ensuring nutrition security is crucial to improving both short- and long-term health outcomes. Notably, Americans of all demographic groups have poor dietary quality.²⁷ The overall diet quality score for Americans on the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) is 58 out of 100, indicating that the average American diet does not align with the DGA.²⁸ Poor diet quality, including the intake

of processed foods, increases the risk of diet-related chronic diseases, such as obesity and heart disease.²⁹ According to the CDC, poor nutrition is the leading cause of illness in the United States, and diet-related diseases result in more than 600,000 deaths per year.³⁰ More than 4 in 10 U.S. adults have obesity, nearly 1 in 2 has diabetes or prediabetes, and nearly 1 in 5 children and adolescents ages 2-19 has obesity.^{31, 32, 33} Currently, 6 in 10 U.S. adults have at least one chronic condition and 4 in 10 have more than one, many of which are nutrition-related, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some cancers.³⁴

Beyond the effects on health, poor diet and diet-related diseases are a major contributor to rising U.S. health care expenditures. Approximately 85% of health care spending is related to the management of diet-related chronic disease.³⁵ A 2019 study found that unhealthy diets account for almost 20%, or \$50 billion, of annual U.S. health care costs from heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.³⁶ Further, a recent [Bipartisan Policy Center report](#) estimated that in 2020, annual medical expenditures due to obesity totaled \$248 billion, equating to 6.2% of total health care costs.³⁷

Research has shed light on the many barriers to food and nutrition security at the individual and population levels. One barrier is the food environment in a community. Research in three Los Angeles neighborhoods found that food security varied by neighborhood, with the percentage of census tracts that are food secure being associated with the types and locations of food retailers, such as supermarkets, corner stores, and restaurants, located in the neighborhood.³⁸ Another study conducted in California found that low-income neighborhoods had more unhealthy food and beverage advertisements than higher-income neighborhoods.³⁹ The affordability of nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables, can also vary depending on where an individual lives. In some parts of the United States, food prices are as low as 85% of the national average, while in others, they are nearly 30% above the national average.⁴⁰

Given the enormous impact of poor nutrition on Americans' health, health care costs, and society, both the public and private sectors should maximize opportunities to strengthen food and nutrition security. Recommendations in this report help to achieve this goal.

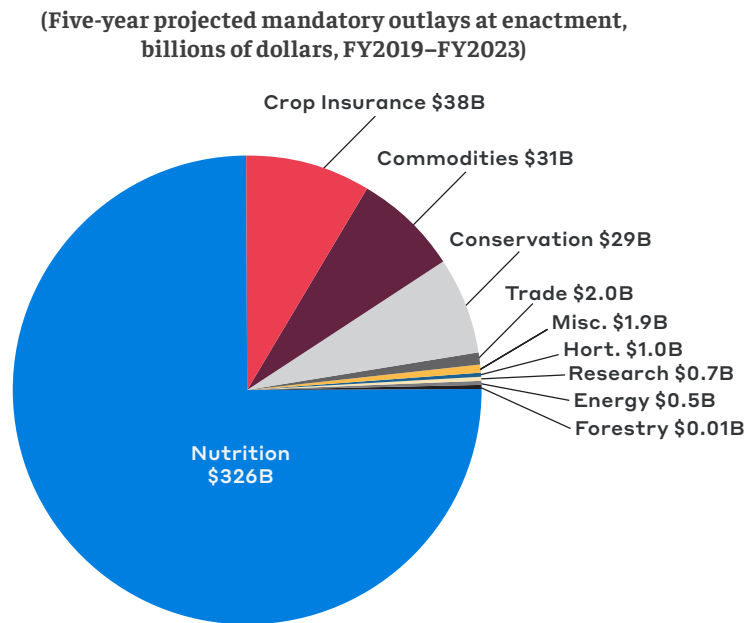
THE FARM BILL

The farm bill, which is typically reauthorized every five years, provides an opportunity to improve food and nutrition security through the federal nutrition assistance programs. The farm bill is an omnibus, multiyear law that governs an array of food and agricultural programs. Although farm bills have historically focused on farm commodity revenue supports, they have become increasingly expansive in nature particularly when the nutrition title was first included in 1973. The most recent farm bill, the \$428 billion

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), was signed into law in December 2018, and the programs authorized under the bill are set to expire on September 30, 2023.

The 2018 Farm Bill consists of 12 titles, including commodity revenue supports, farm credit, trade, nutrition, rural development, research, forestry, energy, horticulture, and crop insurance. At the time of the 2018 law’s passage, the legislation was projected to cost \$428 billion over five years and \$867 billion over 10 years, and the nutrition title, which reauthorizes several domestic food and nutrition assistance programs, was projected to constitute 76% of the total farm bill spending.^{41,42} See Figure 2.

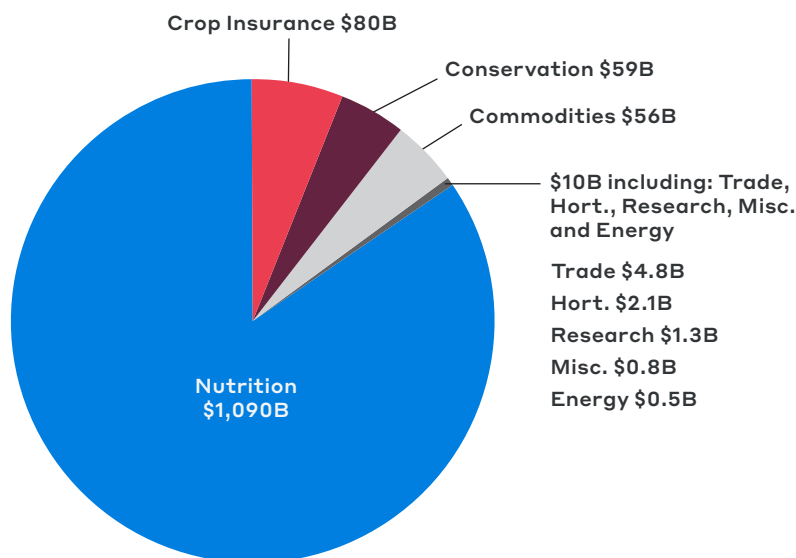
Figure 2. Projected Outlays Under the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, by Title



Source: Congressional Research Service, *The 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334): Summary and Side-by-Side Comparison*, February 22, 2019. Available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45525/10>.

Extending the 2018 Farm Bill policies with no changes (baseline), the 2023 Farm Bill would total an estimated \$1.295 trillion, making it the first farm bill to cost more than \$1 trillion. However, farm bill spending has shifted since passage of the 2018 bill.⁴³ According to the May 2022 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) baseline for the major farm bill programs, the nutrition title is projected to be 84% of total farm bill spending, compared with 76% of the 2018 Farm Bill and 67% of the 2008 Farm Bill.⁴⁴ This increase reflects COVID-19 pandemic assistance and adjustments to SNAP benefit calculations.⁴⁵ See Figure 3.⁴⁶

Figure 3. May 2022 CBO Baseline for 2023 Farm Bill Programs, by Title (billions of dollars, 10-year mandatory outlays, FY2023–2032)



Source: Congressional Research Service, *Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?* June 28, 2022. Available at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12047>.

NUTRITION PROGRAMS IN THE FARM BILL

The 2018 Farm Bill’s nutrition title amended aspects of SNAP and related federal nutrition assistance programs. The major programs reauthorized in the 2018 bill are:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the food stamp program
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)
- Community Food Projects

See [Appendix 1](#) for information on these and other farm bill programs. Notably, much of the debate over the 2018 Farm Bill focused on stricter work-related requirements and other eligibility rules in SNAP, which ultimately did not end up in the final farm bill, issues that are likely to arise again during the 2023 deliberations.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

Among USDA's domestic food assistance programs, SNAP is the largest in both participation and federal spending. Federal spending for SNAP is driven largely by program participation. See Table 1. Approximately 95% of SNAP expenditures are for the benefits themselves, which are 100% federally funded.⁴⁷ However, the program's administrative costs for eligibility determination are shared between the states and the federal government.

Table 1. SNAP Program Participation and Costs, FY2018–FY2022

Fiscal Year	Average Participation	Average Benefit per Person per Month	Total Benefits	Total Costs
2018	40,776,000	\$124.50	\$60,916,850,000	\$65,448,840,000
2019	35,702,000	\$129.83	\$55,622,280,000	\$60,385,540,000
2020	39,875,000	\$155.21	\$74,099,050,000	\$79,119,030,000
2021	41,555,000	\$217.33	\$108,515,730,000	\$113,740,260,000
2022*	41,200,000	\$238.42	\$143,887,000,000	\$159,369,000,000

*FY2022 data are CBO estimates (May 2022)

Sources: FY2018–2021 Data: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “Program Data Overview: Summary of Annual Data, FY2018–2022.” Updated November 2022. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pdf/overview>.

FY2022 estimates: Congressional Budget Office. Baseline Projections: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Available at: <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files?file=2022-05/51312-2022-05-snap.pdf>. Accessed December 5, 2022.

In response to the COVID-19 PHE, the federal government, in the form of waivers, flexibilities, and relief legislation, strengthened SNAP's reach by temporarily suspending work-related requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD), extending SNAP participants' use of mobile technology to redeem SNAP benefits in 49 states, expanding access to college students and others, and increasing benefit levels.^{48,49} The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), enacted in December 2022, rescinded the temporary boost to SNAP benefits, known as emergency allotments, established through COVID-19 relief legislation.⁵⁰ Prior to this law, state SNAP agencies had the option to provide monthly emergency allotments to all SNAP households as long as both the federal PHE and their state-level emergency declarations were in place.⁵¹ Beginning in March 2023, all SNAP households' benefits will return to normal amounts.⁵²

In August 2021, as required by the 2018 Farm Bill, USDA released a re-evaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), which is used to calculate SNAP benefit levels.⁵³ The TFP is one of four food plans developed by USDA, which provide an estimate of a healthy eating pattern at varying price points. The least expensive of the four plans, the TFP, supports an active, healthy lifestyle, aligns

with dietary guidance, represents a limited food budget, and reflects what Americans purchase and consume.⁵⁴ In conducting its data-driven review of the TFP, USDA relied on four key factors identified in the 2018 Farm Bill: current food prices, what Americans typically eat, dietary guidance, and the nutrients in food items. As a result of the first-ever cost adjustment to TFP since it was first introduced in 1975, the average benefit amount was permanently increased for FY2022 by \$36.24 per person, per month, or \$1.19 per day. This amounts to an average benefit increase of 21% over pre-pandemic levels.⁵⁵ However, given that some COVID-19 emergency SNAP allotments expired at the time the TFP update took effect, actual increases were smaller.

CBO projected that SNAP program costs would increase by 18% in 2022, from \$135 billion to \$159 billion, largely due to the TFP update.⁵⁶ Monthly participation is expected to average 41.2 million, with average monthly benefit levels of \$238.42 per person.⁵⁷ Although total benefits are projected to remain relatively high through 2023, program costs are expected to decline in 2024 and 2025 and program participation to gradually decline through 2032 to 33.1 million persons annually.^{58,59} SNAP participation typically declines after the unemployment rate falls and the economy improves, although this change does not take place as quickly as it expands during times of increased need.⁶⁰

SNAP-Ed

To promote healthy eating among SNAP-eligible populations, the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program, commonly referred to as SNAP Education or SNAP-Ed, provides nutrition education to low-income households on a variety of topics, including the importance of good nutrition and how to achieve it, how to stretch food dollars by budgeting, and the importance of physical activity.⁶¹ SNAP-Ed works to build healthier communities through partnerships and collaboration, and it focuses on policy, systems, and environmental changes to improve health and nutrition. In FY2022, \$464 million was allocated to states to implement SNAP-Ed activities.⁶²

GusNIP

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) was established in the 2018 Farm Bill.⁶³ Formerly known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program, GusNIP provides competitive grants to programs that encourage good nutrition through incentives and prescriptions for produce. The nutrition incentive programs provide income-eligible consumers with incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables. These types of programs are commonly referred to as “Double Up Bucks” or “Vouchers for Veggies,” and they allow SNAP participants to purchase additional fruits and vegetables by providing them with Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) benefits. Produce prescription programs are operated through health care systems and health

care providers, who provide prescriptions to their patients to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables to prevent or reduce the impact of nutrition-related chronic conditions. In addition to the two programs, a training, technical assistance, evaluation, and information center was established as part of the 2018 Farm Bill to oversee evaluation of GusNIP. In FY2019, 22 GusNIP projects were funded; 30 projects received funding in FY2020, 63 in FY2021, and 81 in FY2022.⁶⁴ In 2022, USDA announced additional funding support for GusNIP projects as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2), including \$40 million announced in June 2022 and \$59.4 million in November 2022.^{65, 66}

GusNIP contains three types of grant programs:

1. Nutrition incentive grants that encourage increased purchases of fruits and vegetables among SNAP participants by providing incentives at the point of sale;
2. Produce prescription grants that provide prescriptions for fresh fruits and vegetables, coupled with nutrition education, to increase purchasing and consumption of fruits and vegetables, reduce health care usage and costs, and reduce food insecurity; and
3. Cooperative agreement grants that offer training, technical assistance and support, and evaluation to the grantees operating nutrition incentive or produce prescription programs.⁶⁷

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS

Congress established The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) through the Emergency Food Assistance Act of in 1983. Initially called the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP supports agricultural producers and low-income households by connecting people in need with USDA-purchased foods.^{68, 69} USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers TEFAP, which provides emergency food assistance, at no cost, to low-income Americans. USDA purchases a variety of nutritious, high quality [USDA foods](#) and makes them available for distribution through state agencies. Each state receives food based on the number of individuals with incomes below the poverty level, as well as the number of individuals who are unemployed. States distribute the foods through local agencies, such as food banks and other community organizations. In FY2021, TEFAP was authorized at \$1.25 billion and distributed 940 million pounds of food.⁷⁰ In FY2022, TEFAP funding for food purchases authorized by Congress and provided by USDA totaled about \$800 million, including almost \$400 million for entitlement food purchases and \$400 million in additional food purchase funds allocated by USDA for COVID-19 recovery. The department also provided \$180 million in TEFAP administrative grants for food storage and distribution. Additionally, USDA purchased \$516 million in food to support U.S.-grown commodities through

Section 32 funding and authority, and distributed these bonus commodities through TEFAP to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks.^{71,72} Feeding America network food banks, which distribute approximately 85% of TEFAP foods provided nationwide, reported distributing 1.29 billion pounds of food through TEFAP in FY2022.⁷³

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) was first authorized in 1977 to connect low-income Native American households with nutritious foods.⁷⁴ Today, many eligible low-income households, including those on Indian reservations and American Indian individuals residing in approved areas near reservations and in Oklahoma, participate in the program as an alternative to SNAP. Through FDPIR, [USDA Foods](#) are provided to Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) or state agencies, which distribute the goods in the form of food packages to households. In FY2020, approximately 276 tribes received FDPIR foods. In FY2021, FDPIR received \$122 million in funding, and the program served 48,000 individuals.⁷⁵

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) was established in 1969 to address hunger in pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children.⁷⁶ In 1974, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was established, shifting CSFP's focus to other populations.^c Pilot programs that provided access to CSFP for people 60 years and older were established in 1982. Currently, CSFP serves low-income Americans ages 60 years or older by providing them with nutritious foods acquired through [USDA Foods](#). State agencies and ITOs receive the USDA foods as well as administrative funds to operate the programs. They then work with food banks and other community organizations to distribute the food packages to eligible individuals. In FY2022, CSFP received \$332 million in funding, which allowed the program to serve 760,547 individuals during calendar year 2022.⁷⁷

OTHER FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED THROUGH THE FARM BILL

Additional food and nutrition programs authorized in the Farm Bill include:

- Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Micro-Grants for Food Security Program

^c The WIC program is reauthorized through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization rather than the farm bill.

