

Farm Bill: Congress Must Protect and Strengthen SNAP, TEFAP, and Other Anti-Hunger Programs

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is the cornerstone of the nation's nutrition and food security safety net, helping to put food on the table for 42 million participants with low incomes each month. When the number of families struggling to make ends meet increases, SNAP responds quickly and effectively to meet that need.

SNAP Action Needed

Congress should again protect SNAP's structure and funding, and strengthen SNAP by adopting provisions contained in the following bills:

H.R. 3037/S. 1336 — Closing the Meal Gap Act

- Base SNAP benefit allotments on the more adequate Low-Cost Food Plan.
- Boost SNAP benefits for families with children forced to choose between food and shelter.
- Boost SNAP benefits for older Americans forced to choose between food and medicine.
- Boost the SNAP minimum monthly benefit, which currently is only \$23.
- Improve equitable access by extending SNAP to Puerto Rico.

H.R. 1510/S. 2435 — Improving Access to Nutrition Act

- End SNAP's arbitrary three-month time limit to ensure that all eligible people have access to nutrition assistance and stay healthy.

H.R. 3183/S. 1488 — Enhance Access to SNAP Act (EATS Act)

- Eliminate the barriers that college students face when accessing SNAP.

H.R. 3519/S. 2258 — The Hot Foods Act

- End the prohibition on use of SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared foods from food retailers.

H.R. 4170/S. 2038 — The Lift the Bar Act

- Eliminate the five-year bar (i.e., waiting period) for legal permanent immigrants to access SNAP and other federal programs.

H.R. 3479/S. 1753 — The Restore Act

- Repeal the lifetime federal ban on individuals with felony drug convictions from receiving SNAP.

Ensuring Equitable Food Access

Indian Country

Improve SNAP access for tribal populations, including by allowing participation in both SNAP and FDPIR.

Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories

Extend pathway for SNAP to Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

SNAP Has a Range of Extraordinary Strengths

SNAP DELIVERS ASSISTANCE

quickly and effectively to people recovering from natural disasters or economic crises.



SNAP REACHES KEY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

— the large majority are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

SNAP IS EFFICIENT, using electronic benefits technology and regular channels of commerce.



SNAP SUPPORTS WORK, helping families struggling with low wages.

SNAP REDUCES HUNGER

and food insecurity by providing low-income people necessary food money.



SNAP BOLSTERS LOCAL ECONOMIES

by increasing money spent for food at local retailers.



SNAP IMPROVES DIETARY INTAKE

and health, especially among children and with lasting effects.

SNAP LIFTS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE out of poverty.

Other benefits include:

- SNAP relieves pressure on overwhelmed food banks, pantries, religious congregations, and other emergency food providers across the country that could not begin to meet the need for food assistance if SNAP eligibility or benefits were reduced. SNAP provides roughly nine meals for every one meal provided by the Feeding America network.
- Disaster SNAP provides replacement benefits for regular SNAP recipients who lose food in a disaster and extends benefits to many households that would not ordinarily be eligible but suddenly need food assistance. The benefits are delivered via Electronic Benefit Transfer cards, which can expedite and mainstream the relief process for survivors.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP is a means-tested federal nutrition program that provides food commodities at no cost to individuals and families in need of short-term hunger relief through organizations, such as food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. Through TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchases nutritious food from U.S. growers and producers. Feeding America's network of food banks (and other emergency assistance organizations) then partner with states to distribute these USDA foods to eligible individuals and families. As the demand for food remains high at food banks across the country, a reliable and continuous stream of TEFAP is necessary for the provision of a steady emergency food supply.

TEFAP Action Needed

1. Increase TEFAP funding to help people facing hunger and support the U.S. agricultural economy.

- Reauthorize and increase mandatory funding for TEFAP food purchases \$500 million per year, adjusted for inflation. This would double the annual amount of funding for TEFAP entitlement commodities set by the Farm Bill.
- Reauthorize and increase funding for TEFAP storage and distribution to \$200 million per year in discretionary funding.
- Reauthorize TEFAP infrastructure grants to \$15 million per year in discretionary funding. Storage and distribution funding and infrastructure grants will help food banks offset the cost of storing and transporting USDA foods, especially in rural communities. They will help cover expenses like refrigeration and fuel.

2. Bolster the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Program.

- Congress should increase funding for the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Program, remove the state match, and allow states to prioritize projects for donated food or food purchased at a low cost from local growers and producers.

TEFAP Fast Facts

- Between July 2021 and June 2022, the Feeding America food bank network received 1.24 billion pounds of food from TEFAP, providing over 1 billion meals to people facing hunger.

- The Feeding America network is the largest TEFAP participant, with approximately 96 percent of Feeding America's partner food banks receiving and distributing TEFAP foods in fiscal year 2022. Feeding America's food banks receive TEFAP foods through their states and then distribute the food to local organizations, including food pantries, meal programs, and shelters.
- TEFAP is a hunger lifeline for rural communities, in particular. In 2020, the Feeding America network food banks distributed TEFAP foods in 96 percent of rural counties, providing over 465 million pounds of food to neighbors facing hunger in rural areas.
- States agencies and the Feeding America network place food orders with USDA, which then works with the food industry to fulfill the orders. Each state is required to determine how TEFAP foods are distributed, and they oversee the agencies that distribute the food.
- TEFAP offers more than 120 nutritious foods, including fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, nuts, milk, cheese, and whole-grain and enriched-grain products, such as rice, cereal, and pasta.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

CSFP is a federal nutrition program that leverages government buying power to provide nutritious food boxes to thousands of older adults, ages 60 years and above, with low incomes each month. The program is designed to help older adults access the food they need to maintain good health through monthly food packages filled with fruits and vegetables, meat and cheese, and other nutrition-packed foods, to supplement their diets. All 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and five Indian Tribal Organizations participate in CSFP. CSFP is a discretionary program, meaning Congress determines its funding level each year through the federal appropriations process. The program can only serve as many eligible participants as funding allows, regardless of how many people may qualify. Through the yearly appropriations process, funds are allocated for caseloads in each state. In fiscal year 2020, approximately 692,467 older adults were set to receive CSFP boxes; however, additional funding in the American Rescue Plan allowed for 760,634 to be served in 2020.

CSFP Action Needed

- In the 2023 Farm Bill, Congress needs to:
 - Reauthorize CSFP.
 - Exempt Medicare payments from the gross income calculation used to determine CSFP eligibility.
 - Reduce the administrative burden for program participants and increase program efficiency by streamlining reporting requirements.
- Congress also needs to adequately fund CSFP in the fiscal year 2024 appropriations legislation to, at a minimum, maintain the current CSFP caseload of 760,547 participants.

CSFP Fast Facts

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/federal-hunger-relief-programs/csfp>