



Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



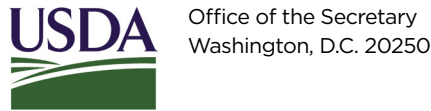
LEVERAGING THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE
TO PROMOTE AND ELEVATE NUTRITION SECURITY:

The Role of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service



Tom Vilsack

Secretary, U.S. Department
of Agriculture



Dear FNS Stakeholders:

On the heels of the second, historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, this is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the work of the Food and Nutrition Service in reducing hunger, increasing healthy eating, and reducing disparities. I am humbled by how much this agency has accomplished and by how much potential it has to improve the health and well-being of our fellow Americans, especially children.

As Secretary of one of the greatest Departments in our Federal government, I have the privilege to hear from children, families, and program administrators how important our programs are to helping them put food on the table each and every day, especially during these tough economic times. Without question, we administer powerful tools to tackle food and nutrition insecurity and we have leveraged every tool at our disposal and applied creative solutions to meet the moment. We do this with the support of the White House, with the needed authorities and appropriations from Congress, in lockstep with our partners in State, Tribal, U.S. Territories, and local government, and along with the critical front-line work that occurs at WIC agencies, school districts, and food banks across the country. I am truly impressed with our increased efforts to meet our participants or potential participants where they are, and our efforts to design or modify our programs to be more inclusive of historically underserved populations. Our work makes a difference—each of you make a difference.

Now we enter an equally important phase of leveraging the momentum of this monumental Conference and the National Strategy. As I explained when launching our Department's game-changing nutrition security initiative in March 2022 and during our launch of transformative food systems investments in June 2022, we are prioritizing nutrition security because of the pandemic and our Administration's goal to advance racial equity. At USDA, we recognize promoting food *and* nutrition security is a critical ingredient to recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring racial equity, and we humbly acknowledge that our Department plays a fundamental role in our nation's ability to leverage all our powerful tools to pursue that goal.

The White House is leading bold actions to address hunger, diet-related diseases, and health disparities. The enclosed report highlights how the Food and Nutrition Service, in collaboration with all of USDA, is continuing its important work and leveraging the momentum of the Conference. As the President emphasized during the Conference, we cannot do this alone. I am pushing us at USDA and each of you to do more and to do better to help *all* children in this country thrive. I encourage each of you in your professional positions and in all the other roles you play—grandparent, parent, primary care provider, daughter, son, friend, among others—to lean in. Even if you think it's a small step—they all add up.

In closing, I want to thank each and every one of you for your work—especially during the pandemic—and as we call on you in the coming weeks to take bolder steps to help us end hunger, reduce diet-related diseases, and accelerate progress on health equity. We are genuinely grateful for all you do and open to ways we can help you.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has had a long history of helping to end hunger, reduce diet-related diseases, and accelerate health equity.¹ This report explains who we are, who we serve, highlights key work underway, and how we aim to leverage the second, historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health recently hosted by the Biden Administration on September 28, 2022.² It also touches on the role of the first White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health in 1969, as well as our key accomplishments during the COVID-19 pandemic.³

Who We Are

At FNS, we work to end hunger and improve food and nutrition security through a suite of more than [15 nutrition assistance programs](#), which serve 1 in 4 Americans over the course of a year (see table).⁴ We accomplish this by partnering with over 175 States, U.S. Territories, and Tribal organizations that operate our Federal nutrition programs. In fiscal year 2022, the budget for these programs totaled \$163 billion.⁵ Typically, they represent more than 70 percent of USDA's budget; however, due to increased authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic, Federal nutrition assistance programs currently represent an even higher percentage.⁵

The Federal nutrition assistance programs aim to provide children and income-eligible people access to safe, nutritious, and equitable food, along with nutrition education and promotion resources to help individuals, families, and communities eat healthfully.⁶ Our nutrition assistance programs reach tens of millions of Americans, including more than 41 million Americans through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), more than 30 million children each school day through our National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (NSLP/SBP), and nearly half of all infants in the United States through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).⁴ Across all of our programs, we prioritize program integrity to ensure strong stewardship of Federal funds.⁷

The USDA FNS Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, develops the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* every 5 years based on the latest nutrition science and recommendations. CNPP also translates the guidelines into consumer-friendly information through MyPlate.⁸ USDA invests more than \$1 billion per year on nutrition education and promotion efforts across all our programs, including MyPlate, SNAP-Education (SNAP-Ed), WIC nutrition education and counseling, Team Nutrition, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).⁹



Evidence- and Experience-Based Programs

FNS programs and policies are rooted in a strong base of evidence. Policy changes in our programs, such as updates to the school meal standards and the WIC food packages, are informed by the latest nutrition science and a rich body of research on program operations. Our FNS research teams in the Office of Policy Support (OPS) continuously conduct robust [evaluation research and data analysis](#) to understand the reach and impact of our programs and inform program improvements. In addition, our work is driven by the lived experiences of the participants we serve, our staff, and our stakeholders. We use on-the-ground experiences to inform program improvements and policy decisions.