The SFMNP increases access to locally grown foods for low-income seniors. USDA FNS provides grants to states, U.S. territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations, which then provide vouchers, or coupons, to eligible individuals. In FY2020, SFMNP received \$21 million in funding and served 725,686 individuals.⁷⁸ In FY2021, SFMNP grant amounts totaled \$23.7 million.⁷⁹

FFVP provides fresh fruits and vegetables at no cost to children attending eligible elementary schools.⁸⁰ USDA awards funding to state agencies, which work with local school food authorities (SFA) to operate the program. FFVP prioritizes schools with the highest percentage of children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. The program's intent is to introduce children to new and different fresh fruits and vegetables, and SFAs have flexibility in determining the frequency and types of fruits and vegetables served. In FY2022, USDA FNS distributed \$233.1 million to state agencies for FFVP.⁸¹ In comparison, in FY2019 the most recent year for which full data on program reach are available, FFVP received \$172 million in funding, which allowed 7,600 schools to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to 4 million students.⁸²

Authorized by the 2014 and 2018 farm bills, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative aims to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities while building a more equitable food system.⁸³ In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congress authorized USDA to approve a community development financial institution to administer funds supporting "projects that attract fresh, healthy food retailers" and that "expand or preserve access to staple foods" and accept SNAP benefits.⁸⁴ Under HFFI, grants are available to support projects designed to improve access to fresh, healthy foods through food retailers.⁸⁵ In FY2022, \$183 million in funding for HFFI was provided through USDA (\$160 million) and the Department of the Treasury (\$23 million), a major increase in funding from FY2021 when \$28 million was provided for the initiative. The funding increase was provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2, Title I), which authorized funding to address disruptions in the food supply chain and agricultural production systems due to the pandemic.⁸⁶

The Micro-Grants for Food Security Program, aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of locally grown foods in food insecure communities in the noncontiguous U.S. states and territories, was established in the 2018 Farm Bill.⁸⁷ USDA distributed funds to agricultural departments or agencies in eligible states and territories to competitively issue subgrants of up to \$5,000 or \$10,000 to eligible entities (e.g., individuals, Indian tribes, nonprofits engaged in food insecurity, federally funded educational facilities, and local or tribal governments). The funds must be used for specified activities to increase the quantity and quality of local foods. In FY2022, \$4.4 million in funding was awarded to five agricultural agencies or departments in Alaska, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Hawaii.⁸⁸

The 2018 Farm Bill also authorized \$5 million in discretionary funding for up to 10 pilot projects that support public-private partnerships addressing food insecurity and poverty. They were to last no more than two years and were to address specified objectives. However, this program never received funding.⁸⁹

The 2018 Farm Bill required school food authorities in the contiguous U.S. states to purchase domestic commodities or products to the maximum extent practicable for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.⁹⁰ A domestic commodity or product is defined as an agricultural commodity that is produced in the United States or a food product that is substantially processed in the United States using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States. However, the federal child nutrition programs, including the school meal programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), summer meal programs, and WIC are otherwise authorized through Child Nutrition Reauthorization, typically a separate piece of legislation from the farm bill.

COSTS AND COST SAVINGS OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated earlier, the Task Force acknowledges that fully implementing its recommendations, which are described in more detail in the Policy Recommendations section of this brief, will increase federal spending. Policy recommendations that would increase spending, relative to current law, include but are not limited to the following: the expansion of SNAP and SNAP-Ed to Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories; increased SNAP participation as a result of expanded access to TANF families who lose their cash assistance along with expanded benefits to military families and other populations; a new SNAP Cash Value Benefit for the purchase of healthy foods or expansion of GusNIP; increased SNAP-Ed funding; increased funding for TEFAP entitlement funding; additional funding for nutrition research; and expanded resources for FFVP and SFMNP.

Estimating the direct impact of these and other Task Force recommendations is a challenge. Where reliable cost estimates are available, they are included in the text discussion of the specific recommendation. Although some Task Force members wanted an overall cost estimate, it was decided that due to the interaction of various recommendations, summing up cost estimates for individual recommendations could be misleading.

The Task Force recommendations acknowledge a variety of policy goals for SNAP, including improving economic security, food security, and nutrition security for all Americans. With respect to economic stabilization, preliminary estimates indicate that federal expenditures for SNAP will reach a historic high, topping nearly \$160 billion in FY2022, while providing benefits to more than

41 million people.⁹¹ The program, which expanded in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided valuable food purchasing power in times of economic stress. High unemployment coupled with broadened eligibility and reduced workforce requirements combined to significantly increase SNAP expenditures in recent years. Current CBO estimates project a significant decline in SNAP expenditures over the next decade as the economy recovers, the pandemic recedes, and PHE flexibilities are lifted: SNAP participation will decline steadily to 33 million people by the end of the decade, according to the CBO, and annual expenditures will fall to \$110 billion.⁹²

SNAP's economic benefits extend beyond the participants to local economies. SNAP participants typically spend their benefits soon after receiving them, boosting revenue for local communities. A 2019 study from USDA ERS found that during a slowing economy, a \$1 billion increase in SNAP benefits would produce a \$1.54 billion increase in the GDP, a more than 150% return on investment.⁹³ This benefit increase would generate an additional \$32 million in income for the U.S. agriculture industries and support an additional 480 full-time agriculture jobs, the study said.⁹⁴ According to the National Grocers' Association, SNAP is responsible for nearly 200,000 grocery industry jobs and nearly 45,000 jobs in supporting industries including agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and municipal services. Grocery and other industry jobs that administer SNAP generate more than \$9.4 billion in earnings.⁹⁵

Thus, the Task Force's recommendations related to expansion of the program should be considered in the overall context of enhanced economic security for both SNAP participants and benefits to local economies, as well as the projected decrease in actual expenditures as economic conditions improve.

This brief includes several recommendations to enhance nutrition security in addition to food security. The Task Force believes that long-term improvements in diet quality would offset the potential costs of these recommendations by reducing health care costs. The average American adult currently shows about 60% adherence to the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), a measure of diet quality.⁹⁶ But recent research finds that if this were increased to 72% adherence (a relative increase of 20%), the United States could save an estimated \$31.5 billion in health-related costs annually.⁹⁷ Under a more ambitious scenario, if the average adult increased adherence to 80% of the HEI, researchers project an annual savings of \$55.1 billion.⁹⁸ Improving diet quality for all Americans has the potential to significantly reduce economic costs related to diet-related chronic conditions.

The Task Force believes that failing to take action to improve the quality of SNAP participants' diets, as well as the diets of all Americans, will lead to unnecessary premature deaths and disability and to continued increases in health care costs, which would disrupt the U.S. economy and reduce quality of life for millions. Actions outlined in this report could reverse these harmful trends and lead to a future of healthful living for all.

About This Policy Brief

This policy brief provides bipartisan, evidence-based, consensus-based recommendations to improve food security and nutrition security by strengthening SNAP and other food assistance programs reauthorized through the 2023 Farm Bill. The brief should serve as a useful resource for policymakers and other stakeholders considering priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill and other federal and state legislation, regulations, and private-sector actions.

Policy recommendations address the following topics:

- SNAP Eligibility, Benefit Levels, and Program Administration
- Nutrition and Eligible Foods in SNAP
- SNAP Integrity, Technology, and Retailer Considerations
- Food Distribution Programs
- Other Food and Nutrition Programs Authorized Through the Farm Bill

BPC has a history of engaging on issues related to food and nutrition security, including providing recommendations related to policy initiatives in the farm bill. Before enactment of the 2018 Farm Bill, BPC's SNAP Task Force, led by former Agriculture Secretaries Dan Glickman and Ann Veneman and former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, released a report, [*Leading with Nutrition: Leveraging Federal Programs for Better Health*](#), with the goal of identifying strategies to promote nutrition through public programs, such as SNAP, and policies related to food and health.

In May 2021, BPC launched the bipartisan Food and Nutrition Security Task Force, comprising 18 distinguished public- and private-sector leaders. This report is the third in a series of three from this Task Force. In addition to the experience and expertise of the Task Force members, the recommendations were informed by: (1) a stakeholder roundtable; (2) two focus groups of individuals with lived experience with SNAP and other federal nutrition assistance programs; and (3) a nationally representative poll of U.S. adults and SNAP participants.

On May 3, 2022, BPC hosted a virtual stakeholder roundtable discussion on behalf of the Task Force. During the roundtable, the 32 participants were asked to share their perspectives on how food and nutrition security can be improved through the 2023 Farm Bill. Questions focused on all five topics areas on which the Task Force makes recommendations in this brief. Stakeholders represented anti-hunger and nutrition advocates; racial equity and health equity advocates; organizations addressing social determinants of food and nutrition insecurity; nutrition researchers and educators; public health and health care providers; the private

sector; and philanthropic organizations. Participating stakeholders were also invited to share written comments and resources.

On June 28, 2022, BPC hosted two virtual focus groups with a total of nine individuals with lived experience. The focus groups provided insight into the experiences and perspectives of current and former SNAP participants. Discussion topics included:

- Experience using SNAP
- Nutrition and eligible foods in SNAP
- Nutrition incentives and produce prescriptions
- Impact of the COVID-19 flexibilities and waivers on SNAP eligibility and benefit levels
- SNAP employment and training programs and work requirements
- Overall opinions of and improvements needed to SNAP

During the virtual focus groups, participants emphasized the importance of adequate benefits and recommended that benefit levels be increased, especially given rising food prices. Participants also voiced support for incentive programs, including GusNIP, and additional benefits to allow them to shop more at farmers' markets, purchase fresh produce, and support local farmers. Participants described burdensome application and recertification processes and a lack of communication between state SNAP agencies and participants, particularly regarding the availability of SNAP employment and training (E&T) programs and incentive programs, such as GusNIP. Participants also emphasized the importance of incorporating the experiences of individuals who have participated in SNAP and other federal nutrition assistance programs into program design, implementation, and policy decision-making processes.

In addition, BPC commissioned a poll through Morning Consult to better understand the perspectives of the general public and of SNAP participants about SNAP. The poll was conducted September 12-14, 2022, and surveyed 2,210 adults, 483 of whom were current SNAP participants. Interviews were conducted online, and demographic data was weighted to match an approximate makeup of the U.S. population.^d The pollsters asked 10 questions relating to SNAP benefits, SNAP eligibility criteria, and SNAP operations. Key findings from the poll are included in Box 1, and the full list of questions and poll results can be found in [Appendix 2](#). Through the stakeholder roundtable, focus groups, and poll, the Task Force gained useful insights into areas of focus that informed the policy recommendations in this brief.

^d The margin of error for the SNAP poll was +/-2% for the general population and +/-4% for SNAP participants.

Box 1: Key Findings from SNAP Poll

SNAP participants express the need for a benefits increase.

- More than half (59%) of current SNAP participants say their SNAP benefit levels are too low. Additionally, three out of four (74%) current SNAP participants say benefit levels should increase; the figure includes more than half (58%) who say benefit levels should increase by 20% or more.

SNAP participants support broadening the variety of items benefits should enable them to purchase.

- A majority of current SNAP participants agree benefits should be allowed to be used for hot, prepared foods (80%) and the purchase of groceries online (91%).

SNAP participants generally support lessening eligibility criteria.

- A majority of current SNAP participants agree college students (79%) and legal immigrants (70%) should be eligible to participate in SNAP if they meet other eligibility criteria.

There is bipartisan support for SNAP to incentivize the purchase of healthful foods.

- A large majority of current SNAP participants and adults, regardless of partisanship, support providing additional benefits to participants who purchase healthful foods and fruits and vegetables. A majority of U.S. adults and SNAP participants also support providing these additional benefits when conditioned on not purchasing or with reduced benefits for purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- More than half (58%) of current SNAP participants say states should be able to operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants, as does a bipartisan majority of adults.

Policy Recommendations

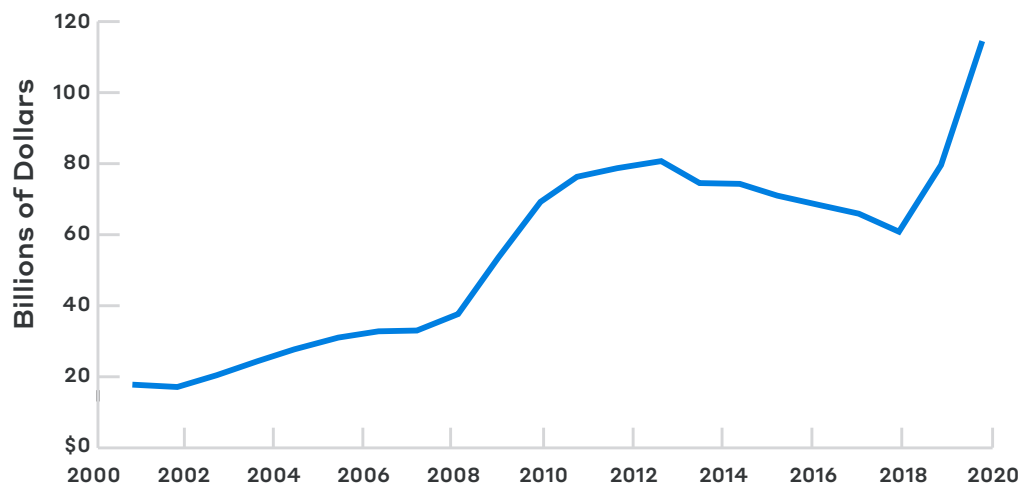
SNAP ELIGIBILITY, BENEFIT LEVELS, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that SNAP benefit levels are adequate to achieve a nutritious diet; that eligibility requirements and employment and training programs promote workforce participation and increased earnings without presenting undue barriers to SNAP participation; and that access to SNAP is expanded to all U.S. territories.

SNAP is the largest USDA food and nutrition assistance program and is the cornerstone of the nation's federal nutrition safety net.⁹⁹ As an "entitlement program," SNAP provides food and nutrition assistance to all individuals and households who apply and meet the eligibility criteria, including income and asset limits.¹⁰⁰ SNAP's benefit structure allows the program to expand as households' incomes fall and to contract when households recover and poverty declines.¹⁰¹ For example, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 36 million income-eligible individuals participated in SNAP each month.¹⁰² However, during the pandemic, when many families experienced job insecurity and lost income, SNAP enrollment increased rapidly to more than 41.5 million participants each month, reaffirming the program's ability to respond quickly, reduce household food insecurity and overall health care expenditures, and assist families facing economic or health crises.^{103, 104} The sharp increase in SNAP costs from 2019–2021 is largely due to COVID-19-related policy changes that increased SNAP participation and benefit levels.¹⁰⁵ See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Total SNAP Costs, 2000-2021 (in billions of dollars)



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

Benefit Levels

As required by the 2018 Farm Bill, USDA should continue to reevaluate the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) every five years and annually update benefit levels for inflation to ensure benefit adequacy.

The most recent update to benefit levels, based on an evaluation using the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), was released in 2021. As noted previously, USDA’s 2021 TFP reevaluation was the first comprehensive update to the benefit package in more than 45 years.¹⁰⁶

In addition, research on benefit levels is critical to determining whether existing benefits are sufficient to address food and nutrition insecurity. Research should consider such factors as the cost of living or food costs and should heavily incorporate input from SNAP participants. In a 2021 USDA report on barriers to healthy eating among SNAP participants, 3 in 5 of the 88% of participants who noted one or more barrier cited “affordability of healthy food” as the largest environmental barrier to achieving a healthy diet. Barriers were similar across household composition, income sources, education level, urbanicity, and geographic region.¹⁰⁷ To support healthy eating among SNAP participants, USDA should continue to conduct research on benefit adequacy and barriers to program participation to inform timely updates to SNAP benefit levels and policies.

Income and Asset Limits

SNAP eligibility rules and benefit levels are largely set at the federal level. To qualify for SNAP under the federal rules, a household must meet three criteria:

gross monthly income,^e net monthly income,^f and asset limits.¹⁰⁸ See Table 2. A household's gross monthly income must be at or below 130% of the FPL, or \$28,550 annually for a three-person household in FY2022. Households with a member who is elderly (age 60 or older) or has a disability are not subject to the gross income limit. Net monthly income must be at or below the FPL, or \$21,960 annually for a three-person household in FY2022.¹⁰⁹ Asset limits must fall below \$2,500, or \$3,750 if the household has a member who is elderly or has a disability. Notably, certain assets, including applicants' homes and retirement plans, are not counted for eligibility determinations. In addition, for individuals receiving assistance from the Social Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs, certain assets are not counted in SNAP eligibility determinations. Vehicles do count toward the asset limit, unless certain exclusion criteria are met. Specifically, up to \$4,650 of the fair market value of a household's vehicles are subject to an asset test.¹¹⁰ However, states have the option to exclude the value of vehicles from the asset limit.¹¹¹ States can also align their vehicle asset limit with that of other assistance programs such as TANF, SSI, and Medicaid, so long as their limits are not more restrictive than federal SNAP eligibility rules.¹¹²

Vehicle values, and used vehicle values in particular, have skyrocketed in the past few years. Between July 2019 and July 2022, the price of used vehicles increased nearly 50%.¹¹³ This rise alone could result in a loss of SNAP eligibility without any change in income or other assets. At the same time, food prices rose 11% between August 2021 and August 2022, increasing the resources needed to purchase an adequate supply of healthy food.¹¹⁴

Federal requirements or limits are a baseline, giving states the flexibility to tailor certain eligibility components, such as asset limits, categorical eligibility, or work-related requirements, to expand access to SNAP. For example, in Idaho, the state asset limit is \$5,000 for all households and \$4,250 for households with an elderly member or someone with a disability who did not meet the gross income test (compared with the \$2,500/\$3,750 federal limits); Virginia has no state asset limit.¹¹⁵

e Gross income means a household's total, nonexcluded income before any deductions have been made.

f Net monthly income is gross income minus allowable deductions.

Table 2: SNAP Income Eligibility Limits Oct. 1, 2021, through Sept. 30, 2022

Household size	Gross monthly income (130% of poverty)	Net monthly income (100% of poverty)
1	\$1,396	\$1,074
2	\$1,888	\$1,452
3	\$2,379	\$1,830
4	\$2,871	\$2,209
5	\$3,363	\$2,587
6	\$3,855	\$2,965
7	\$4,347	\$3,344
8	\$4,839	\$3,722
Each additional member	+\$492	+\$379

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, *SNAP Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions: What are the SNAP Income limits?* Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>.

Congress should support the utilization of categorical eligibility to simplify program administration, provide program flexibility, and expand eligibility to families in need.

Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) allows noncash TANF or State Maintenance of Effort (MOE) qualifying families to become automatically eligible for SNAP, which simplifies overall program administration and increases flexibilities for benefit qualification. Five states with BBCE maintain asset limits for the TANF/MOE qualifying programs, while the remaining states do not. BBCE has yet to be implemented in Alaska, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, and Wyoming.¹¹⁶ Although categorical households bypass regular SNAP asset limits, households must still meet net income limits to qualify for SNAP benefits.¹¹⁷ In implementing BBCE, states give individuals and families greater flexibility to continue receiving SNAP while maintaining modest savings, and this prevents them from falling off the “benefit cliff” by slowing the pace at which benefits phase out as wages increase.¹¹⁸ Research shows that BBCE increases SNAP eligibility and participation among certain vulnerable groups, such as households with elderly members and children, while also reducing federal administrative costs associated with the program.¹¹⁹ States have utilized BBCE to align asset tests or limits with other federal programs, raise asset limits, or bypass asset limits altogether to improve families’ financial security.¹²⁰

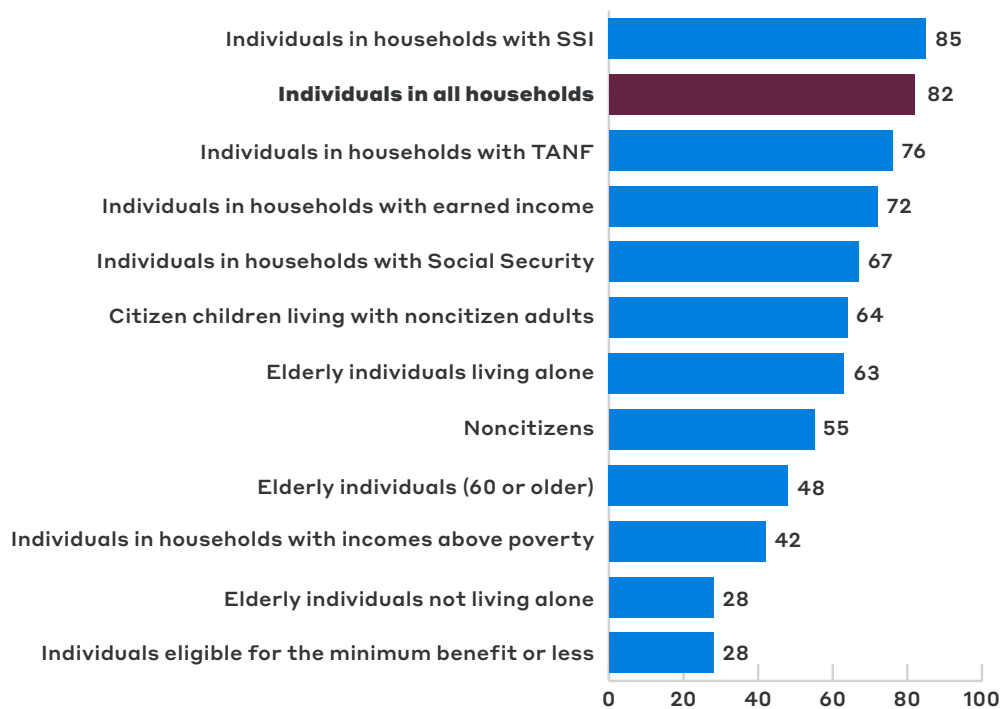
SNAP Participation Among Eligible Populations

Each month, approximately 41 million individuals participate in SNAP.¹²¹ Nearly half (44%) of participants are children, two-thirds are in households with children and more than one-third are in households with older adults (age 60 or older), or nonelderly adults with disabilities.¹²² SNAP is effective in reaching more than 80% of those who are eligible.¹²³ However, according to new data released by USDA, of the 41 million individuals eligible for SNAP in FY2019, 7

million were not participating and went unserved, this is often referred to as the “SNAP gap.”¹²⁴ In other words, 18% of eligible individuals are not accessing critical food and nutrition assistance for which they qualify.¹²⁵

SNAP participation rates vary by demographic, economic and geographic subgroups.¹²⁶ See Figure 5.¹²⁷ SNAP gaps disproportionately affect underserved communities, including older adults, TANF and SSI-eligible households, households with mixed-immigration status, college students, and working families who are still experiencing poverty.¹²⁸ For example, immigrant communities and mixed-status families might be worried about the impact of accessing SNAP benefits on their immigration status and citizenship process.¹²⁹

Figure 5: Individual SNAP Participation Rate Estimates by Subgroup, FY2019



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Trends in USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2016 to Fiscal Year 2019*. Available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Trends2016-2019.pdf>.

Barriers to SNAP participation might include eligibility rules that are complicated or confusing; concerns regarding stigma or immigration status; lack of awareness of the program; past negative personal experiences with the program (themselves or a loved one); challenging application processes; or low benefit amounts that lead some eligible individuals to decide that the potential benefit does not outweigh the cumbersome application process.¹³⁰

To remove unnecessary barriers to SNAP participation, Congress should make permanent certain public health emergency-related procedural flexibilities, such as providing applicants the option to interview and

provide their signature remotely. USDA should also encourage states to utilize existing SNAP demonstration authority to test alternative approaches to program administration to improve program access, efficiency, and delivery of SNAP benefits. Congress should consider evidence from state demonstration projects and input from state SNAP administrators, community partners, and participants to better inform and modify SNAP administration rules.

To participate in SNAP, households must apply through their local SNAP agency, as each state has its own application process.¹³¹ Generally, households must undergo an interview when they first apply and when they recertify eligibility.¹³² Depending on the length of the certification period, households must also periodically report any changes that could affect their eligibility and benefit levels, including changes to income and employment status.¹³³ However, during the public health emergency, USDA authorized certain procedural flexibilities on the state level to ensure efficient, equitable, and safe access to SNAP benefits.¹³⁴ These flexibilities included waivers to initial, recertification, and face-to-face interview requirements; adjustments to periodic reporting requirements; allowing audio-only telephonic signatures; and extending participants' certification periods.¹³⁵ States frequently used these and other flexibilities, and SNAP enrollment increased by about 6 million participants during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic between February and May 2020.^{136, 137} USDA and states should consider lessons learned from the pandemic on the impact of the procedural flexibilities.¹³⁸ Making these temporary flexibilities permanent should facilitate enrollment among applicants who face barriers to in-person enrollment, including challenges with transportation, child care, or employment. Consideration should be given to ensuring that these procedural flexibilities do not adversely affect program integrity.

To increase access to SNAP and participation among eligible households, Congress should streamline and simplify program requirements, program administration, and data sharing.

Streamlining and simplifying eligibility requirements, enrollment, and data sharing across federal food, nutrition, and social service programs, such as SNAP and Medicaid, will make it easier for eligible households to participate in SNAP. Adjunctive eligibility (AE), which was established to simplify program administration, is one of the best ways to increase SNAP participation among those who are eligible. Through AE, an applicant who participates in one program, such as SNAP, is automatically considered income-eligible for other programs without having to apply separately. This is often used with WIC and SNAP.¹³⁹ AE could be expanded to SSI, TANF, Medicaid, and other programs to make it easier for households to participate in SNAP and for agencies to administer the programs.

In addition to utilizing AE, state agencies should be encouraged to collaborate with other agencies to identify and provide outreach to individuals who are

eligible but not participating in nutrition, health, and social service programs. State agencies could enter into data-sharing agreements with one another to identify these eligible individuals, and then create an outreach strategy. State agencies could conduct culturally and linguistically tailored outreach and education about SNAP and other assistance programs to communities at higher risk of food and nutrition insecurity. Additionally, USDA could require that state agencies provide accessible and mobile-friendly SNAP applications that are translated into multiple languages. Also, local organizations and agencies that process applications could better train their staff on how to treat applicants with dignity and respect throughout the process. In addition, USDA should collect data on SNAP participation by key demographic categories and conduct research on barriers to participation among those who are eligible, particularly among populations and in states with lower SNAP enrollment rates.

Expansion of SNAP Benefits to U.S. Territories

Congress should expand SNAP and SNAP-Ed to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, in place of the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) block grants.

In addition to all 50 states, SNAP is available in some U.S. territories, including Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.¹⁴⁰ Other territories, such as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, instead provide food assistance to low-income families through the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP). Unlike SNAP, which can expand to meet rising and falling demand for food assistance, NAP has its funding set by Congress at a fixed amount, with benefit levels and eligibility determined by each territory where the program is implemented.¹⁴¹ Block grants to Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands were authorized in Section 19 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525).¹⁴² In FY2023, the block grants for the U.S. territories totaled nearly \$2.9 billion, including \$2.8 billion for Puerto Rico, \$10 million for American Samoa, and \$30 million for the Northern Mariana Islands.^{143, 144, 145}

In 2021, 40.5% of all Puerto Ricans lived in poverty.¹⁴⁶ Approximately one-third of adult residents in Puerto Rico experience food insecurity, and more than half of all NAP participants are children, seniors, or those receiving disability benefits.¹⁴⁷ In comparison, the U.S. Virgin Islands, a territory in close proximity to Puerto Rico, has 22% of its population living below the poverty level, and qualifying residents are permitted to enroll in SNAP.¹⁴⁸ Although NAP plays an important role in reducing food insecurity for households across multiple territories, its funding structure limits its flexibility and coverage during times of increased need or natural disaster.

A 2022 update to a [USDA Feasibility Study on Implementing SNAP in Puerto Rico](#) documented widespread support among the island’s stakeholders and estimated that SNAP could be successfully implemented over a 10-year period, with an initial start-up cost of \$341 million to \$426 million, with about 84% of those costs required for data-systems development.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Puerto Rico has existing infrastructure with community partners to support implementation of SNAP-Ed, D-SNAP, and SNAP E&T.¹⁵⁰ In transitioning to SNAP, the feasibility study noted Puerto Rico will require significant technical assistance from USDA during the program design period, additional staffing to handle the increased caseload and program requirements, and strengthened local office infrastructure to administer the program.¹⁵¹ The estimated cost of SNAP administration in Puerto Rico is \$249 million to \$414 million per year, and the cost of benefits is \$4.5 billion annually.¹⁵² If cost, political, or other considerations prevent transition from NAP to SNAP for some U.S. territories in the 2023 Farm Bill, Congress could take additional interim steps to further explore and address barriers to transition.

Expansion of SNAP Benefits to Additional Populations

To reduce barriers to SNAP participation, support underserved communities, and advance racial equity, Congress should expand SNAP benefits to college students, immigrant communities subject to a waiting period, and people in the military; Congress should also eliminate military members’ basic allowance for housing (BAH) from SNAP eligibility determinations.

Before the pandemic, SNAP eligibility rules excluded all college students enrolled at least half time unless they had a qualifying exemption, such as caring for a child or working at least 20 hours per week in paid employment.¹⁵³ Even if a student meets a qualifying exemption, they are still subject to the general SNAP eligibility rules and could be excluded if they live on campus or have a school meal plan.¹⁵⁴ Students enrolled less than half time are not excluded from receiving SNAP benefits and are subject to the work-related requirements for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD).¹⁵⁵ These rules reflect outdated assumptions about the typical college student and do not meet the needs of today’s students.^{9, 156} According to a 2018 Government Accountability Office report, most college students (71%) are “nontraditional,” meaning they do not enter college directly after high school and remain financially dependent on their parents.¹⁵⁷ Instead, they might be financially independent, be enrolled part time, work full time while in school, care for dependents, or not have a traditional high school diploma.

To address food insecurity among college students, more than 650 colleges and universities have a food pantry on campus.¹⁵⁸ Studies demonstrate that pre-

⁹ The College Student Eligibility Rules were added in the 1980 amendments to the Food Stamp Act due to concerns that students from higher-income households were qualifying for SNAP as separate households.

pandemic, 30% of college students experienced food insecurity at some point during their college careers.¹⁵⁹ As expected, the PHE worsened rates of food insecurity among college students and college-aged individuals in part because of university closures, reduction or closure of food assistance services, or lack of employment opportunities.¹⁶⁰ A study on the pandemic's impact on college students' basic needs found that 39% of students in two-year colleges and 29% of students at four-year colleges reported experiencing food insecurity in the 30 days prior to the survey.¹⁶¹ The study also highlighted significant disparities by race and ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ status, and gender identity.¹⁶² Across two- and four-year colleges, 75% of Indigenous, 70% of Black, and 70% of American Indian or Alaska Native students experienced food and/or housing insecurity compared with 54% of white students.¹⁶³ Additionally, 65% of students identifying as LGBTQIA+ experienced food and/or housing insecurity.¹⁶⁴ In a September 2022 Morning Consult poll commissioned by the Bipartisan Policy Center, two-thirds of U.S. adults supported expanding SNAP access to college students who would otherwise qualify.

In response to the PHE, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260) temporarily expanded SNAP eligibility for certain college students.¹⁶⁵ This temporary expansion includes students who are eligible to participate in state or federally financed work-study programs, as well as students who have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0 in the current academic school year.¹⁶⁶ Although temporary and set to expire 30 days after the federal PHE is lifted, this expansion makes approximately 6 million more college students eligible for SNAP who would otherwise not qualify.¹⁶⁷ Approaches to amending existing law include expanding the exemptions to include certain categories of college students, such as those exempted during the PHE, or removing the student disqualification provision entirely.¹⁶⁸ The House-passed version of the 2018 Farm Bill included a proposal to exempt caregivers, but this provision was not included in the final version.¹⁶⁹ To increase participation, Congress and USDA should also encourage higher education institutions and others to conduct outreach to eligible students. Strategies could include making SNAP application information available to students and encouraging food stores on or near campus to become SNAP-authorized retailers.

Congress should repeal the five-year restriction that bars immigrants who are lawful permanent residents from accessing public assistance programs, including SNAP. Currently, only U.S. citizens and certain noncitizens can receive SNAP benefits. For those specific groups, eligibility requirements such as income and resource limits still apply.¹⁷⁰ Although there are exceptions, non-U.S. citizens are generally prohibited from receiving SNAP benefits for five years after entering the United States.¹⁷¹ Lawful permanent residents in the United States number nearly 13 million, and of those eligible to naturalize, the most common countries of origin are Mexico, China, the Philippines, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and India.¹⁷² Some states, including California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, and Washington, maintain policies

that increase SNAP accessibility for immigrant populations, but federal policies still pose barriers to access for many throughout the country.¹⁷³ As a result of the federal waiting period, many lawful permanent residents are prohibited from accessing SNAP, regardless of poverty status, for a multiyear waiting period. In 2019, more than 25% of naturalized citizens had incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, similar to the 29% of the overall U.S. population at this income level.^{174, 175} Additionally, a recent Morning Consult poll commissioned by the Bipartisan Policy Center found that a majority of U.S. adults agree that immigrants who are lawfully present should be able to participate in SNAP if other eligibility criteria are met. Removing the five-year waiting period for SNAP eligibility would increase access to nutrition assistance for non-U.S. citizen households, including those with children.

In 2019, 22,000 active-duty service members, 213,000 members of the National Guard or reservists, and 1.1 million veterans participated in SNAP.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, according to a 2021 survey conducted by Blue Star Families, 29% of junior enlisted service members reported experiencing food insecurity in the last year.¹⁷⁷ Military members who receive a Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) in lieu of on-base or other in-kind housing are often ineligible for SNAP benefits because eligibility determinations count the BAH stipend as income.¹⁷⁸ As a result, many people in the military and their families continue to experience food insecurity and have to rely on the charitable food sector.¹⁷⁹ The House-passed version of the 2018 Farm Bill included a provision to exclude up to \$500 of the BAH in SNAP eligibility determinations, but it was not included in the enacted version.¹⁸⁰ Eliminating military members' BAH from SNAP eligibility determinations will improve food and nutrition security among military members and their families.

Transitional Benefits

USDA should require states to provide five months of SNAP benefits to households that have had their cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program terminated. The benefit amount for these months should be equal to the amount received before TANF was terminated.

TANF is a \$16.5 billion annual federal block grant program that provides cash assistance to low-income families with children.¹⁸¹ Although the federal government funds TANF, states are given the authority to determine program structure and eligibility requirements for participants. Unlike SNAP, TANF funding is not restricted to food purchases, and the program offers greater purchasing flexibility to help families establish economic stability within a limited time frame.¹⁸² When eligibility criteria are met, applicants can receive both SNAP and TANF concurrently. However, if income levels or other eligibility criteria are no longer being met, the sudden removal of TANF cash benefits could push many families off a “benefit cliff” and upend their economic

stability.¹⁸³ To help ease the transition off of TANF and allow families to continue building economic stability, or to better protect their savings, USDA should require states to provide families with five months of transitional SNAP benefits equal to their pre-termination TANF benefit levels. Twenty-three states currently offer transitional SNAP benefits with a five-month time limit that is activated by a loss of TANF.¹⁸⁴

Employment and Training Programs

Congress should enhance SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) programs through continued evaluation of existing E&T programs, such as E&T pilot programs and “SNAP to Skills,” to improve their effectiveness in increasing workforce participation and earnings and their cost-effectiveness.

