

Congress must continue to re-evaluate SNAP benefits every five years to keep up with the latest dietary guidelines and market prices.

Background: The Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), created in 1975, is the cheapest of four U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans, attempting to represent the weekly cost of buying food on a limited budget to maintain a healthy diet. This plan determines the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) monthly benefit based on:

- current dietary guidelines,
- food consumption data, and
- cost of food items at retailers from 2016.

The bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to update the Thrifty Food Plan. The resulting update in 2021 was the first in the plan's history and led to a necessary and long overdue increase in SNAP benefits. The benefit increase averages out to \$1.19 per person per day.

Evaluating the Thrifty Food Plan without adjusting the SNAP benefit ignores the reality of market rates and evolving dietary guidelines. Since 1975, the TFP has only been adjusted for inflation, leaving SNAP benefits out of sync with updated dietary guidelines and the economic realities of struggling households.

The impact: While the purchasing power of this modest increase can fluctuate due to rising food prices, fuel costs, and other economic factors, the increase of about \$1.19 has had a significant impact on individuals. Stopping future increases and/or reversing this update would immediately reduce SNAP benefits for all participants, with deeper cuts over time. Currently, benefits average \$6.20 per person per day; a reversal would cut this by \$1.40, reducing the daily benefit to around \$4.80.

For example, a working mother of two who currently receives \$573 a month in SNAP benefits would see her assistance reduced to \$443 under the proposed cuts —

a loss of \$130 per month. This reduction comes at a time when food, housing, and fuel costs continue to rise.

FRAC's ask: Protect the Thrifty Food Plan adjustment from efforts to eliminate or weaken it in the 2025 Farm Bill and in other legislation. The last Farm Bill created a necessary pathway to ensure that the USDA Food and Nutrition Service updates the Thrifty Food Plan every five years. This secures alignment of current dietary guidelines and food prices with the SNAP benefit amount. The regular adjustments also mean a smaller fiscal impact, while waiting several decades for the next adjustment would guarantee a higher fiscal impact. Congress must protect the Thrifty Food Plan and other SNAP provisions, and strengthen SNAP as our nation's first line of defense against food insecurity and hunger.



Note: *The Thrifty Food Plan update differs from the annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). SNAP benefits receive a COLA increase annually. This only takes into account inflation based on the Consumer Price Index. COLAs do not respond to changes in nutrition science and new nutrient-dense food and beverage products on the market that may help individuals achieve a balanced diet.*