Our Roots: Grown Out of the 1969 White House Conference

In December 1969, President Richard Nixon held the first White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health, to convene experts around “how the private food market might be used to improve the nutritional status of Americans, and how Federal food programs could be improved.” Over 3,000 people attended the 1969 Conference, and the resulting recommendations were informed by stakeholders and experts across academia, medicine, agriculture, industrial and consumer

trade groups, non-profit advocacy groups, women's organizations, and religious denominations. FNS traces our roots back to that 1969 White House Conference as the Agency was established under the direction of President Nixon on August 8, 1969, just a few months ahead of that historic first Conference. At the time, FNS was charged with administering a growing suite of Federal food and nutrition assistance programs aimed at eradicating hunger and malnutrition. A number of the key flagship programs and activities FNS administers today were established or expanded due to the recommendations from the 1969 Conference. Most notably, this includes:

- Significant expansions to Food Stamps (now known as SNAP), increasing the number of Americans served from 2 million in 1968 to 11 million by 1971,
- Increasing the reach of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which served 2 million children before the Conference and expanded to serving 8 million by 1971,
- Permanent authorization of the National School Breakfast Program in 1975, which was also inspired by The Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast for School Children Program, started in 1969,
- Authorization of the pilot for the Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants, and Children in 1972, which later became the WIC we know today, and
- Setting the stage for the development of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which serve as the cornerstone for Federal nutrition assistance programs and the basis of MyPlate.



Prioritizing Equity

USDA is committed to working across all its agencies to tackle inequities in nutrition and health outcomes and address barriers in access to our programs that may perpetuate existing inequities. For examples, we recently launched the **Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative** to promote Tribal food sovereignty and ensure Indigenous perspectives shape our policies going forward. We are also working to improve our reach in underserved remote and rural communities through USDA's **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Reach and Resiliency** grants and are engaging with key advocacy groups to learn about how our emergency feeding networks can meet the needs of those keeping kosher or following Halal.



In 2021, around 10.2 percent of American households experienced food insecurity.

Who We Serve

Poor nutrition is a leading cause of illness in the United States, associated with more than half a million deaths per year.¹⁰ Food and nutrition insecurity, hunger, and diet-related diseases disproportionately affect certain groups. In 2021, around 10.2 percent of American households experienced food insecurity, with significantly higher rates among Black (19.8 percent) and Hispanic (16.2 percent) households, households with children (12.5 percent), and households with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty threshold (26.5 percent).¹¹ While there are some signs of incremental improvement—food insecurity declined from 2020 for households with children, single mothers with children, and Black households, among other groups—there are still considerable disparities in diet-related diseases. The prevalence of [obesity](#) and [high blood pressure](#) is higher for non-Hispanic Black adults than for non-Hispanic white adults. American Indian/Alaska Native adults have the highest prevalence of diagnosed [diabetes](#).¹²⁻¹⁴ Rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes are [rising](#) among children, and [recent estimates](#) project that most children in America today will have obesity by the time they are 35 years old.^{15,16}

While FNS programs support individuals and families of all backgrounds and at all life stages, we are especially committed to promoting nutrition security among eligible children and historically underserved populations.¹⁷ Many of the food insecurity and health disparities described above are perpetuated and exacerbated by barriers rooted in structural racism—particularly against Black, Indigenous, and Latino people.¹⁸⁻²⁰ The Biden-Harris Administration places equity and racial justice at the top of USDA's priorities.²¹ Our latest work at FNS, including our commitment to nutrition security described later in this report, applies a health equity lens to the way we improve our programs and fulfill our mission to address the unique and multifaceted needs of the people we serve.¹⁷



Nutrition Security

In March 2022, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack [announced](#) USDA's commitment to advancing [nutrition security](#) as a Federal priority. Nutrition security means having consistent and equitable access to safe, healthy, and affordable foods essential to optimal health and well-being. It builds on the Department's longstanding efforts to address food insecurity with two specific focus areas by: (1) emphasizing the co-existence of food insecurity and diet-related diseases; and (2) applying an equity lens to our efforts. For more information on nutrition security, see [USDA Actions of Nutrition Security](#) report and associated [infographic](#).