Background on Employment and Training (E&T) Programs

The requirement for all states to implement SNAP employment and training (E&T) programs dates to the Food Stamp Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198).¹⁸⁵ It defined an E&T program as containing one or more of the following: workfare, job search training, job search, work training or experience, or other programs as approved by USDA. This legislation, which required states to implement an E&T program by April 1, 1987, provided funding through annual federal grants for state E&T operations, as well as 50% federal reimbursement for state agency E&T expenses above the grant levels, including the cost of reimbursing participants.¹⁸⁶

State E&T programs have evolved since 1987. The 1993 Mickey Leland Childhood Hunger Relief Act (P.L. 103-66) removed caps on E&T dependent care reimbursements and instead had state agencies reimburse the actual costs of dependent care expenses up to a certain limit set by the state agency.¹⁸⁷ The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-33) and the Agricultural Research, Education, and Extension Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-185) more than doubled E&T funding and required states to use at least 80% of the money to provide Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) with work program opportunities.¹⁸⁸

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79), known as the 2014 Farm Bill, revised the E&T programs. To evaluate new approaches to encourage work or increase earnings among SNAP participants, the legislation provided \$200 million in new funding for up to 10 three-year pilot projects.¹⁸⁹ It also required the Food and Nutrition Service to develop E&T reporting for states; create new FNS monitoring and oversight of the state programs; allow states to adjust E&T programs if they had inadequate employment and training outcomes; and adjust E&T funding requirements. The 2018 Farm Bill expanded the kinds of E&T activities a state could provide and the elements that could be included and authorized workforce partnerships.¹⁹⁰

Current Employment and Training Programs

All state agencies are required to operate SNAP E&T programs, and they receive federal funding to administer and operate the programs. In FY2021, \$319 million was utilized for E&T program administrative costs.¹⁹¹ State agencies can tailor their E&T programs to support SNAP participants, and they are encouraged to partner with state and federal workforce programs.¹⁹² Many states include work readiness training, education opportunities and vocational training, as well as workfare and job retention services, in their E&T programs. E&T programs vary by state and are multifaceted, with the goal of giving SNAP participants the tools they need to seek and retain employment and increase earnings.

Nine years later, many states are still implementing the 2014 Farm Bill SNAP E&T pilots. As one example, the Generating Opportunities to Attain Lifelong Success (GOALS) program was launched through the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF) in 35 counties.¹⁹³ The program enrolled more than 4,000 SNAP participants and offered a comprehensive and intensive set of services, including job readiness and job search training and assistance, case management, job development, occupational skills training, and more. The program tailored services to individual participants, and participants could access multiple program services. An evaluation of the program showed it increased the number of individuals receiving case management and support services and participating in employment or training-related activities. However, the program produced no impact on earnings.¹⁹⁴

FNS provided \$3.6 million in FY2021 and \$3.5 million in FY2022 for SNAP E&T data and technical assistance grants, as well as \$3 million in FY2022 for SNAP E&T national partnership grants.^{195, 196, 197} The SNAP E&T data and technical assistance grants supported training and capacity building. The grants also went to efforts to improve E&T data quality and develop information technology (IT) systems that would support the collection, reporting, and analysis of SNAP E&T data, and/or continuous program improvement of SNAP E&T programs, including the provision of effective and efficient services. Five states received funding in FY2021 (Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Virginia), and three states (California, Virginia, and Kentucky) and the District of Columbia received funding in FY2022.^{198, 199} The national partnership grants were aimed at nonprofit organizations with large networks of community colleges or consortia of community colleges that provide workforce development services to SNAP participants and other low-income individuals. Grant funds were to be used to expand the nonprofits' capacity to provide training and other technical assistance to network or consortia members seeking to become SNAP E&T providers.

In May 2022, FNS published a report that included outcomes and findings from the pilot programs authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill as well as a cost-benefit analysis.²⁰⁰ Among the key findings, SNAP participation did not decrease, earnings rose in three pilot states, and employment increased in five of the

pilots, compared with control groups. Unfortunately, increases in employment did not correlate with increases in earnings, the cost of the pilots outweighed the benefits in most states, and food security did not improve.²⁰¹

Issue briefs that accompanied the May 2022 FNS report emphasized that administrative oversight by SNAP agencies is important to ensure proper implementation of policies and programs by providers and partners. The briefs also noted that community colleges are an integral E&T provide, and further partnerships should be explored.²⁰² Furthermore, the findings highlighted the opportunities for community college partnerships to provide a wide range of workforce development services and to reach diverse populations and rural communities, where E&T services or programs might be less available.²⁰³ As a result of these preliminary findings, FNS is strengthening partnerships with community colleges through grants to expand SNAP E&T programs and increase program data collection.²⁰⁴ In addition to the pilots established in the 2014 Farm Bill, FNS is administering the “SNAP to Skills Project,” which provides technical assistance to states to build more effective and job-driven E&T programs.²⁰⁵

In December 2022, FNS published a report highlighting lessons from the pilots that included recommendations on how to improve experiences in SNAP E&T programs.²⁰⁶ Among the key findings, “individuals were less likely to engage with the program or begin E&T activities if there were multiple participant handoff points and referrals between enrollment and accessing E&T services.” The report also said that challenges with service delivery models reduced participant engagement, which often led to noncompliance and sanctions; most of the work-based learning opportunities provided did not lead to permanent jobs; and sanctioned individuals had lower employment and earnings, compared with those who were not sanctioned. About 1 in 5 individuals in Georgia, Illinois, and Mississippi were sanctioned in their first year in the pilot.²⁰⁷

In the 2023 Farm Bill, Congress should draw on the evaluation findings from the E&T pilot programs and “SNAP to Skills” to enhance SNAP E&T programs. Policymakers should also consider making program changes that would increase workforce participation and earnings. And they should consider ways to increase the cost-effectiveness of SNAP E&T programs.

Work Requirements

Changes to the work requirements to simplify administration, streamline application processes, and ensure compliance with the law should be considered during the reauthorization of the 2023 Farm Bill. The Task Force recognizes the administrative complexities and challenges for beneficiaries of the current work requirements but makes no specific recommendations in this brief.

Work Requirements in Current Law

SNAP has two sets of work requirements: (1) a general work requirement that applies to all SNAP applicants ages 16-59 who can work, and (2) a work requirement for Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD), which applies to SNAP applicants ages 18-49 who are able to work and do not have any dependents.²⁰⁸

The two types of work requirements are summarized in Table 3. Notably, applicants who are ages 18-49 and without dependents will likely have to meet both sets of work requirements to be eligible to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in a three-year period.

Table 3: Comparison of SNAP Work Requirements

	General Work Requirement	Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) Work Requirement
Applicable Population	SNAP applicants ages 16–59 who can work	SNAP applicants ages 18–49 who can work and do not have dependents
Ways for Individuals to Meet Work Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register for work • Participate in SNAP E&T or workfare if assigned by state SNAP agency • Take a suitable job if offered • Not voluntarily quit a job or reduce work hours below 30 hours per week without a good reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work at least 80 hours a month (work can be for pay, for goods or services, unpaid, or volunteer) • Participate in a work program for at least 80 hours a month (could be SNAP E&T or another federal, state, or local work program) • Participate in a combination of work and work program hours for a total of at least 80 hours a month • Participate in workfare for the number of hours assigned to the individual each month (number of hours will depend on amount of SNAP benefit)
Criteria for Being Excused from Work Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already work at least 30 hours per week (or earn wages at least equal to the federal minimum wage multiplied by 30 hours) • Meet work requirements for another program (TANF or unemployment compensation) • Care for a child under 6 or an incapacitated person • Be unable to work due to a physical or mental limitation • Participate regularly in an alcohol or drug treatment program • Study in school or a training program at least half-time (but college students are subject to other eligibility rules) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be unable to work due to physical or mental limitation • Be pregnant • Have someone under 18 in your SNAP household • Be excused from general work requirement
Consequences For Not Meeting Work Requirement	Disqualification from receiving SNAP benefits for at least one month and must start meeting the requirements to get SNAP again.	Loss of benefits after three months and must meet ABAWD work requirements for a 30-day period or become excused to get SNAP again. Otherwise, the applicant must wait until the end of the three-year period, when they will get another three months of benefits.

Federal Waiver of Work Requirements

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) (P.L. 116-127), enacted in March 2020, suspends the time limit for SNAP participants subject to the ABAWD work requirement due to the PHE.²⁰⁹ Effectively, this means states cannot limit ABAWD eligibility for not working, unless participants are not meeting qualifying work opportunities offered by their state agency (i.e., a work or workfare program). Like other PHE-related waivers, this suspension is in effect through the end of the subsequent month after the HHS secretary lifts the COVID-19 PHE declaration. The secretary has extended the PHE through at least April 11, 2023

State Waivers of Work Requirements

States can request to temporarily waive the ABAWD time limit if an area's unemployment rate tops 10% or it has an insufficient number of available jobs.²¹⁰ An ABAWD time limit waiver does not waive the general SNAP work requirement.

As of October 1, 2022, 22 states and territories have been approved for statewide ABAWD time limit waivers.²¹¹ As of September 2022, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had an unemployment rate below 5%, well below the 10% trigger. Of the states and territories with ABAWD time limit waivers, the highest unemployment rate was 4.7% in the District of Columbia, and the lowest was 2.0% in Minnesota. Minnesota also had the lowest unemployment rate in the nation.²¹²

The Evidence on Work Requirements

Research has shown mixed results on the impact of work requirements on employment rates. A three-state study in Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Missouri found that reinstating the time limit for ABAWD after the Great Recession in 2008 had a small adverse impact on employment, and sensitivity analysis found no statistically significant effect on the ABAWD time limit on employment among older participants (ages 47–49) in Colorado and Pennsylvania and a small positive effect in Missouri.²¹³ Taken together, the results from the main analysis and sensitivity analysis provide no evidence of improved employment because of time limit reinstatement in Colorado or Pennsylvania, while the employment effects for Missouri were inconclusive. These findings reflect the experiences of three states in the aftermath of the Great Recession and might not be generalizable to other states or time periods.

Additionally, 2018 census data from the American Community Survey (ACS) indicates that nearly three-quarters of SNAP households had at least one worker and one-third had two or more workers, indicating that many households relying on federal food assistance participate in the workforce.²¹⁴ A June 2022 CBO report suggests that SNAP work requirements have “probably” boosted employment for some adults without dependents, but might have

reduced incomes, on average, across all participants.²¹⁵ The report found that earnings increased among participants who worked more, but a greater number of adults stopped receiving SNAP benefits as a result of the work requirement.²¹⁶

NUTRITION AND ELIGIBLE FOODS IN SNAP

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen nutrition in SNAP by encouraging the consumption of nutritious foods through establishment of a fruit and vegetable cash value benefit (CVB), further expansion of and investment in the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), stronger retailer stocking standards, improvements to the SNAP-Ed program, better data collection, and demonstration projects.

With 41.5 million people participating in SNAP in 2021, the program presents immense opportunities to increase access to and intake of healthy foods.²¹⁷ A 2018 study found that as overall diet quality improved between 1999 and 2014, SNAP participants' diet quality stayed the same or worsened.²¹⁸ Additional studies have also found that SNAP lessens food insecurity but does not significantly improve diet quality.²¹⁹ Although research indicates that Americans from all income levels have poor diets, SNAP participants have lower total Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores than nonparticipants with both the same and higher income levels.^{220, 221} More specifically, data from 2011-2016 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) found that SNAP participants scored worse for total fruits, whole fruits, total vegetables, and added sugars, and better on sodium than nonparticipants of either similar or higher income levels.²²² However, among older adults, SNAP participants and nonparticipants of similar income levels had comparable diet quality.²²³ SNAP participants also have higher rates of obesity than nonparticipants.²²⁴ Policy changes should continue to move toward making diet quality a key SNAP objective.

Programs to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake

To overcome the barriers that SNAP participants face in accessing healthy food options, including fruits and vegetables, Congress should support an increase in accessibility, availability, affordability, and intake of nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables. Options to achieve this goal include:

- 1. A pilot program providing a new monthly cash value benefit (CVB) for SNAP participants for fruits and vegetables in all forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried) similar to the WIC CVB; or**
- 2. Scaling and expanding the existing GusNIP nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs to reach additional SNAP participants by making the GusNIP program permanent and increasing funding to at least \$1 billion, or 1% of SNAP expenditures. Congress should also make GusNIP program enhancements to increase equitable access to the program, including decreasing or eliminating the nonfederal matching requirement for grantees in lower-resourced communities, and ensure that GusNIP incentive and produce prescription programs include fruits and vegetables in all forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried).**

USDA research has shown that SNAP participants would have to allocate 40% of their SNAP benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables to meet the DGA recommendations.²²⁵ However, U.S. households allocate, on average, only 26% of their food budget to fruits and vegetables.²²⁶ An additional benefit dedicated specifically to fruits and vegetables in all forms (fresh, frozen, canned, dried) with no added sodium, sugar, or fat could help to make fruits and vegetables more affordable and close this gap. Research from the WIC program has shown that a benefit dedicated solely to fruits and vegetables can increase the consumption of these nutritious foods. One study conducted with 11 state WIC agencies and one Indian Tribal Organization examined the 2021 increases in the CVB amount from \$9–11 per participant to \$24–35 per participant. It found that total daily fruit and vegetable intake rose by one-third cup from 2.01 cups before the increase to 2.31 cups after the increase. These findings showcase not only the benefit’s importance but also the benefit amount.²²⁷ The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) recommends that WIC CVB benefit levels be set at 50% of the DGA recommended fruit and vegetable intake, resulting in recommended amounts of \$24 per month for children, \$43 per month for pregnant and postpartum women, and \$47 per month for partially or fully breastfeeding women.²²⁸ These amounts align closely with current benefit levels, although they are three to four times higher than the current regulatory amounts of \$9 per month for children and \$11 per month for pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding participants. The proposed WIC rule released in November 2022 seeks to make the NASEM-recommended amounts permanent.²²⁹ A similar target could be set for a SNAP CVB, with benefit amounts adjusted regularly for inflation. Such a program could first be established as a pilot project and later expanded, depending on funding availability and evidence of positive impact.

The Gus Schumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), which was previously called the The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Program, “presents the opportunity to bring together stakeholders from various parts of the food and healthcare systems to foster understanding of how they

might improve the health and nutrition status of participating households,” according to USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.²³⁰

An evaluation of GusNIP found that both nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs had positive effects on fruit and vegetable consumption in the second year of the program (September 1, 2020, to August 31, 2021).²³¹ For nutrition incentive programs, purchasing and consumption of fruits and vegetables rose, produce sales increased, and the economic impact was positive.²³² Longer participation in nutrition incentive programs was associated with higher fruit and vegetable intake: 2.54 cups per day for participants enrolled less than six months, compared with 2.82 cups per day for participants enrolled for longer than six months.²³³ Participants who used their nutrition incentive benefits at farm direct stores averaged 0.21 more cups per day of fruits and vegetables, and participants who used their nutrition incentive benefits at brick-and-mortar stores averaged 0.43 more cups per day of fruits and vegetables, than people who did not participate in the program. These findings are clinically significant.²³⁴ For produce prescriptions, fruit and vegetable consumption increased by approximately one-fourth cup compared with the baseline from 2.2 cups to 2.49 cups per day.²³⁵ In addition, participants reported reduced food insecurity compared with the baseline, and very low food insecurity decreased by almost half.²³⁶ Research has shown that the outlay is cost effective: For every \$1 invested in a healthy food incentive program, up to \$3 in economic activity can be generated in return.²³⁷

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized \$250 million in mandatory funding for GusNIP, with a maximum of 10% of funding for produce prescription programs. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260) provided an additional \$75 million in emergency funding for GusNIP, and in FY2022, USDA announced additional funding for GusNIP projects as part of the American Rescue Plan Act, including \$40 million announced in June 2022 and \$59.4 million in November 2022.^{238, 239} Increased investment in the program, with appropriate flexibilities, could allow for testing an increased number and expanded variety of pilot projects to determine the most effective incentive model and the best ways to expand access to additional SNAP participants. Currently, only 3.7% of SNAP beneficiaries participate in GusNIP nutrition incentive programs.²⁴⁰

Program enhancements could also help to increase equitable access to GusNIP, including decreasing or eliminating the nonfederal matching requirement for grantees in lower-resourced communities. Additional opportunities to improve equity include increasing technical assistance for applicants and program implementation; promoting greater community participation in project design and implementation; increasing maximum incentive amounts; allowing testing of same-day incentives (discounts) and supporting infrastructure for expansion and integration into EBT.

Policymakers should consider streamlining the program to improve consistency across jurisdictions; this would both reduce consumer confusion and make it easier to raise retailer participation. GusNIP should be integrated into retailer operations, and improvements should be made to data, funding, resources, evaluation, and technical assistance across government departments.

In addition to increasing GusNIP funding and the percentage of program funds allowed to be used for produce prescriptions from the current limit of 10%, access to produce prescription programs can be expanded through increased insurance coverage. To accomplish this goal, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) could provide clear guidance on how Medicare and Medicaid programs can operate produce prescription programs for beneficiaries, including in lieu of services options (which allow health plans when it is medically appropriate and cost-effective to pay for nonmedical services instead of standard Medicaid benefits). Or HHS could establish a demonstration model within the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. Medicaid and Medicare programs (Section 1115 demonstration waivers in Medicaid and Medicare Advantage Plans) and other state and federal insurance programs could explore other options to cover food and nutrition supports that would broaden coverage of produce prescription programs. The Veterans Health Administration could also provide coverage for produce prescriptions.

