



Health Program

Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative

Food and Farm Policy

Agriculture is a major sector of the U.S. economy and one in which government decisions – subsidies and incentives, trade policies, etc. – play a major role. Historically, farm and agriculture policies were, at most, tangentially influenced by considerations of diet, nutrition and health. This has begun to change. Growing awareness of the costs and impacts of high rates of obesity and chronic disease in America are prompting a broader look at our entire food supply chain and at the policies and programs that, along with consumer preference, determine what foods appear on grocery store shelves and, ultimately, on our plates.

RECOMMENDATION: THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA), IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, SHOULD IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS BARRIERS TO INCREASING THE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES.

We recommend that USDA:

- Review existing government policies for opportunities to eliminate barriers that may reduce the supply and increase the cost of healthy foods.
- Authorize a generic fruit and vegetable promotion board.
- Seek opportunities to improve transportation and distribution systems to make fresh produce more available and affordable.
- Explore ways to incentivize healthier food choices through federal nutrition assistance programs.

RECOMMENDATION: USDA SHOULD IDENTIFY AND PURSUE FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND NUTRITION THROUGH ITS NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

Federal nutrition assistance programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), reach millions of the nation's most vulnerable individuals and families each year – including many people at





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high risk for obesity and chronic disease. We recommend continued support for these programs coupled with increased efforts to align program guidelines and incentives with federal dietary guidelines. We also recommend further research and analysis to better understand the impacts of these programs on dietary choices and health in the recipient population and to inform relevant policy debates going forward, such as the current debate about whether certain food items should be excluded from the SNAP program.

RECOMMENDATION: CONGRESS SHOULD CONTINUE SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR RELEVANT RESEARCH BY OFFICES OF USDA.

Research conducted by the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Economic Research Service (ERS) is valuable to ensure that policymakers, stakeholders and the public continue to have robust, up-to-date information on the impacts of food and farm policies.