Keeping Food on the Table During COVID-19 Pandemic

Like no other time in recent history, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical importance of access to healthy food. In 2020, for the first time in nearly a decade, the percentage of households with children that were not food secure—that is, households that reported not always having enough food for all members to have an active, healthy life—increased to a high of nearly 15 percent. As parents lost their jobs, cities locked down, and schools closed, tens of millions were left unsure of whether they would be able to feed themselves or their children adequately. SNAP, which is the Nation’s first line of defense against hunger and designed to respond quickly, expanded by more than 6 million people in the first 3 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 37 million to more than 41.5 million—an extraordinary 17-percent increase. Never before in history has SNAP experienced an enrollment increase of this magnitude. For comparison, it took 17 months after the Great Recession for more than 6 million people to join SNAP.

With increased resources and expanded authorities from Congress, FNS worked quickly and efficiently to respond to the hunger crisis in cooperation with our partners in State and Tribal governments, U.S. Territories, local WIC agencies, school districts, food banks, and more. FNS leveraged every tool at its disposal and applied creative solutions to address unprecedented challenges and keep food on the table. Some of the agency’s key actions included:

- Increasing the SNAP maximum benefit amount for tens of millions of participants and providing Emergency Allotments that boosted benefits to the maximum amount for the household’s size.
- Replacing lost school meals through Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) that provided families with around \$35 in grocery benefits per week per eligible child.

- Rapidly expanding the ability for SNAP benefits to be used online, from 5 States participating in March 2020 to 49 States and the District of Columbia in August 2022. Over this period, the number of approved online retailers has also expanded dramatically from the 8 selected for the initial pilot to nearly 150 stores representing thousands of retailers—a number that will continue growing.
- Providing free school meals to all children.
- Offering flexibilities to make it easier for parents to get food for their children, such as the ability to pick up multiple meals from school or summer meal programs at one time.
- Allowing flexibilities in meal requirements for Child Nutrition Programs to allow program operators to continue to offer complete and nutritious meals while dealing with supply chain disruptions.
- Increasing training and technical assistance for program operators across many FNS programs to allow them to continue operating effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Allowing waivers for WIC services to be provided remotely, which made it possible for pregnant and postpartum women and their young children to continue receiving WIC nutrition services without putting themselves at risk.
- Increasing funding to The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), which allows more food to be provided to food banks and Tribal communities.

None of this work would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the FNS staff and their local, State, U.S. Territory, and Tribal partners. Many worked nights and weekends to fulfill the agency's critical mission, often while caring for their children at home due to school and childcare closures. The best thing about an organization is often its people, and this is certainly the case at FNS.



Ensuring Food Safety Across Our Programs

FNS tailors **food safety** information for consumers and our local partners that operate FNS programs to ensure they have the latest food safety science and information on preventing foodborne illnesses. These critical resources help us not only provide necessary food and nutrition assistance but also do so in a way that prioritizes the safety of those served—whether through our emergency food response efforts or meals served in schools and childcare settings.



A core piece of this mission is focused on promoting and elevating nutrition security.

What We Are Doing

FNS continues to use all available resources to meet our mission, always thinking creatively about how to help those most in need. A core piece of our mission is focused on promoting and elevating nutrition security.²²

FNS's work is driven by our four nutrition security pillars: (1) providing meaningful nutrition support from pregnancy to birth and beyond; (2) connecting all Americans with healthy, safe, affordable food sources; (3) developing, translating, and enacting nutrition science through partnership; and (4) prioritizing equity every step of the way.^{17,22} Together, these serve as the foundation for our broad portfolio of work. Furthermore, we recognize that longstanding disparities in diet-related diseases are rooted in structural racism and will require equities beyond those available in FNS. Therefore, FNS is working with our Federal partners and stakeholders across the country to meet the goals of the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health to promote and elevate nutrition security.²



Departmentwide Approach to Nutrition Security

Secretary Vilsack emphasized in his March 2022 announcement that addressing nutrition security is a priority across all of USDA and will require a collaborative, interagency approach going forward. At FNS, we work in close coordination with our colleagues throughout USDA to achieve our shared goal of improving nutrition security across America. Examples of these partnerships include:

- Collaborating with the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to implement programs that incentivize healthy food purchases among SNAP participants through the [Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program \(GusNIP\)](#).
- Working with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to [distribute USDA Foods](#), 100 percent American-grown and -produced meat, poultry, fish, fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products, to USDA programs.
- Sharing data and collaborating on important research on [food security](#), [access to food stores](#), and [examining trends in FNS programs](#) with our research colleagues at the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS).
- Improving access to healthy food retailers through USDA Rural Development's [Healthy Food Financing Initiative \(HFFI\)](#), which provides grants and technical assistance to retailers and other food enterprises to improve access to nutritious retail foods in areas underserved by grocery stores.