Retailer Stocking Standards

Congress and USDA should strengthen the stocking standards for SNAP-authorized retailers to better align them with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), including providing more options for fruits and vegetables without added sugars, sodium, or fats; lean protein foods; low-fat dairy products; and whole grains. Financial or technical support or specific exemptions could be provided to support smaller retailers in meeting stronger stocking standards or in voluntarily going beyond existing standards.

Retail stocking standards are important for providing healthy retail environments for all consumers, including SNAP customers. Stocking standards require that SNAP-authorized stores have available a minimum number and variety of foods. Under current law, SNAP-authorized stores must either (1) have at least three units of three different varieties for each staple food category on a continuous basis, with at least one perishable variety for two staple food categories; or (2) have more than 50% of total gross retail sales from staple foods.²⁴¹ Staple foods are defined as “the basic foods that make up a significant portion of a person’s diet,” which are usually prepared at home and eaten as a meal. Staple food categories include:

- Fruits and vegetables;

- Dairy products;
- Meat, poultry, and fish; and
- Breads or cereals.

Although the existing criteria ensure that a variety of products across these food categories are available in SNAP-approved stores, they do not fully align with the DGA, which recommends consuming nutrient-dense forms of foods and beverages across all food groups, in recommended amounts, and within calorie limits. According to the DGA, the core elements of a healthy dietary pattern include:

- Vegetables of all types;
- Fruits, especially whole fruit;
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grain;
- Dairy, including fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese, and/or lactose-free versions and fortified soy beverages and yogurt as alternatives;
- Protein foods, including lean meats, poultry and eggs, seafood, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and soy products; and
- Oils, including vegetable oils and oils in food, such as seafood and nuts.²⁴²

Strengthening the stocking standards for SNAP-authorized retailers to better align with the DGA could help to ensure that a greater number and variety of fruits and vegetables in all forms, lean protein foods, low-fat dairy products, and whole grain products are available to SNAP customers. For example, the [Minimum Stocking Levels and Marketing Strategies of Healthful Foods for Small Retail Food Stores](#) recommended by a Healthy Eating Research expert panel could be considered. Support for smaller retailers in meeting stronger stocking standards or in voluntarily going beyond existing standards could be provided in the form of financial or technical support, or specific exemptions, as needed. Further, it is important that requirements for SNAP retailers adequately balance the need to ensure the availability of nutritious foods to SNAP participants, while also ensuring low-income participants' access to retail food stores.

Strengthening stocking standards would benefit all people who shop in SNAP-authorized stores, and not only SNAP participants. Therefore, this policy change has the potential to improve diet quality for all Americans.

Congress and USDA should encourage or incentivize through technical assistance or federal funding that in-store and online marketing at SNAP-authorized retailers promote foods and beverages that are recommended by the DGA and do not promote foods and beverages that are not recommended by the DGA. Research should be conducted to identify the impact and feasibility of potential strategies to improve the retail environment for SNAP and non-SNAP customers.

For example, retailers could be encouraged or incentivized to promote fresh, frozen, canned, or dried vegetables and fruits; whole grain products; low-fat and fat-free dairy products and fortified soy beverages and yogurt; lean meats and poultry; eggs; seafood; beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and soy products; and oils. Consistent with the DGA, marketed foods would also be low in added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat.

Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed)

Congress and USDA should create a robust, coordinated SNAP-Ed that promotes nutrition education and nutritious food choices by doubling funding for SNAP-Ed and better integrating it with other federal and state government programs, allowing the program to reach more individuals.

Called the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant program in the 2018 Farm Bill, SNAP-Ed is a federally funded, evidence-based program that helps people lead healthy, active lives by partnering with state and local organizations in all U.S. states and some territories.²⁴³ SNAP-Ed should better engage with state health department nutrition programs, which are often funded by the CDC. SNAP-Ed programs aimed at children should also be paired with the Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration (CORD) program, funded by the CDC. Congress should realign the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to work synergistically with SNAP-Ed, while avoiding program duplication. And SNAP-Ed's mission should be shifted to provide more policy, systems, and environmental change interventions which address socioeconomic factors and make healthy choices more accessible by increasing funding and technical assistance for these initiatives. SNAP-Ed would be more innovative and effective if it increased its focus on evaluating the impact and implementation of systems changes, technology, and community health approaches rather than on traditional individual-level education. Research should be conducted on the effectiveness of SNAP-Ed consumer and nutrition education initiatives, including doing a pilot study on online nutrition education. Finally, Congress should double funding for SNAP-Ed to allow it to reach more participants. In FY2022, the funding allocation for SNAP-Ed was \$464 million.²⁴⁴

Demonstration Projects

Food and nutrition security should be prioritized in all federal nutrition programs. However, there is currently no component of SNAP to incentivize nutritious food purchases. A 2021 USDA survey found that 88% of SNAP participants face at least one barrier to healthy eating, with difficulty in affording healthy meals (61%), lack of time to prepare meals (30%), and

challenges with transportation to a store (19%) being the most common.²⁴⁵ Demonstration projects could test the effects of potential policy changes to address these and other barriers on diet quality among SNAP participants, while preserving participants' choice and dignity.

USDA and Congress should encourage and fund, and states should prioritize, multiple rigorous demonstrate projects in SNAP to evaluate different innovative approaches to jointly reduce hunger and improve nutrition. These demonstrations should be designed to look at the added challenges for a SNAP customer to achieve a nutrient dense diet as compared to the U.S. population, and how to reduce those challenges for all.

The demonstrations should test ways to reduce these challenges and could include:

- **Increased benefit levels;**
- **Behavioral economics, including novel uses of mobile technology and online/remote retail applications, taking into account limitations imposed under applicable privacy laws;**
- **Allowing purchases of hot, prepared foods consistent with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) definition of healthy and/or recommended to be consumed by the DGA;**
- **Incentives for selection of nutrient dense items recommended to be consumed by the DGA; and**
- **Incentives for selection of fewer less healthful items recommended to be minimized or reduced by the DGA.**

Demonstrations should be designed after the impactful factors are identified through evaluation and should include allowing SNAP customers to "opt in" to participate in a demonstration project. It is important that demonstrations are designed in a way to preserve participant choice and dignity. Both the design and evaluation of the demonstrations should include the perspectives of SNAP participants, be both quantitative and qualitative, and include assessment of the following outcomes: reach, interest in enrollment, stigma, dignity, satisfaction, food security, nutrition security, health, program costs, and health care utilization. Demonstration projects should be implemented through rulemaking, which should identify the specific nutrition criteria and consider the feasibility of implementation at the retailer level. These demonstrations should also seek to establish collaboration between the public and private sectors.

A September 2022 poll commissioned by the Bipartisan Policy Center found that a bipartisan majority of U.S. adults (67%) and a majority of SNAP participants (58%) agreed that states should be able to operate pilot programs, either freely or with USDA approval, that seek to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants. With respect to specific changes to SNAP benefits, two-thirds

of U.S. adults and 80% of adult SNAP participants supported allowing SNAP benefits to be used for hot, prepared foods. More than two-thirds of adults across political parties and more than three-quarters of SNAP participants also backed providing additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of fruits and vegetables or for a range of healthful foods, such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, legumes, and whole grains. More specifically, there was support from a bipartisan majority of U.S. adults and SNAP participants to:

- Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of a range of healthful foods, such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, legumes, and whole grains (77% of U.S. adults; 83% of SNAP participants).
- Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of fruits and vegetables in all forms (75% of U.S. adults; 78% of SNAP participants).
- Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, if participants do not purchase sugar-sweetened beverages with SNAP benefits (61% of U.S. adults; 52% of SNAP participants).
- Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, if participants do not purchase certain unhealthy foods, such as foods high in added sugars or sodium (such as candy or chips), with SNAP benefits (60% of U.S. adults; 53% of SNAP participants).
- Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, combined with fewer benefits if sugar-sweetened beverages are purchased with SNAP benefits (59% of U.S. adults; 53% of SNAP participants).

These findings align with the Task Force's recommendations for SNAP demonstration projects. Many food companies are now offering products that give consumers more choice on foods and beverages containing smaller portion sizes and lower sugar and sodium content, so those foods and beverages are becoming more available. Well-designed demonstrations showcasing these reformulations will allow more consumers, both SNAP and non-SNAP participants, to take advantage of these offerings.

Americans are generally still consuming too many foods and beverages that the DGA advises consumers to limit and too few of foods and beverages that the DGA recommends people increase. Action should be taken to help promote shifts toward healthier diets. *See Figure 6.*

Figure 6: DGA Guidance on Intake of Added Sugars

How can I cut down on added sugars?

Small changes make a big difference! Try these healthy swaps:

- Instead of regular soda, drink water, sparkling water, or unsweetened tea
- Instead of sugary cereal, try plain oatmeal or yogurt with fruit
- Replace the candy dish with a fruit bowl

Take small steps to cut back:

- Make your own coffee or order plain coffee – add 1 teaspoon of sugar or less, use a no-calorie sweetener, or don't use any sweetener at all
- Enjoy a smaller serving of dessert – or share dessert with a friend

What's the limit for added sugars?

Try to limit added sugars as much as possible – a simple rule is to aim for **less (or much less!) than 50 grams a day**. And people who get less than 2,000 calories a day, such as younger children and some teens and women, need to limit added sugars to much less than 50 grams a day.

Children under age 2 need to make every bite count to meet their nutrient needs within calorie limits. That's why it's important not to give them any foods or beverages with added sugars.



Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size **2/3 cup (55g)**

Calories 230

Amount per serving

% Daily Values*

Total Fat 8g **16%**

Saturated Fat 5g **9%**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 100mg **7%**

Total Carbohydrate 37g **12%**

Dietary Fiber 4g **14%**

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars 20%

Protein 3g

Vitamin D 2mcg **10%**

Calcium 200mg **20%**

Iron 8mg **45%**

Potassium 230mg **6%**

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Check the label

Check the Nutrition Facts label to see if foods are **low or high** in added sugars. Look at the % Daily Value (DV):

- **5% DV or less** is a **low** source of added sugars
- **20% DV or more** is a **high** source of added sugars

More often, choose foods that are lower in added sugars.



Why less than 50 grams?

It's important to get **less than 10% of your daily calories** from added sugars. If you get more than that, it's hard to get all the nutrients you need without getting too many calories. For a 2,000-calorie diet, 10% is 200 calories – and that's about 50 grams of added sugars.

So 50 grams is a simple limit to remember. But try to get even less. And remember not to give children under age 2 any added sugars at all.

Source: https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/DGA_FactSheet_AddedSugars_2021-06_508c.pdf.

Data Collection

Congress and USDA should invest in a robust research and data collection strategy to identify opportunities to improve nutrition in SNAP.

Congress should require that USDA regularly collect data from all federal nutrition programs to measure alignment with, and progress toward, improvements in dietary quality and food security for participants in these programs.

To better understand relationships between federal nutrition programs and health and nutrition outcomes, USDA should work across government agencies to collect and share data to identify ways to strengthen federal nutrition programs, including SNAP. Additionally, further investments from Congress are needed to carry out robust, impactful nutrition research. Currently, total federal funding for nutrition research is less than \$2 billion annually.²⁴⁶ Additional investments are needed to better understand the intersections of food, nutrition, and health with SNAP and other federal nutrition programs. Although USDA released a formal definition of nutrition security in March 2022, no nutrition security screening tools exist. Research should be conducted to develop and validate nutrition security screening tools. These tools should then be used to identify gaps in nutrition security among SNAP participants and nonparticipants of varying income levels.

Also, a robust evaluation plan should accompany any SNAP demonstration projects. Data on the impact of the demonstrations should be used to inform decisions about additional demonstration projects or the scaling of existing initiatives.

USDA should report every two years on the quality of SNAP participants' diets using science-based metrics, such as USDA's Healthy Eating Index, and data collected from nutrition surveys and research, such as the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

The HEI assesses how well individuals meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans by providing a score out of 100. National survey data from What We Eat In America, a component of NHANES, provides the data for the HEI.²⁴⁷ Data on SNAP and WIC participation are collected through the NHANES survey and could be paired with the Healthy Eating Index to provide a better understanding of the diet quality and health of SNAP participants.²⁴⁸ Analyses of SNAP and NHANES data are conducted inconsistently and data are typically outdated by the time reports are released.²⁴⁹ Studies containing important analyses of SNAP participants' eating habits should be produced regularly and their findings should be used to inform changes to SNAP, including ways to better support SNAP participants in accessing and consuming healthy foods.

SNAP INTEGRITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND RETAILER CONSIDERATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Use data matching, online purchasing, and other technology enhancements to improve SNAP access, integrity, and operations for participants and retailers.

Program Integrity and Data Matching

USDA, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and state administration agencies should continue to ensure program integrity and protect federal investment and public support for SNAP. The OIG should conduct an independent audit of SNAP's flexibilities provided during the PHE, including increased benefit levels and remote application and recertification processes.

Going forward, USDA should work closely with state SNAP agencies, as expected, to provide technical assistance to implement the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC) system fully and effectively across all states. Once implemented, USDA should conduct an evaluation of NAC's

effectiveness in detecting and preventing dual participation in SNAP and ensure all program administrators are in compliance with the final NAC rule.

It is important to ensure that federal SNAP funds are spent to provide food assistance only for those who meet eligibility criteria and that fraud, waste, and abuse in the program is limited. During the PHE, Congress and USDA enacted a number of waivers and flexibilities to strengthen SNAP's reach and mitigate the economic crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵⁰ Some of these flexibilities include providing households with increased benefits levels, expanding SNAP benefits to additional college students, and allowing remote interview and signature options.²⁵¹ As Congress and USDA consider lessons learned from the pandemic and policy changes to update and modernize SNAP, it is important to continue to ensure the program's integrity. Specifically, an Office of Inspector General audit should evaluate whether certain PHE-related flexibilities resulted in any improper payments, inaccurate eligibility determinations, fraud, or waste in the program and their impact on food insecurity and poverty among SNAP participants. Congress should use the findings to inform policy changes.

The 2018 Farm Bill required USDA to establish an interstate data system, known as the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC), to identify and prevent multiple issuances of SNAP benefits to participants across states also known as interstate dual participation or concurrent enrollment.²⁵² At the time of the 2018 Farm Bill's enactment, CBO estimated that the nationwide expansion of NAC would reduce SNAP spending by \$576 million between 2019 and 2028.²⁵³

Before NAC's permanent establishment, Mississippi undertook the NAC pilot program, funded by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to test the feasibility of establishing a real-time interstate data-matching system to identify and prevent duplicate participation across states. Five states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi—participated in the two-year pilot project, which also assessed NAC's technical capacity, states' effectiveness and utilization of NAC as a data-sharing tool, and any potential cost savings to SNAP.²⁵⁴

USDA's evaluation of the five-state pilot focused on NAC's impact on dual participation and states' effectiveness in utilizing NAC to prevent dual participation; it also compared NAC and the Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) and NAC's return on investment.²⁵⁵ Although the National Accuracy Clearinghouse did reduce dual participation in the five pilot states, the impact and effectiveness in utilizing NAC varied by state.²⁵⁶ Overall findings from the pilot indicated that the rate of dual participation is low; the percentage of dual participants of all eligible individuals ranged from 0.087% in Louisiana to 0.171% in Alabama.²⁵⁷ Although the pilot is still operating under administrative waivers, Louisiana is no longer participating.²⁵⁸

On October 3, 2022, USDA published an interim final rule, also known as the NAC rule, to establish requirements for all state SNAP agencies to use NAC.²⁵⁹ Specifically, the rule aims to ensure program integrity by reducing the risk of improper overpayments and to improve customer service by requiring state agencies to take appropriate and timely action to resolve NAC data matches.²⁶⁰ The rule additionally provides protections to safeguard identity and location information for SNAP applicants and participants and ensure the limited use of NAC's data to prevent dual participation.²⁶¹ Effective December 2, 2022, the final NAC rule will be phased in over the next five years.²⁶²

As the final NAC rule is implemented, USDA should work closely with state SNAP agencies to provide technical assistance to ensure full implementation of the NAC system in all states. NAC's implementation in all states should more effectively reduce dual participation because it will allow for data comparison across all 50 states rather than just the five that participated in the pilot. Post-implementation, an independent evaluation assessing compliance with the final NAC rule and NAC's effectiveness in detecting and preventing dual participation in SNAP will help to protect the effectiveness of the federal investment in SNAP and inform future strategies to promote program integrity.

Online Purchasing and Other Technology Improvements

Congress should authorize the Online Purchasing Pilot as a permanent program and increase equitable access to and promote nutrition through online purchasing. Congress should allow SNAP benefits to be used to cover online shopping transaction, delivery, monthly membership, or other fees up to a certain limit, such as \$10 per month per SNAP participant. To promote nutritious food purchases, funding should be provided for retailers to provide incentives to SNAP participants to make healthy food purchases when purchasing online and in stores.

To increase equitable access to and promote nutrition through online purchasing, Congress could require USDA to provide a report on the effects of online SNAP redemption, including barriers to access and consumer choice and a comparison of foods purchased. Additionally, Congress should ensure that all communities have access to affordable, high-quality broadband to access federal nutrition programs, including SNAP particularly in rural, tribal, and low-income urban areas. Congress should also establish a USDA micro-grant program to support rural or small-scale retailers to establish or improve their online infrastructure for online SNAP purchasing.

The 2014 Farm Bill established a pilot program to test the feasibility and implications of allowing retail food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions.²⁶³ In 2019, the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot launched in New York state, allowing SNAP participants to select and purchase

groceries online through what was intended to be a two-year pilot.²⁶⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic greatly accelerated the progress of the pilot. Additional states were quickly allowed to enroll in the online purchasing program, and as of September 2022, 49 states and Washington, D.C., have been approved to participate. With 99% of SNAP participants having access to online purchasing as of September 2022, online shopping among SNAP households increased from 35,000 households in March 2020 to more than 3 million in July 2022.²⁶⁵ As of September 2022, there were 1,240 SNAP-authorized online retail store locations.²⁶⁶ A 2022 Brookings Institution report found that 93% of the U.S. population has access to at least one of the four largest food delivery companies/platforms, including more than 90% of people in low-income census tracts.^{h,267} However, this leaves more than 4.5 million Americans without access.²⁶⁸ A recent Morning Consult poll commissioned by the Bipartisan Policy Center found that more than 90% of current SNAP participants and 74% of U.S. adults agreed that the online purchase of groceries should be allowed using SNAP benefits.

In addition to improving convenience for SNAP participants, expanding online purchasing has the potential to improve nutrition. For example, a 2021 study found that individuals shopping online spent significantly less money on candy, cold or frozen desserts, and grain-based desserts than those shopping in a store, despite spending 44% more per transaction.²⁶⁹

Ensuring that all communities have access to affordable, high-quality broadband is important for accessing SNAP and other federal nutrition programs. A 2022 Brookings Institution report found that the broadband adoption rate is 86% across the United States, indicating that a lack of broadband is a greater barrier to online food purchasing than a lack of online food delivery vendors.²⁷⁰ Congress should work with USDA and the Biden administration to promote and expand the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which ensures that households can access and afford broadband that may be needed for work, school, and more.²⁷¹ SNAP households are eligible for the ACP, but further outreach could help to raise awareness of the program.

Retail improvements in SNAP online purchasing could also help to increase access to the program. A USDA micro-grant program could help to level the playing field for retailers by supporting rural or small-scale retailers in establishing or improving the infrastructure needed for SNAP online purchasing. USDA should also provide technical and financial assistance to smaller retailers that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to incentivize and ease their participation in the online purchasing program. Additionally, to ensure equitable access among SNAP participants, USDA should continue to expand authorized retailers in operational states, with an emphasis on underserved areas; these retailers could include small-scale retailers like

^h This study includes delivery platforms for hot, prepared foods that are not SNAP-authorized.

independent grocers or farmers' markets. USDA could strengthen privacy measures for all online retailers related to sharing SNAP online purchasing and browsing data with third parties.

To cover the increased costs associated with online shopping or delivery, many retailers charge shipping, delivery, monthly membership, or other transaction fees. These fees can present a barrier to SNAP participants, as they must be paid with non-SNAP funds. To remove this barrier to online SNAP purchases, Congress should authorize SNAP benefits to be used to cover all or some of these fees up to a limit, such as \$10 per month per SNAP participant. Allowing SNAP funds to cover participants' online shopping or delivery fees would help to balance an interest in reducing barriers to online shopping with an interest in ensuring that SNAP participants get the maximum possible food benefit.

Congress should also authorize a USDA retailer pilot program to test various strategies to incentivize online retailers to increase the promotion of healthy food purchasing options through policies such as order-of-search results, emails, in-app or website hints or "nudges," and other promotions.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Modernize the food distribution programs, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), to improve nutrition, program access, and program operations.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

To continue to meet the needs of Americans experiencing food and nutrition insecurity, Congress should increase TEFAP entitlement funding by \$250 million annually, adjusted for inflation, and make programmatic changes to improve the nutritional quality of foods, increase access to the program, and ease administrative burden.

To support the distribution of fresh and frozen foods, Congress should reauthorize and annually appropriate at least \$200 million for TEFAP administrative grants for storage and distribution and \$15 million for TEFAP infrastructure grants to allow for better transport of foods and to increase the distribution of nutritious foods that require temperature control. Congress should also require USDA Foods purchases to maintain a

certain percentage of fresh or frozen items, such as low-fat dairy products, produce, and protein foods.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) was first authorized in 1983 to distribute USDA-purchased foods to support agricultural producers and connect low-income families with nutritious foods.²⁷² TEFAP provides emergency food assistance to low-income individuals who may not qualify for SNAP or who might need additional food assistance. USDA purchases a variety of foods through TEFAP and then makes them available to state agencies, which distribute them through food banks and other community organizations. TEFAP provided more than 39% of food distributed through the Feeding America network of food banks in 2020 more than 2.4 billion meals.²⁷³ USDA considers unemployment and poverty rates in its distribution of food to states. States also receive administrative funds for the storage and distribution of these USDA Foods. In FY2021, TEFAP was authorized at \$1.25 billion and distributed 941 million pounds of food.²⁷⁴ In FY2022, TEFAP food purchase funding was \$800 million. In addition, USDA provided \$180 million for administrative grants and purchased \$516 million in food to support U.S.-grown commodities through Section 32 purchases.²⁷⁵ Feeding America network food banks, which distribute approximately 85% of TEFAP foods provided nationwide, reported dispensing 1.29 billion pounds of food from TEFAP in FY2022.²⁷⁶ Annual TEFAP entitlement funding is \$250 million, adjusted by the TFP as an inflationary measure. In FY2022, this funding totaled \$399 million.²⁷⁷ This amount should be increased by \$250 million annually, or doubled from its original noninflation adjusted amount. Additionally, Congress should authorize \$200 million per year for TEFAP storage and distribution and \$15 million per year for infrastructure grants, which would better support the movement of foods, particularly in rural communities.

Several improvements can be made at the federal and state levels to increase access to TEFAP and ease administrative challenges. For example, states have different program eligibility requirements, presenting challenges for organizations that serve multiple states. Currently, states can set the income threshold for participation in TEFAP, making the program confusing for participants and cumbersome for organizations distributing foods in multiple states through TEFAP. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service could encourage states to streamline eligibility requirements or allow participants to declare need without providing documentation of meeting income guidelines. In addition, FNS should work with states to ensure they are allowed and encouraged to serve food across state lines with cooperative agreements. For example, food banks that operate in a geographic area that covers multiple states should be allowed to distribute foods across the food bank's entire geographic area without restrictions. To further expand access, states should consider not requiring collection of identification and should remove restrictions on the number of times someone can receive TEFAP food distributions within a month. Flexible distribution

plans, which enable participants to pick up food via drive-through, central locations, and more, should be encouraged to further expand access and ease program administration.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Congress should reauthorize the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); allow Native American families to simultaneously use both SNAP and FDPIR; provide tribal authority over administration of SNAP, SNAP-Ed, FDPIR, and other nutrition programs; and expand access to local and regionally produced and traditional foods through FDPIR.

Congress should also expand or make permanent 638 Authority, a legal tool for tribal self-determination that gives tribes the ability to administer certain federal government programs; eliminate the matching requirement for tribes; and provide funding to improve infrastructure to update facilities and equipment. Inclusion of more traditional, regional, and cultural foods should also be encouraged. Congress should reauthorize the FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Project to strengthen regional tribal communities by requiring the purchase of regional and culturally relevant foods from USDA-authorized tribal farmers and producers. Additionally, Congress should allow USDA to create a pilot program to allow Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) to source locally produced herbs and spices as part of nutrition education in FDPIR and include more traditional/tribally produced foods on a regional basis.

FDPIR was established to connect families living on Indian reservations without easy access to stores that accept SNAP benefits with healthy, nutritious foods.²⁷⁸ The program provides USDA Foods to income-eligible and categorically eligible households, including those living on Indian reservations and American Indian households residing in approved areas near reservations and in Oklahoma. USDA works with state agencies or Indian Tribal Organizations to administer the program at the local level. Participating households have the option to select from more than 100 products to make up their monthly food package. In FY2020, approximately 276 tribes were receiving benefits and 74,900 individuals were participating in the program monthly.²⁷⁹ Funding for FDPIR was \$122 million in FY2021.²⁸⁰ Currently, households cannot participate in both FDPIR and SNAP in the same month.

Native Americans experience food insecurity and hunger at much higher rates than the national average due to institutional and systemic inequities. While 1 in 9 Americans experience food insecurity, for Indigenous people the rate is 1 in 4, more than twice the rate of the overall U.S. population.²⁸¹ In March 2020, food insecurity was as high as 49% among Native households.²⁸² Tribal organizations should be able to administer TEFAP, SNAP, and SNAP-Ed. Expanding 638 authority to tribes would give them the authority to administer SNAP, FDPIR, and other federal nutrition programs. Encouraging

the availability of more traditional, regional, and cultural foods in FDPIR could help to increase program participation and satisfaction among people who are eligible for the program.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program

To better address the needs of older adults experiencing food insecurity, Congress should allow USDA to update the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), to allow more older adults to participate in the program by updating its criteria for determining program size.

CSFP provides nutritious, supplemental USDA Foods to low-income individuals at least 60 years of age.²⁸³ USDA provides foods to state agencies and ITOs, which then distribute them to eligible individuals through food banks and other local agencies. In addition to providing food, the local agencies provide nutrition education through the program and referrals to other assistance programs, such as SNAP and Medicaid. In FY2021, CSFP was authorized at \$298 million and 661,000 individuals participated in the program.²⁸⁴ In FY2022, \$332 million was authorized for the program.²⁸⁵

Although states determine eligibility criteria, including income limits, for CSFP, USDA utilizes a formula to determine caseload in each jurisdiction. Often there are more older adults experiencing food insecurity than slots available in the program, producing a waitlist. For example, in the District of Columbia, which has the highest rate of senior food insecurity in the nation, approximately 13,000 individuals are experiencing food insecurity, but slots to participate in CSFP number only 5,411.^{286, 287, 288}

Cross-Program Actions

Congress should work with USDA to improve food and nutrition security across food distribution programs, including TEFAP, FDPIR, and CSFP, through pilot programs, changes in procurement procedures, and research studies on progress and barriers.

There are several opportunities to improve food and nutrition security across TEFAP, FDPIR, CSFP, and other food distribution programs. USDA should be encouraged to collaborate further with community organizations that distribute directly to participants to learn how these programs and program models can be most effective and efficient. Policy changes across programs should help to ensure that traditional, regional, and culturally appropriate foods are incorporated in food distribution programs. USDA can work with partners to ensure they have the necessary infrastructure to distribute nutritious foods. Additionally, USDA's procurement procedures should increase and improve procurement of nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables.

Congress should require USDA to produce a report on the effectiveness, efficiency, nutritional value, cost, format, impact on diverse populations, and unintended consequences of federal food distribution programs, including food box programs, and provide best-practice recommendations for future programs.

In response to food chain disruptions caused by the pandemic, USDA began its Farmers to Families Food Box Program (FFFB) in 2020 under the \$19 billion Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.²⁸⁹ FFFB permitted USDA to purchase up to \$6 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products, including produce, meat, and dairy products, which were packed into boxes and distributed locally at food banks or other nonprofits.²⁹⁰ Before ending in May 2021, the program delivered 174 million boxes of food to individuals and families in need while supporting local farmers and agricultural producers.²⁹¹ The program delivered boxes to nearly 78% of all U.S. counties, and reached 89% of counties with poverty rates of at least 20%.²⁹² In announcing the sunset of the program in 2021, Secretary of Agriculture, Thomas Vilsack, noted that USDA would instead focus on providing food assistance through existing channels, such as TEFAP, SNAP, and WIC.²⁹³ Despite the success in delivering boxes to communities during the height of the pandemic, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) pointed to a need to improve data collection and analysis, the efficiency of the food distribution process, collaboration with existing food and nutrition agencies, and the quality of food boxes to meet the cultural and dietary needs of populations being served.²⁹⁴

To improve the quality and delivery of current and future food distribution programs, Congress should require USDA to further assess and report on the effectiveness, efficiency, nutritional value, cost, format, unintended consequences, and impact of the FFFB on diverse populations. The report could also be expanded to consider the effectiveness, efficiency, cost, format, and impact on food security and nutrition security, including disparate effects on various populations, of other food distribution programs. Such findings could inform and improve future programs, such as the TEFAP produce boxes or the [Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program](#) (LFPA).²⁹⁵

USDA should give local or state agencies and nonprofits the authority to determine the best methods for food distribution.

State or local agencies and nonprofit organizations that implement federal food distribution programs know how to best meet the food assistance needs of people in their service area. Depending on the situation or local jurisdiction, the most appropriate format could be a box, bag, or pantry, for example. Some FFFB distributors experienced challenges with preassembled boxes due to a lack of flexibility with client choice and meeting clients' dietary and cultural needs and preferences. Increased flexibility and local control over the format for food distribution would allow USDA to continue fostering relationships with

local commodity producers while also ensuring local food banks, nonprofits, and other agencies are able to use their existing distribution infrastructures to meet the dietary and cultural needs of their clients.

OTHER FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED THROUGH THE FARM BILL

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Improve food and nutrition security for priority populations through other food and nutrition assistance programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), Public-Private Partnerships Program, and Micro-Grants for Food Security Program.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)

To increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, Congress should provide the necessary funding and approval to expand FFVP to all elementary schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Congress could also provide further funding and approval to expand FFVP to all middle and high schools that participate in CEP.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program provides low-income elementary school children with access to fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day.²⁹⁶ According to data from the 2015-2018 NHANES, approximately 75% of children ages 2-19 consumed fruit on a given day and 91% consumed vegetables.²⁹⁷ Although a majority of children consume some fruits and vegetables, about 60% of children do not eat enough fruit and 93% do not eat enough vegetables.²⁹⁸ FFVP's goal is to increase consumption and acceptance of fresh produce, while introducing children to new and different varieties and promoting nutrition education.²⁹⁹ A USDA evaluation found that FFVP increases fruit and vegetable consumption among low-income students, while also helping to reduce plate waste at school meals.³⁰⁰ Additional research found that FFVP participation can reduce obesity rates.³⁰¹ FFVP is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.³⁰² FFVP prioritizes schools with high percentages of children who receive free or reduced-price school meals because low-income households are less likely to purchase healthful foods than higher-income households.³⁰³ Therefore, children with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to consume fresh produce regularly.

USDA's Food Nutrition Service allocates FFVP funds to states, and state agencies then work with local school food authorities to implement the program. Participating elementary schools receive \$50-\$75 per student per school year, although the exact amount is determined by the state agency and is based on the total funds provided and student enrollment. Despite the potential for the program to increase fruit and vegetable intake, existing resources do not allow the program to serve all students who could benefit. As noted previously, in FY2022, FNS distributed \$233.1 million to state agencies for FFVP.³⁰⁴ In FY2019, the most recent year for which full data on program reach are available, FFVP received \$172 million, which allowed 7,600 schools to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to 4 million students.³⁰⁵ However, that same year, more than 30,000 schools participated in the Community Eligibility Provision, meaning they have a large proportion of students that are low-income and could have benefited from the program if additional funds were available.³⁰⁶

USDA should direct state agencies to encourage participating schools to serve fresh fruits and vegetables through FFVP for as many days as possible. Currently, schools are encouraged to serve fresh produce two days per week. USDA and state agencies should also consider ways to incorporate local and regional food systems in the FFVP procurement process to provide local produce to school districts.

Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

To increase access to the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for all eligible seniors, Congress should reauthorize and increase funding for the SFMNP to allow for program expansion and increased benefit levels.

In addition, Congress should require participating states to accept proof of enrollment in other programs with similar income limits (adjunctive eligibility) as satisfying eligibility for SFMNP and make permanent some of the administrative flexibilities that states implemented during the COVID-19 PHE.

The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides fresh, nutritious foods to low-income seniors who are at least 60 years of age and have household incomes of no more than 185% of the FPL.³⁰⁷ The program also supports local producers and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs by connecting seniors with locally produced fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey. Although older adults consume more fruits and vegetables than younger adults, less than 50% of seniors consume the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables per day.³⁰⁸ The SFMNP is particularly important for increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables among low-income older adults. Predictors of fruit and vegetable intake among seniors are complex and relate to health status; geographic/physical environment; gender, marital status, and household composition; social support; race/ethnicity; socioeconomic status;

and dietary knowledge.³⁰⁹ Low food security in adults ages 55 or older has been associated with extreme obesity, lung diseases, and diabetes, adjusting for social and demographic factors.³¹⁰ Increasing fruit and vegetable intake in this population is critical, as poor diet quality is a risk factor for chronic diseases, which are particularly common in older adults.^{311,312} Approximately 85% of adults over age 65 have at least one chronic disease, and approximately 60% have two or more, many of which are nutrition-related.³¹³

The SFMNP operates in U.S. states, territories, and federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations.³¹⁴ USDA provides cash grants to state agencies that submit an annual plan describing how they will operate and administer the program. Coupons or checks are issued to SFMNP-eligible individuals, which can be used at locations that have been authorized by the state agency, such as farmers' markets, CSA, or roadside stands. Typically, the benefit level is at least \$20 and cannot exceed \$50 per year per individual, unless the state has been granted an exception.³¹⁵ In addition to providing the funds, nutrition education is provided to SFMNP participants. In FY2020, 725,686 individuals received SFMNP benefits at an average benefit level of \$35.³¹⁶

Congress should increase SFMNP funding to allow the program to serve more seniors and increase the benefit amount. In addition, requiring participating states to accept proof of enrollment in other programs with similar income limits, including the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and SNAP, as satisfying eligibility for SFMNP could help to increase participation and reduce administrative burdens. Making permanent some of the administrative flexibilities implemented by states during the COVID-19 PHE could also help to reduce administrative burdens and make SFMNP participation easier and safer for eligible seniors. For example, Congress could require state agencies to offer mailing or home delivery of SFMNP checks or coupons to eligible participants as an alternative to in-person pick-up.