National Strategy Pillars

The work done by FNS staff and our local, State, U.S. Territories, and Tribal community partners to administer FNS programs plays a critical role in ensuring all Americans have consistent and equitable access to safe, healthy, and affordable food.²³ FNS' four nutrition security pillars and many of our major current or planned projects are well aligned with the five pillars in the National Strategy and the [2022 White House Conference pillars](#) and touch on all life stages.² The following are selected highlights of our work that support each of the National Strategy pillars:

Pillar 1:

Improve Food Access and Affordability

End hunger by making it easier for everyone—including individuals in urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities and U.S. Territories—to access and afford food.

Increasing SNAP Benefits to Support Healthy Eating Patterns at All Life Stages

In 2022, FNS published its [reevaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan](#) (TFP), which is the basis of the value of SNAP benefit amounts.^{24,25} The reevaluation resulted in a 21-percent increase in SNAP benefits, which amounted to about \$36 more per person per month when the changes took effect on October 1, 2021—the first permanent increase in the purchasing power of SNAP benefits in the last 45 years. This historic update aligns SNAP benefits with the cost of a nutritious, practical, and cost-effective diet for modern American lifestyles. We will soon finalize our 2021 historic TFP update by issuing the Alaska and Hawaii updates.

Bringing SNAP and WIC Shopping Online

SNAP has a long history of working to ensure that participants have access to modern payment options aligned with those available to non-SNAP consumers.²⁶ Today, over 160 stores representing thousands of retailers have made [online purchasing](#) an option for SNAP households, putting healthy foods in easier reach.²⁷ Nearly 3.5 million SNAP households shopped online in August 2022, a substantial increase from 35,000 households in March 2020. FNS is continuing to expand availability of SNAP online shopping, as well. Many more retailers are expected to add an online SNAP option soon, and FNS is working to ensure smaller retailers and farmers are not left behind. For example, in fiscal year 2023, FNS expects to award a grant to provide technical assistance to small retailers considering online SNAP participation. In addition, an e-commerce platform for farmer participation online is close to implementation. For WIC shoppers, FNS is working to expand online ordering and transactions.²⁸ Recently, we established a cooperative agreement to test online shopping projects in seven WIC State agencies and provided guidance on the process for requesting waivers to allow online ordering and transaction projects under authority provided in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA, P.L. 117-2).²⁹ We are also working on revisions to WIC



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regulations through a proposed rule that will remove barriers to WIC online shopping and modernize the delivery of WIC food benefits.^{30,31}



Modernizing WIC to Improve Our Reach

As part of ARPA, FNS received \$390 million for outreach, innovation, and modernization in WIC and the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.³² FNS is making key investments and partnering with local, State, and Tribal partners on the [following initiatives](#): national and community outreach, enhancing the shopping experience, growing

and supporting the WIC workforce, and improving the WIC journey.³³ The ultimate goal of all of these efforts is to ensure that more eligible families are connected with WIC's powerful nutrition services throughout critical stages in life.

Reaching More Americans With Emergency Food

Through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), FNS purchases a variety of nutritious, domestically sourced and produced USDA Foods and makes them available to State distributing agencies that, in turn, provide the food to local agencies, such as food banks.³⁴ FNS is working to expand the reach of TEFAP in remote, rural, Tribal, and/or low-income areas underserved by the program through a \$100 million grant initiative.³⁵ In June 2022, FNS awarded over \$39 million in [TEFAP Reach and Resiliency grants](#) to 38 TEFAP State agencies for a variety of unique and impactful projects³⁶ and will announce a second opportunity for funding later this year. FNS is also working to understand and address gaps in meeting the needs of individuals and families keeping Kosher and following Halal through TEFAP, among other programs that use USDA Foods.^{37,38}

Investing in Resilient Child Nutrition Programs Amid Supply Chain Challenges

Our State and local partners have continued to prove their resiliency and dedication to our Nation's children through more than 2 years of COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions.³⁹ In our latest move to strengthen our Child Nutrition Programs, USDA [announced](#) an additional nearly \$500 million in Commodity Credit Corporation funds for schools to purchase American-grown foods for their meal programs.⁴⁰ This is on top of the nearly \$1 billion [USDA announced in June 2022](#) and the [\\$1 million previously allocated in December 2021](#). During the school year 2022-2023, this critical, nearly \$2.5 billion investment will continue to help ensure access to healthy foods in schools amid rising food costs and continued supply chain disruptions.^{41,42} Another way we are investing in child nutrition programs is through increased per meal reimbursement rates, totaling an estimated \$4.3 billion in additional resources for school meal and child and adult day care program operators. Meanwhile, we continue to invest in the nutritional quality of these meals through our work to update

the meal requirements in the Child Nutrition Programs.⁴³ We have put in place interim measures to advance meal requirements while providing flexibility for program operators still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expanding Access to FDPIR and Aligning Foods With Traditional Tribal Foodways

[Last November](#), USDA announced a \$3.5 million investment to fund FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Projects, giving eight Tribal nations the ability to enter into their own contracts for some of the foods offered in the program.⁴⁴ Earlier this year, FNS awarded an additional \$2.2 million to fund modifications or extensions to the existing contracts, and will soon announce the availability of an additional \$3 million to support new projects. This has provided Tribes with an opportunity to better align the FDPIR food package with their dietary preferences and traditional foods, and to purchase foods from Indigenous producers.



Pillar 2: Integrate Nutrition and Health

Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security and overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure that our health care system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.

Supporting a Diverse WIC Workforce

WIC is one of the most powerful, evidence-based public health interventions available, providing supplemental foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and key referrals to health care and other important services to income-eligible pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children. In its ongoing efforts to maximize the impact of the program,⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷ FNS will be working with USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and its network of Minority Serving Institutions

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to create a national workforce strategy for WIC. This partnership will cultivate comprehensive solutions for WIC workforce development, including ensuring diverse pipelines into the WIC workforce. The goal of this collaboration is to better support WIC staff and ensure skilled and culturally relevant care for WIC families, ultimately increasing participation in the program and improving outcomes for participants.



Pillar 3: Empower All Consumers to Make and Have Access to Healthy Choices

Foster environments that enable all people to easily make informed healthy choices, increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy work place and school policies, and invest in public messaging and education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities.

Making Healthy School Meals That Kids Enjoy

FNS staff are hard at work building a national campaign to support updating the nutrition standards for school meals to reflect the 2020-2025 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.⁴³ FNS is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the nutrition

standards, which are expected to be in effect for school year 2024-2025. USDA also recently announced [a new \\$100 million fund](#) to support school food authorities, such as school districts, to innovate and accelerate their efforts to improve the nutritional quality of school meals.⁴⁸ This new Healthy Meals Incentive initiative will challenge industry partners to provide healthier offerings while also recognizing and building upon existing local innovations. Our goal is to provide a nationwide service of nourishing school meals that students want to eat; are operationally feasible; put children's health at the forefront; and are produced in a way that honors cultural and religious food preferences, the environment, local economies, and the school nutrition professionals who prepare and serve the meals.

Maximizing WIC Food Packages to Promote Healthy Choices

Congress temporarily [increased the value of the WIC cash-value voucher](#), which participants can use to purchase fruits and vegetables as part of their WIC food package, through fiscal year 2022. The increased cash-value voucher has been

[popular among WIC participants](#), and it was included in the President’s budget request for fiscal year 2023. In addition to expanding purchasing power for fruits and vegetables, FNS is working on comprehensive revisions to the WIC food packages through a new proposed rule.⁴⁹ These revisions aim to make it easier for WIC participants to follow healthy eating patterns that align with the latest nutrition science, increase participant choice and access to culturally appropriate foods, and promote and support participants’ breastfeeding goals.

Promoting Healthy Eating at All Life Stages With SNAP Incentive Programs

To increase SNAP participants’ purchasing power while improving diet quality, USDA encourages SNAP retailers to participate in one or more of the SNAP-based point-of-purchase incentive initiatives. These include the [Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program \(GusNIP\)](#), focused on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption; the [Healthy Fluid Milk Incentive \(HFMI\)](#), focused on increasing consumption of low-fat milk; the Electronic Healthy Incentives Program (eHIP), focused on putting money

back on SNAP EBT cards when consumers buy healthy, local fruits and vegetables from participating farm vendors; and State, nonprofit and retailer-initiated SNAP incentives that promote foods aligned with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.^{50,51} SNAP is maximizing the availability of incentives through consistent, technology-driven incentive delivery options.

Centralizing Consumer Information to Support Healthy Shopping and Meal Prep for Income-Eligible Households

While many low-income individuals and families are eligible for and could benefit from multiple FNS programs, finding helpful information—such as where they can use their SNAP and WIC benefits and relevant healthy eating incentive programs—can require already time-pressed participants to look across multiple different sources. CNPP’s consumer friendly app, [Shop Simple with MyPlate](#), is trying to help solve this problem.⁵² While the app is currently focused on SNAP participants, CNPP is hoping to expand the resources provided to help connect users with WIC-authorized retailers, food banks, and other sources of food and nutrition assistance.