Healthy Food Financing Initiative

Congress should reauthorize funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) at or above the current level to continue to support projects to attract fresh, healthy food retailers that accept SNAP benefits.

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative was first authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and reauthorized in 2018. It is a partnership between USDA, the Department of Treasury, and the Department of Health and Human Services, although Congress has funded HFFI through two of the three departments at one time and not all three simultaneously.³¹⁷ In 2018, \$125 million was provided to implement the program. HFFI was established to assist low-income communities by improving access to healthy foods in underserved areas and create and preserve quality jobs.³¹⁸ In 2021, the program provided grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$200,000 as one-time investments in food

enterprise projects or food retail projects that assist in addressing barriers and high costs to entry in underserved areas. Grantees were located in 46 states, and 45% of grantees served a rural area.³¹⁹ HFFI also provides technical assistance to organizations working to plan a food enterprise or retail project that align with HFFI goals.³²⁰ Since the program's inception, it has leveraged more than \$220 million in grants and an estimated \$1 billion in financing. Through the program, nearly 1,000 grocery and other healthy food retail projects in more than 35 states have received support.³²¹ In FY2022, \$183 million in funding was provided for HFFI between USDA (\$160 million) and the Department of the Treasury (\$23 million), a major increase in funding from FY2021, during which \$28 million was provided.³²² The funding increase came from the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2, Title I), which provided funding to address disruptions in the food supply chain and agricultural production systems due to the COVID-19 pandemic.³²³

Public-Private Partnerships

Congress should authorize and fund a public-private partnerships program and work with USDA to ensure the program is implemented.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized \$5 million in discretionary funding for pilot programs that support public-private partnerships addressing food and nutrition insecurity.³²⁴ However, Congress never appropriated funding and the program was not implemented. This program should be reauthorized and fully funded in the 2023 Farm Bill. A program could establish a sustainable funding mechanism for public-private partnerships and develop a coordinated, multisector plan to expand healthy food access and improve diet quality. Such a program could help to support collaborations between government and nonprofit or private-sector entities addressing food and nutrition insecurity. More specifically, grants to organizations embedded in communities and particularly in rural areas would complement SNAP and other federal feeding programs by magnifying their impact and effectiveness in local communities. Diverse and successful partnership models that are identified through this program could be implemented and scaled throughout the country, increasing the long-term capacity to address food and nutrition insecurity.

Micro-Grants for Food Security Program

Congress should reauthorize the Micro-Grants for Food Security Program to address the unique needs of the noncontiguous U.S. states and territories in promoting food security.

The 2018 Farm Bill included the Micro-Grants for Food Security Program, which was intended to increase the quality and quantity of locally grown foods in food insecure communities in Alaska, Hawaii, and U.S. territories:

American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.³²⁵ Reauthorization of this program is important to address the unique needs of these states and territories.

Conclusion

The 2023 Farm Bill presents immense opportunities to increase access to federal nutrition assistance programs and make program improvements to promote food and nutrition security. Implementing the evidence-based bipartisan policy recommendations in this report would provide legislators with a range of options to improve food and nutrition security, while maintaining program integrity and increasing efficiencies with program administration. Improving collaboration and coordination at the federal, tribal, territorial, state, and local levels could help individuals and families better access and benefit from nutrition assistance and social safety net programs, including SNAP. In addition, it is important that program funding decisions do not expand or improve one program at the expense of another program. Given Americans' poor dietary state, policymakers should give special consideration to promoting good nutrition through SNAP and other farm bill programs.

Appendix 1: Description, Eligibility, Participation, and Cost of Farm Bill Nutrition Programs, FY2019–FY2022ⁱ

Program	Description	Eligibility	Program Cost and Participation		
			Year	Cost	Participation
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	Improves the health of low-income persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with monthly food packages of nutritious USDA Foods.	Participants must reside in one of the states or on one of the Indian reservations that participate in CSFP. States can establish local residency requirements. Persons must have income limits at or below 130% FPL.	FY2019	\$259 million ³²⁶	703,000 individuals ³²⁷
			FY2020	\$286 million ³²⁸	693,000 individuals ³²⁹
			FY2021	\$298 million ³³⁰	661,000 individuals ³³¹
			FY2022	\$332 million ³³²	760,547 ³³³
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	Provides USDA Foods in lieu of SNAP benefits to income-eligible households living on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in Oklahoma or in designated areas near reservations.	Residential: Income eligible households that reside on a reservation (whether American Indian or non-Indian) or households living in approved areas near a reservation or in Oklahoma, where at least one member of the household is also a member of a Federally recognized tribe. Income eligibility is dependent on household size. The net income standard is the sum of the applicable SNAP net monthly income standard and the applicable SNAP standard deduction.	Year	Cost	Participation
			FY2019	\$143 million ³³⁴	83,800 individuals ³³⁵
			FY2020	\$159 million ³³⁶	74,900 individuals ³³⁷
			FY2021	\$122 million ³³⁸	48,000 individuals ³³⁹
			FY2022	Data not available	Data not available

ⁱ Program cost and participation data for FY2022 are included where available.

Program	Description	Eligibility	Program Cost and Participation		
			Year	Cost	Participation
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)	Provides a free fresh fruit or vegetable snack during the school day at participating elementary schools.	Elementary schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program, with priority for schools with the highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.	FY2019	\$172 million ³⁴⁰	7,600 schools provided fresh produce to 4 million students ³⁴¹
			FY2020	\$176 million ³⁴²	Data not available
			FY2021	\$202.9 million ³⁴³	Data not available
			FY2022	\$233.1 million ³⁴⁴	Data not available
Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)	Provides funding opportunities to conduct and evaluate projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by income-eligible consumers by providing incentives; also provides funding to produce prescription programs to SNAP/Medicaid participants to reduce food insecurity and health care usage and associated costs.	Nonprofit organizations and government agencies are eligible to apply for the GusNIP Nutrition Incentive Program and the GusNIP Produce Prescription Program.	FY2019	\$41.4 million in grants awarded ³⁴⁵	22 projects funded ³⁴⁶
			FY2020	\$41 million in grants awarded ³⁴⁷	30 projects funded ³⁴⁸
			FY2021	\$110 million in grants awarded ³⁴⁹	63 projects funded ³⁵⁰
			FY2022	Data not available	81 projects funded ³⁵¹
Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)	The program aims to build a more equitable food system that supports the health and economic vibrancy of all Americans through supporting local projects.	For-profit businesses, cooperative businesses, nonprofit organizations, and state, local, and tribal governments and governmental agencies aiming to strengthen, expand, and innovate within the food retail supply chain.	FY2019	\$24 million ³⁵²	Data not available
			FY2020	\$27 million ³⁵³	20 projects awarded ³⁵⁴
			FY2021	\$28 million ³⁵⁵	134 projects awarded ³⁵⁶
			FY2022	\$183 million ³⁵⁷	Data not available

Program	Description	Eligibility	Program Cost and Participation		
			Year	Cost	Participation
Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)	The program awards grants to states, federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations, and U.S. territories to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, CSAs, etc.	Low-income seniors, generally individuals who are at least 60 years old, with household incomes of no more than 185% of the FPL. Some state agencies accept proof of participation or enrollment in another means-tested program, like SNAP, CSFP, etc.	FY2019	\$21.0 million ³⁵⁸	832,111 ³⁵⁹
			FY2020	\$21.1 million ³⁶⁰	725,686 ³⁶¹
			FY2021	\$23.7 million ³⁶²	Data not available
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	The program provides nutrition benefits to low-income individuals and families, to supplement food budgets in the form of electronic benefits redeemable for SNAP-eligible foods at SNAP-eligible retailers. Benefit amounts vary by household size and benefit calculation rules.	Must apply in the state in which the applicant currently lives and must meet certain resource, asset, and income limits. SNAP income and resource limits are updated annually. There are special SNAP rules for households with elderly family members, those with disabilities, or those living in Alaska or Hawaii.	Year	Cost	Participation
			FY2019	\$60.39 billion ³⁶³	35.70 million individuals ³⁶⁴
			FY2020	\$79.12 billion ³⁶⁵	39.88 million individuals ³⁶⁶
			FY2021	\$113.7 billion ³⁶⁷	41.56 million individuals ³⁶⁸
			FY2022	Data not available	41.16 million individuals ³⁶⁹ <i>**Data as of November 10, 2022</i>
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed)	Evidence-based program that helps people lead healthy, active lives. SNAP-Ed teaches people how to make their SNAP dollars stretch, how to shop for and cook healthy meals, and how to stay physically active. The program utilizes individual, group-based, multilevel and community- or population-based approaches.	Serves SNAP participants, low-income individuals eligible to receive SNAP benefits or other means-tested federal assistance programs, and individuals residing in communities with a significant low-income population.	Year	Cost	Participation
			FY2019	\$433.0 million allocated to states ³⁷⁰	Data not available
			FY2020	\$441.0 million allocated to states ³⁷¹	Data not available
			FY2021	\$431.2 million allocated to states ³⁷²	Data not available
			FY2022	\$464.0 million allocated to states ³⁷³	Data not available

Program	Description	Eligibility	Program Cost and Participation		
			Year	Cost	Participation
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	<p>Helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost.</p> <p>USDA purchases a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA Foods, and makes those foods available to state distributing agencies.</p>	<p>Public or private nonprofit organizations that provide nutrition assistance to low-income Americans, either through the distribution of food for home use or the preparation of meals; households that meet state eligibility criteria can receive food for home use and low-income individuals may receive prepared meals.</p>	FY2019	\$764 million ³⁷⁴	785 million lbs. of food distributed ³⁷⁵
			FY2020	\$770 million ³⁷⁶	719 million lbs. of food distributed ³⁷⁷
			FY2021	\$1.25 billion ³⁷⁸	940 million lbs. of food distributed ³⁷⁹
			FY2022	\$1.03 billion allocated ³⁸⁰	Data not available

Appendix 2: Findings from BPC SNAP Poll

BPC commissioned a poll by Morning Consult to better understand the perspectives of the general public and of SNAP participants about SNAP. The poll was conducted September 12-14, 2022, and reached 2,210 adults, 483 of whom were current SNAP participants. Interviews were conducted online and demographic data was weighted to match an approximate makeup of the U.S. population. The poll had a margin of error of 2% for the general population and 4% for SNAP participants. Percentages might not total 100% due to rounding. The poll questions and responses from all respondents and from SNAP participants only are provided in this section.

MORNING CONSULT POLL RESULTS – ALL RESPONDENTS

Question 1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Have you or members of your household ever participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps?	Yes, current participant	483	22%
	Yes, participated since March 2020 but no longer participating	91	4%
	Yes, participated between September 2017 and February 2020 but no longer participating	78	4%
	Yes, participated 5+ years ago but no longer participating	230	10%
	No, never participated	1328	60%

Question 2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Thinking about the current SNAP benefit levels, which of the following best represents your view?	Benefit levels are too low	938	42%
	Benefit levels are sufficient	655	30%
	Benefit levels are too high	165	7%
	Don't know/No opinion	452	20%

Question 3	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think current SNAP benefit levels should be increased, decreased, or remain the same?	Increase by 20% or more	782	35%
	Increase by less than 20%	375	17%
	Remain the same	581	26%
	Decrease by less than 20%	100	5%
	Decrease by more than 20%	89	4%
	Don't know/No opinion	282	13%

Question 4-1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Assuming they meet other eligibility criteria, do you agree or disagree the following groups of people should be eligible to participate in SNAP? <i>College students</i>	Strongly agree	853	39%
	Somewhat agree	643	29%
	Somewhat disagree	260	12%
	Strongly disagree	211	10%
	Don't know/No opinion	244	11%

Question 4-2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Assuming they meet other eligibility criteria, do you agree or disagree the following groups of people should be eligible to participate in SNAP? <i>Legal immigrants</i>	Strongly agree	888	40%
	Somewhat agree	697	32%
	Somewhat disagree	162	7%
	Strongly disagree	228	10%
	Don't know/No opinion	235	11%

Question 4-3	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Assuming they meet other eligibility criteria, do you agree or disagree the following groups of people should be eligible to participate in SNAP? <i>Individuals with prior drug convictions</i>	Strongly agree	524	24%
	Somewhat agree	595	27%
	Somewhat disagree	367	17%
	Strongly disagree	345	16%
	Don't know/No opinion	379	17%

Question 5	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, certain SNAP participants were required to work at least 80 hours per month or be actively participating in a work training program to be eligible for SNAP benefits. These work requirements for SNAP participants were temporarily waived to ensure Americans are able to access the food benefits they need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on what you know, should the work requirement for SNAP participants be more or less strict than it was compared to prior to COVID-19?</p>	SNAP work requirements should be stricter than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	339	15%
	SNAP work requirements should return to what they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	901	41%
	SNAP work requirements should be less strict than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	617	28%
	Don't Know/No opinion	353	16%

Question 6-1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of fruits and vegetables in all forms (N=262)</i></p>	Strongly support	501	44%
	Somewhat support	349	31%
	Somewhat oppose	84	7%
	Strongly oppose	64	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	131	12%

Question 6-2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of a range of healthful foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, legumes, and whole grains (N=1080)</i></p>	Strongly support	472	44%
	Somewhat support	356	33%
	Somewhat oppose	82	8%
	Strongly oppose	64	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	107	10%

Question 6-3	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, if participants do not purchase sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	669	30%
	Somewhat support	671	30%
	Somewhat oppose	270	12%
	Strongly oppose	274	12%
	Don't know/No opinion	326	15%

Question 6-4	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, if participants do not purchase certain unhealthful foods, such as foods high in added sugars or sodium (like candy or chips), with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	653	30%
	Somewhat support	681	31%
	Somewhat oppose	286	13%
	Strongly oppose	250	11%
	Don't know/No opinion	340	15%

Question 6-5	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Remove sugar-sweetened beverages from the products that can be purchased with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	527	24%
	Somewhat support	473	21%
	Somewhat oppose	411	19%
	Strongly oppose	506	23%
	Don't know/No opinion	294	13%

Question 6-6	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Remove a variety of unhealthful foods, including foods high in added sugars or sodium (like candy and chips), from the products that can be purchased with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	567	26%
	Somewhat support	500	23%
	Somewhat oppose	380	17%
	Strongly oppose	471	21%
	Don't know/No opinion	293	13%

Question 6-7	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, combined with a reduction in benefits if unhealthful foods, such as foods high in added sugars or sodium (like candy or chips), are purchased (N=234)</i></p>	Strongly support	289	27%
	Somewhat support	311	30%
	Somewhat oppose	161	15%
	Strongly oppose	132	13%
	Don't know/No opinion	159	15%

Question 6-8	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, combined with fewer benefits if sugar-sweetened beverages are purchased with SNAP benefits (N=250)</i></p>	Strongly support	329	28%
	Somewhat support	354	31%
	Somewhat oppose	155	13%
	Strongly oppose	152	13%
	Don't know/No opinion	168	15%

Question 7	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>SNAP pilot programs are optional and not required for SNAP participants. Pilot program examples include those that offer additional benefits for healthy food purchases or disincentivize or restrict purchases of unhealthful food items. Currently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has not approved any state SNAP pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants. Based on what you know, should states be allowed to operate SNAP pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants?</p>	Yes, states should be able to freely operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants	691	31%
	Yes, states should be able to operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants, but the program should be approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	786	36%
	No, states should not be able to operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants	285	13%
	Don't know/No opinion	448	20%

Question 8-1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you agree or disagree SNAP benefits should be allowed to be used for the following?</p> <p><i>Hot, prepared foods</i></p>	Strongly agree	751	34%
	Somewhat agree	724	33%
	Somewhat disagree	281	13%
	Strongly disagree	249	11%
	Don't know/No opinion	205	9%

Question 8-2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you agree or disagree SNAP benefits should be allowed to be used for the following?</p> <p><i>Certain non-food items (such as household items like cleaning supplies, diapers, and menstrual products)</i></p>	Strongly agree	740	33%
	Somewhat agree	696	31%
	Somewhat disagree	252	11%
	Strongly disagree	297	13%
	Don't know/No opinion	225	10%

Question 9	Response	Frequency	Percentage
SNAP-authorized stores, including local convenience and corner stores, are required to have a minimum number of a variety of food categories available, including meat, poultry, and fish; bread and cereals; vegetables and fruits, and dairy products. Some of these items must be fresh or frozen products, but there are otherwise no nutrition criteria. What do you think about the food stocking requirement for SNAP-authorized stores?	The food stocking requirement for SNAP-authorized stores should require them to have more healthful food options	829	37%
	The food stocking requirements for SNAP-authorized stores should not change	746	34%
	The food stocking requirements for SNAP-authorized stores should be lessened	174	8%
	Don't know/No opinion	464	21%

Question 10	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you agree or disagree SNAP participants should be able to use their benefits to purchase groceries online?	Strongly agree	975	44%
	Somewhat agree	670	30%
	Somewhat disagree	145	7%
	Strongly disagree	132	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	288	13%