Reestablishing State Nutrition Action Councils (SNACs) Through FNS Regional Offices

In fiscal year 2022, FNS’s seven Regional Offices worked with State partners to reestablish State Nutrition Action Councils (SNACs). These Councils offer collaborative and coordinated nutrition promotion and education, as well as food and nutrition security efforts conducted at the State level, to maximize resources and move people to healthier lifestyles.^{53,54} SNACs

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also share cross-program information and best practices, maximize resources, and increase cost efficiencies related to nutrition education and nutrition security.



Unifying Consumer Messaging Around Healthy, Affordable Eating

USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) staff work with colleagues at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to update the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA) and publish new guidance every 5 years.⁵⁵ CNPP's expertise in nutrition science and consumer research is further leveraged to translate the DGA into actionable consumer messages, content, and tools to serve the

public, all housed under [MyPlate](#).⁵⁶ CNPP is looking to bring together Federal agencies, the private sector, and health professionals to align on messaging and incorporate MyPlate into their consumer-facing efforts. Doing so is complex and requires planning, open dialogue, ongoing communication, and dedicated funding.

Restructuring SNAP-Ed

SNAP-Ed provides evidence-based programming to promote healthy food choices, obesity prevention, and physical activity.⁵⁷ In response to the Biden Administration's Executive Orders related to food security and racial equity, as well as the Department's focus on nutrition security, USDA recently made several significant changes to SNAP-Ed that were designed to strengthen its impacts on public health and health equity.^{17,58} These changes include: establishing a new National Program Evaluation and Reporting System; developing new resources to ensure equity in SNAP-Ed program access, service delivery, and funding distribution; encouraging maximum flexibility in the use of policy, systems, and environmental change approaches within the SNAP-Ed

guidelines; and establishing a new Nutrition Education Branch dedicated to SNAP-Ed for the first time in the history of FNS. These recent changes are supported by a talented and growing team of SNAP-Ed staff who share a strong public health focus.

Supporting Nutrition Education and Wellness for Kids With Team Nutrition

The [Team Nutrition](#) initiative at FNS supports efforts to improve healthy eating choices and physical activity across our Child Nutrition Programs in schools, childcare settings, and summer meal sites.⁵⁹ Team Nutrition communicates information from MyPlate and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* geared towards children, families, and child nutrition program operators. Through Team Nutrition, FNS also supports our partners in local educational agencies (LEAs) as they develop federally mandated [local school wellness policies](#) to cultivate school environments that promote students' health, well-being, and ability to learn.⁶⁰



Pillar 4: Support Physical Activity for All

Make it easier for people to be more physically active (in part by ensuring that everyone has access to safe places to be active), increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity, and conduct research on and measure physical activity.

Enhancing Online Nutrition Education and Physical Activity Resources in SNAP-Ed

The [SNAP-Ed Connection](#), a database of SNAP-Ed policy guidance, nutrition education, and physical activity resources, is currently undergoing a complete overhaul and expansion.⁶¹ This process aims to improve our ability to: (1) share SNAP-Ed best practices and resources as our online clearinghouse; (2) support State agency program development, implementation,

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and evaluation; and (3) improve public access to SNAP-Ed data. SNAP-Ed also supports physical activity consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans by taking a multidimensional approach and using direct education and policy, system, and environmental change interventions to support a healthy and active lifestyle for SNAP and SNAP-eligible participants.



Pillar 5: Enhance Nutrition and Food Security Research

Improve nutrition metrics, data collection, and research to inform nutrition and food security policy, particularly on issues of equity, access, and disparities.

Strengthening Evidence to Inform FNS Policy and Nutrition Services

The FNS Office of Policy Support conducts robust evaluation research that informs both present and future policy decisions, particularly in SNAP, WIC, and the Child Nutrition Programs.⁶² FNS research on SNAP includes a study currently underway to measure the impact of [recent SNAP benefit adjustments](#) on SNAP participants and regularly occurring research to assess [diet quality, nutrition, and health](#) among

SNAP participants and non-participants.^{63,64} FNS research on WIC examines current participant experiences and evaluates pilot projects to test innovations in WIC.⁶⁵ For example, an ongoing FNS-led [longitudinal cohort study](#) that tracks feeding practices and participant experiences starting at birth, finds that longer participation in WIC is associated with better diet quality among young children.⁶⁶ Finally, our Child Nutrition research team conducts research to identify and support policies that strengthen the nutritional quality of foods provided through school meals and in childcare settings while promoting equitable access to healthy diets throughout childhood.⁶⁷ Data from the [School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study \(SNMCS\)](#) indicates that the diet quality of school meals increased significantly after updated meal standards were implemented in 2012 and that the overall quality of school meals [did not differ](#) by school poverty level or racial and ethnic composition of the school population, emphasizing the importance of meal standards and the tremendous effort of the school nutrition professionals who implement those standards.^{68,69}



Federal Nutrition Programs Are Rooted in Local Partnerships

As highlighted throughout this report, the response efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the critical importance of dedicated local partners in delivering USDA nutrition assistance programs. This is not only true in times of acute national crisis but also in the successes of our programs, year after year, which are rooted in the partnerships we hold with State and local governments, Tribal communities, U.S. Territories, school districts, community organizations, and the sites that deliver our services. We have always relied on the work of our local partners, and we look forward to leaning on these partnerships as we work together to shape the future of nutrition services following the 2022 White House Conference.



Where We Are Headed

We are proud of all the work underway at FNS but recognize that there is still much to be done to tackle the **food and nutrition insecurity** that continues to plague tens of millions of Americans, particularly those who are historically underserved. FNS programs, staff, and research—strengthened by complimentary activities across USDA—look forward to meaningfully contributing to the goals of the 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.² Ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity in the U.S. by 2030 will be a game changer, putting us on a path toward fewer Americans experiencing diet-related diseases and an even more prosperous future for the country. FNS will leverage every tool at our disposal to support consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable food for all Americans. We look forward to effectively and efficiently engaging and collaborating with external partners as well as listening to and lifting up the lived experiences of our program participants and partners. We are energized by so much recent progress and could not be more excited to continue our work while supporting the bold policies articulated in the National Strategy. The cost of inaction is simply too high.⁷⁰ We must work together to tackle these issues. We hope you can join us.

**Table: Programs and Services
Administered by the USDA Food
and Nutrition Service**

Program Overview	Participation	Cost
<p>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, provides nutrition assistance to eligible low-income individuals and households through a monthly benefit used to purchase food at grocery stores and other authorized retailers.</p>	41.6 million (FY 2021)	\$113.9 billion (FY 2021) ^a
<p>Nutrition Assistance Program Block Grants (NAP): NAP block grants are provided in lieu of SNAP to support food assistance to low-income households in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. NAP benefits are provided to households similarly to SNAP through an EBT card to be used at participating markets and grocery stores. While FNS provides oversight of NAP, the Territories administer their programs and establish rules and eligibility requirements to keep expenditures within the cap of the block grant.</p>	1.5 million (FY 2021)	\$3.0 billion (FY 2021)
<p>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed): SNAP-Ed promotes healthy food choices, obesity prevention, and physical activity among SNAP participants. State agencies submit an annual plan to FNS each year to receive funding to support SNAP-Ed programming through local partners who help tailor activities to meet local community needs.</p>	4.2 million (FY 2019)	\$464 million in allocations (FY 2022)
<p>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T): SNAP E&T helps connect SNAP participants, who are able to work with the skills, training, and work experience needed to obtain and maintain regular employment. Using Federal and State funds, States operate SNAP E&T programs through local partners such as businesses and nonprofits, community colleges, and American Job Centers. In addition to building job skills, SNAP E&T programs can also provide supportive services like assistance with transportation, dependent care, and supplies.</p>	406,000 (FY 2019)	\$363 million (FY 2019)

Program Overview	Participation	Cost
<p>National School Lunch Program (NSLP): NSLP provides Federal reimbursements for participating pre-K-12 schools to provide nutritionally balanced meals at low cost or no cost for eligible children. Funding is also available through NSLP for schools to provide afterschool snacks and summer lunches when school is not in session.</p>	<p>29.6 million participants; 4.9 billion lunches served (FY 2019)</p>	<p>\$14.2 billion (FY 2019)</p>
<p>School Breakfast Program (SBP): SBP provides Federal reimbursements for participating pre-K-12 schools to provide nutritionally balanced breakfasts at low cost or no cost for eligible children.</p>	<p>14.8 million participants; 2.5 billion breakfasts served (FY 2019)</p>	<p>\$4.6 billion (FY 2019)</p>
<p>Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): SFSP provides reimbursements for meals and snacks served by nonprofit organizations and schools during the summer months. SFSP sites are located in low-income communities in a variety of settings including schools, parks, community centers, libraries, churches, and migrant centers. Sites are generally open to all children 18 years and younger and can also provide enrichment activities such as reading, physical activity, or nutrition education.</p>	<p>142 million meals served (FY 2019)</p>	<p>\$475 million (FY 2019)</p>
<p>Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): CACFP provides reimbursements for nutritious foods to serve in meals and snacks at child and adult care institutions and family day care homes for young children, at-risk youth, and adults with disabilities.</p>	<p>4.8 million participants; 1.9 billion meals served (FY 2021)</p>	<p>\$3.8 billion (FY 2021)</p>
<p>Special Milk Program (SMP): SMP provides reimbursements to schools, child care providers, and eligible camps to serve half pints of milk to children at no cost, regardless of household income.</p>	<p>35.1 million half pints served (FY 2019)</p>	<p>\$7.3 million (FY 2019)</p>