MORNING CONSULT POLL RESULTS – SNAP PARTICIPANTS

Question 1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Have you or members of your household ever participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps?	Yes, current participant	483	100%

Question 2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Thinking about the current SNAP benefit levels, which of the following best represents your view?	Benefit levels are too low	287	59%
	Benefit levels are sufficient	150	31%
	Benefit levels are too high	15	3%
	Don't know/No opinion	32	7%

Question 3	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think current SNAP benefit levels should be increased, decreased, or remain the same?	Increase by 20% or more	280	58%
	Increase by less than 20%	76	16%
	Remain the same	88	18%
	Decrease by less than 20%	12	2%
	Decrease by more than 20%	9	2%
	Don't know/No opinion	19	4%

Question 4-1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Assuming they meet other eligibility criteria, do you agree or disagree the following groups of people should be eligible to participate in SNAP? <i>College students</i>	Strongly agree	258	53%
	Somewhat agree	124	26%
	Somewhat disagree	25	5%
	Strongly disagree	32	7%
	Don't know/No opinion	44	9%

Question 4-2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Assuming they meet other eligibility criteria, do you agree or disagree the following groups of people should be eligible to participate in SNAP? <i>Legal immigrants</i>	Strongly agree	219	45%
	Somewhat agree	122	25%
	Somewhat disagree	40	8%
	Strongly disagree	48	10%
	Don't know/No opinion	54	11%

Question 4-3	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Assuming they meet other eligibility criteria, do you agree or disagree the following groups of people should be eligible to participate in SNAP? <i>Individuals with prior drug convictions</i>	Strongly agree	155	32%
	Somewhat agree	120	25%
	Somewhat disagree	56	12%
	Strongly disagree	68	14%
	Don't know/No opinion	84	17%

Question 5	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, certain SNAP participants were required to work at least 80 hours per month or be actively participating in a work training program to be eligible for SNAP benefits. These work requirements for SNAP participants were temporarily waived to ensure Americans are able to access the food benefits they need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on what you know, should the work requirement for SNAP participants be more or less strict than it was compared to prior to COVID-19?	SNAP work requirements should be stricter than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	42	9%
	SNAP work requirements should return to what they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	143	30%
	SNAP work requirements should be less strict than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic	214	44%
	Don't Know/No opinion	85	18%

Question 6-1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits? <i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of fruits and vegetables in all forms (N=262)</i>	Strongly support	144	55%
	Somewhat support	60	23%
	Somewhat oppose	17	6%
	Strongly oppose	13	5%
	Don't know/No opinion	27	10%

Question 6-2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of a range of healthful foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, legumes, and whole grains (N=221)</i></p>	Strongly support	127	57%
	Somewhat support	57	26%
	Somewhat oppose	13	6%
	Strongly oppose	6	3%
	Don't know/No opinion	18	8%

Question 6-3	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, if participants do not purchase sugar-sweetened beverages with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	153	32%
	Somewhat support	97	20%
	Somewhat oppose	67	14%
	Strongly oppose	89	18%
	Don't know/No opinion	77	16%

Question 6-4	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, if participants do not purchase certain unhealthy foods, such as foods high in added sugars or sodium (like candy or chips), with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	153	32%
	Somewhat support	103	21%
	Somewhat oppose	79	16%
	Strongly oppose	78	16%
	Don't know/No opinion	69	14%

Question 6-5	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits?</p> <p><i>Remove sugar-sweetened beverages from the products that can be purchased with SNAP benefits</i></p>	Strongly support	51	11%
	Somewhat support	79	16%
	Somewhat oppose	85	18%
	Strongly oppose	221	46%
	Don't know/No opinion	47	10%

Question 6-6	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits? Remove a variety of unhealthy foods, including foods high in added sugars or sodium (like candy and chips), from the products that can be purchased with SNAP benefits	Strongly support	65	13%
	Somewhat support	64	13%
	Somewhat oppose	93	19%
	Strongly oppose	210	44%
	Don't know/No opinion	51	11%

Question 6-7	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits? <i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, combined with a reduction in benefits if unhealthy foods, such as foods high in added sugars or sodium (like candy or chips), are purchased (N=234)</i>	Strongly support	63	27%
	Somewhat support	37	16%
	Somewhat oppose	52	22%
	Strongly oppose	55	24%
	Don't know/No opinion	26	11%

Question 6-8	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you support or oppose making the following changes to SNAP benefits? <i>Provide additional benefits to SNAP participants for the purchase of healthful items, such as fruits and vegetables, combined with fewer benefits if sugar-sweetened beverages are purchased with SNAP benefits (N=250)</i>	Strongly support	75	30%
	Somewhat support	58	23%
	Somewhat oppose	27	11%
	Strongly oppose	55	22%
	Don't know/No opinion	35	14%

Question 7	Response	Frequency	Percentage
SNAP pilot programs are optional and not required for SNAP participants. Pilot program examples include those that offer additional benefits for healthy food purchases or disincentivize or restrict purchases of unhealthy food items. Currently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has not approved any state SNAP pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants. Based on what you know, should states be allowed to operate SNAP pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants?	Yes, states should be able to freely operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants	145	30%
	Yes, states should be able to operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants, but the program should be approved by the U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA)	137	28%
	No, states should not be able to operate pilot programs to improve the nutrition of SNAP participants	98	20%
	Don't know/No opinion	103	21%

Question 8-1	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you agree or disagree SNAP benefits should be allowed to be used for the following?</p> <p><i>Hot, prepared foods</i></p>	Strongly agree	267	55%
	Somewhat agree	120	25%
	Somewhat disagree	30	6%
	Strongly disagree	30	6%
	Don't know/No opinion	37	8%

Question 8-2	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you agree or disagree SNAP benefits should be allowed to be used for the following?</p> <p><i>Certain non-food items (such as household items like cleaning supplies, diapers, and menstrual products)</i></p>	Strongly agree	223	46%
	Somewhat agree	97	20%
	Somewhat disagree	52	11%
	Strongly disagree	76	16%
	Don't know/No opinion	35	7%

Question 9	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>SNAP-authorized stores, including local convenience and corner stores, are required to have a minimum number of a variety of food categories available, including meat, poultry, and fish; bread and cereals; vegetables and fruits; and dairy products. Some of these items must be fresh or frozen products, but there are otherwise no nutrition criteria. What do you think about the food stocking requirement for SNAP-authorized stores?</p>	The food stocking requirement for SNAP-authorized stores should require them to have more healthful food options	159	33%
	The food stocking requirements for SNAP-authorized stores should not change	175	36%
	The food stocking requirements for SNAP-authorized stores should be lessened	46	9%
	Don't know/No opinion	103	21%

Question 10	Response	Frequency	Percentage
<p>Do you agree or disagree SNAP participants should be able to use their benefits to purchase groceries online?</p>	Strongly agree	355	73%
	Somewhat agree	88	18%
	Somewhat disagree	8	2%
	Strongly disagree	4	1%
	Don't know/No opinion	28	6%

Appendix 3: Full List of Task Force Recommendations

SNAP ELIGIBILITY, BENEFIT LEVELS, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that SNAP benefit levels are adequate to achieve a nutritious diet; that eligibility requirements and employment and training programs promote workforce participation and increased earnings without presenting undue barriers to SNAP participation; and that access to SNAP is expanded to all U.S. territories.

- As required by the 2018 Farm Bill, USDA should continue to re-evaluate the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) every five years and annually update benefit levels for inflation to ensure benefit adequacy.
- Congress should support the utilization of categorical eligibility to simplify program administration, provide program flexibility, and expand eligibility to families in need.
- To remove unnecessary barriers to SNAP participation, Congress should make permanent certain public health emergency-related procedural flexibilities, such as providing applicants the option to interview and provide their signature remotely. USDA should also encourage states to utilize existing SNAP demonstration authority to test alternative approaches to program administration to improve program access, efficiency, and delivery of SNAP benefits. Congress should consider evidence from state demonstration projects and input from state SNAP administrators, community partners, and participants to better inform and modify SNAP administration rules.
- To increase access to SNAP and participation among eligible households, Congress should streamline and simplify program requirements, program administration, and data sharing.

- Congress should expand SNAP and SNAP-Ed to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, in place of the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) block grants.
- To reduce barriers to SNAP participation, support underserved communities, and advance racial equity, Congress should expand SNAP benefits to college students, immigrant communities subject to a waiting period, and people in the military; Congress should also eliminate military members' basic allowance for housing (BAH) from SNAP eligibility determinations.
- USDA should require states to provide five months of SNAP benefits to households that have had their cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program terminated. The benefit amount for these months should be equal to the amount received before TANF was terminated.
- Congress should enhance SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) programs through continued evaluation of existing E&T programs, such as E&T pilot programs and "SNAP to Skills," to improve their effectiveness in increasing workforce participation and earnings and their cost-effectiveness.
- Changes to the work requirements to simplify administration, streamline application processes, and ensure compliance with the law should be considered during the reauthorization of the 2023 Farm Bill. The Task Force recognizes the administrative complexities and challenges for beneficiaries of the current work requirements but makes no specific recommendations in this brief.

NUTRITION AND ELIGIBLE FOODS IN SNAP

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen nutrition in SNAP by encouraging the consumption of nutritious foods through establishment of a fruit and vegetable cash value benefit (CVB), further expansion of and investment in the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), stronger retailer stocking standards, improvements to the SNAP-Ed program, better data collection, and demonstration projects.

- To overcome the barriers that SNAP participants face in accessing healthy food options, including fruits and vegetables, Congress should support an increase in accessibility, availability, affordability, and intake of nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables. Options to achieve this goal include:

- A pilot program providing a new monthly cash value benefit (CVB) for SNAP participants for fruits and vegetables in all forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried) similar to the WIC CVB; or
 - Scaling and expanding the existing GusNIP nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs to reach additional SNAP participants by making the GusNIP program permanent and increasing funding to at least \$1 billion, or 1% of SNAP expenditures. Congress should also make GusNIP program enhancements to increase equitable access to the program, including decreasing or eliminating the nonfederal matching requirement for grantees in lower-resourced communities, and ensure that GusNIP incentive and produce prescription programs include fruits and vegetables in all forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried).
- Congress and USDA should strengthen the stocking standards for SNAP-authorized retailers to better align them with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA), including providing more options for fruits and vegetables without added sugars, sodium, or fats; lean protein foods; low-fat dairy products; and whole grains. Financial or technical support or specific exemptions could be provided to support smaller retailers in meeting stronger stocking standards or in voluntarily going beyond existing standards.
- Congress and USDA should encourage or incentivize through technical assistance or federal funding that in-store and online marketing at SNAP-authorized retailers to promote foods and beverages that are recommended by the DGA and do not promote foods and beverages that are not recommended by the DGA. Research should be conducted to identify the impact and feasibility of potential strategies to improve the retail environment for SNAP and non-SNAP customers.
- Congress and USDA should create a robust, coordinated SNAP-Ed that promotes nutrition education and nutritious food choices by doubling funding for SNAP-Ed and better integrating it with other federal and state government programs, allowing the program to reach more individuals.
- USDA and Congress should encourage and fund, and states should prioritize, multiple rigorous demonstrate projects in SNAP to evaluate different innovative approaches to jointly reduce hunger and improve nutrition. These demonstrations should be designed to look at the added challenges for a SNAP customer to achieve a nutrient dense diet as compared to the U.S. population, and how to reduce those challenges for all. The demonstrations should test ways to reduce these challenges and could include:
 - Increased benefits levels;
 - Behavioral economics, including novel uses of mobile technology and online/remote retail applications, taking into account limitations imposed under applicable privacy laws;

- Allowing purchases of hot, prepared foods consistent with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) definition of healthy and/or recommended to be consumed by the DGA;
 - Incentives for selection of nutrient dense items recommended to be consumed by the DGA; and
 - Incentives for selection of fewer less healthful items recommended to be minimized or reduced by the DGA.
- Congress and USDA should invest in a robust research and data collection strategy to identify opportunities to improve nutrition in SNAP.
 - Congress should require that USDA regularly collect data from all federal nutrition programs to measure alignment with, and progress toward, improvements in dietary quality and food security for participants in these programs.
 - USDA should report every two years on the quality of SNAP participants’ diets using science-based metrics, such as USDA’s Healthy Eating Index, and data collected from nutrition surveys and research, such as the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

SNAP INTEGRITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND RETAILER CONSIDERATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Use data matching, online purchasing, and other technology enhancements to improve SNAP access, integrity, and operations for participants and retailers.

- USDA, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and state administration agencies should continue to ensure program integrity and protect federal investment and public support for SNAP. The OIG should conduct an independent audit of SNAP’s flexibilities provided during the PHE, including increased benefit levels and remote application and recertification processes.
- USDA should work closely with state SNAP agencies, as expected, to provide technical assistance to implement the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC) system fully and effectively across all states. Once implemented, USDA should conduct an evaluation of NAC’s effectiveness in detecting and preventing dual participation in SNAP and ensure all program administrators are in compliance with the final NAC rule.
- Congress should authorize the Online Purchasing Pilot as a permanent program and increase equitable access to and promote nutrition through

online purchasing. Congress should allow SNAP benefits to be used to cover online shopping transaction, delivery, monthly membership or other fees up to a certain limit, such as \$10 per month per SNAP participant. To promote nutritious food purchases, funding should be provided for retailers to provide incentives to SNAP participants to make healthy food purchases when purchasing online and in stores.

- To increase equitable access to and promote nutrition through online purchasing, Congress could require USDA to provide a report on the effects of online SNAP redemption, including barriers to access and consumer choice and a comparison of foods purchased. Additionally, Congress should ensure that all communities have access to affordable, high-quality broadband to access federal nutrition programs, including SNAP particularly in rural, tribal, and low-income urban areas. Congress should also establish a USDA micro-grant program to support rural or small-scale retailers to establish or improve their online infrastructure for online SNAP purchasing.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Modernize the food distribution programs, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), to improve nutrition, program access, and program operations.

- To continue to meet the needs of Americans experiencing food and nutrition insecurity, Congress should increase TEFAP entitlement funding by \$250 million annually, adjusted for inflation, and make programmatic changes to improve the nutritional quality of foods, increase access to the program, and ease administrative burden.
- To support the distribution of fresh and frozen foods, Congress should reauthorize and annually appropriate at least \$200 million for TEFAP administrative grants for storage and distribution and \$15 million for TEFAP infrastructure grants to allow for better transport of foods and to increase the distribution of nutritious foods that require temperature control. Congress should also require USDA Foods purchases to maintain a certain percentage of fresh or frozen items, such as low-fat dairy products, produce, and protein foods.

- Congress should reauthorize the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); allow Native American families to simultaneously use both SNAP and FDPIR; provide tribal authority over administration of SNAP, SNAP-Ed, FDPIR, and other nutrition programs; and expand access to local and regionally produced and traditional foods through FDPIR.
- Congress should also expand or make permanent 638 Authority, a legal tool for tribal self-determination that gives tribes the ability to administer certain federal government programs; eliminate the matching requirement for tribes; and provide funding to improve infrastructure to update facilities and equipment. Inclusion of more traditional, regional, and cultural foods should also be encouraged. Congress should reauthorize the FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Project to strengthen regional tribal communities by requiring the purchase of regional and culturally relevant foods from USDA-authorized tribal farmers and producers. Additionally, Congress should allow USDA to create a pilot program to allow ITOs to source locally-produced herbs and spices as part of nutrition education in FDPIR and include more traditional/Tribally-produced foods on a regional basis.
- To better address the needs of older adults experiencing food insecurity, Congress should allow USDA to update the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), to allow more older adults to participate in the program by updating its criteria for determining program size.
- Congress should work with USDA to improve food and nutrition security across food distribution programs, including TEFAP, FDPIR, and CSFP, through pilot programs, changes in procurement procedures, and research studies on progress and barriers.
- Congress should require USDA to produce a report on the effectiveness, efficiency, nutritional value, cost, format, impact on diverse populations, and unintended consequences of federal food distribution programs, including food box programs, and provide best-practice recommendations for future programs.
- USDA should give local or state agencies and nonprofits the authority to determine the best methods for food distribution.

OTHER FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED THROUGH THE FARM BILL

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Improve food and nutrition security for priority populations through other food and nutrition assistance programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), Public-Private Partnerships Program, and Micro-Grants for Food Security Program.

- To increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, Congress should provide the necessary funding and approval to expand FFVP to all elementary schools that participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Congress could also provide further funding and approval to expand FFVP to all middle and high schools that participate in CEP.
- To increase access to the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for all eligible seniors, Congress should reauthorize and increase funding for the SFMNP to allow for program expansion and increased benefit levels.
- Congress should require participating states to accept proof of enrollment in other programs with similar income limits (adjunctive eligibility) as satisfying eligibility for SFMNP and make permanent some of the administrative flexibilities that states implemented during the COVID-19 PHE.
- Congress should reauthorize funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) at or above the current level to continue to support projects to attract fresh, healthy food retailers that accept SNAP benefits.
- Congress should authorize and fund a public-private partnerships program and work with USDA to ensure the program is implemented.
- Congress should reauthorize the Micro-Grants for Food Security Program to address the unique needs of the noncontiguous U.S. states and territories in promoting food security.

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