Program Overview	Participation	Cost
<p>Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP): Through FFVP, elementary schools receive support to provide fresh fruits and vegetables during the school day, outside of NSLP and SBP meal times. The purpose of the program is to introduce young children to a variety of fresh produce in a way that foods are recognizable and encourage them to enjoy fruits and vegetables.</p>	N/A	\$176 million (FY 2020)
<p>Team Nutrition: The Team Nutrition initiative supports FNS Child Nutrition Programs by providing training and technical assistance for foodservice providers, nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support of healthy eating and physical activity.</p>	N/A	\$22 million (FY 2021)
<p>Farm to School Program: The Farm to School Program provides technical assistance and grants to fund projects that incorporate local foods in the FNS Child Nutrition Programs and expose students to food and agricultural education experiences.</p>	123 projects serving more than 3 million children (FY 2022)	\$10 million in competitive grants for School Year 2022-2023 (FY 2022)
<p>Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): WIC serves low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women; infants; and children under age 5 by providing nutritious supplemental foods, nutrition education and breastfeeding promotion, and referrals to health and other social services.</p>	6.2 million (FY 2021)	\$5.0 billion (FY 2021)
<p>WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP): WIC FMNP awards grants to State agencies to provide eligible WIC participants in participating areas with additional coupons they can use to purchase eligible foods from approved farmers' markets or roadside stands.</p>	1.2 million WIC recipients (FY 2020)	\$22.6 million (FY 2020)

Program Overview	Participation	Cost
<p>Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP): SFMNP awards grants to State agencies to provide eligible low-income seniors with coupons they can use to purchase eligible foods from approved farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs.</p>	726,000 (FY 2020)	\$21.1 million (FY 2020)
<p>USDA Foods for Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA Foods programs, in partnership with the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), support procurement of 100 percent American-grown and -produced meat, poultry, fish, fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products to provide to schools and institutions participating in FNS programs.</p>	1.8 billion pounds of domestic food purchased (FY 2020)	\$1.9 billion (FY 2020)
<p>Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR): FDPIR provides nutritious, domestically grown USDA Foods to eligible Native American households in designated areas. The program is administered locally by either Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) or State agencies who store and distribute the food, determine eligibility, and provide nutrition education.</p>	48,000 (FY 2021)	\$118.7 million (FY 2021)
<p>Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): CSFP aims to improve the health of low-income elderly individuals at least 60 years of age by providing supplementary, nutritious, domestically grown USDA Foods. States and ITOs store CSFP foods and distribute foods through public and nonprofit local agencies.</p>	661,000 (FY 2021)	\$296.9 million (FY 2021)
<p>The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): TEFAP provides supplemental, nutritious, domestically grown USDA Foods to low-income Americans through emergency food assistance. USDA Foods purchased through TEFAP are made available to States who in turn provide the foods to their local partners, such as food banks, to be distributed either directly to the public or through local organizations such as soup kitchens and food pantries.</p>	N/A	\$1.4 billion (FY 2021) ^b

Program Overview	Participation	Cost
<p>Food Safety: The FNS develops food safety education and technical assistance resources for FNS program operators and consumers to ensure safe food practices and prevent foodborne illnesses.</p>	N/A	\$3.0 million (FY 2021)
<p>Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP): CNPP develops and promotes dietary guidance driven by the latest nutrition science and consumer needs. CNPP staff, jointly with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, lead the development of the <i>Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i>. CNPP also leads translation of the DGA into MyPlate for consumers nationally, and application of the updated DGA to reevaluate the Thrifty Food Plan, which serves as the basis for the maximum SNAP allotment. With National Institutes of Health (NIH), CNPP also updates the Healthy Eating Index after each new edition of the DGA, assessing how the U.S. population’s diet aligns with the Guidelines.</p>	N/A	\$13.0 million (FY 2021)

Notes:

^a SNAP cost data provided above includes additional SNAP benefits provided through emergency allotments. Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits issued in place of foods provided through child nutrition programs.

^b Includes additional funding to support emergency feeding efforts under COVID-19 pandemic response.

More information on our programs is available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/programs>

Program data is published at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/overview>

FY = Fiscal Year

N/A = Not Applicable; FNS does not or cannot routinely track participation in these programs.

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