



## **Farm Bill: Congress Must Protect and Strengthen SNAP and Other Anti-Hunger Programs MARCH 2022**

### **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 41 million low-income participants 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 Congress should strengthen SNAP by adopting provisions contained in the following bills:

#### **H.R. 4077/S. 2192 (Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021)**

- 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 \$20
- Improve equitable access by extending SNAP to Puerto Rico and other U.S. Territories

#### **H.R. 1753 (Improving Access to Nutrition Act of 2021)**

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





#### **H.R. 1919/S. 2515 (Enhance Access to SNAP Act of 2021)**

- Level SNAP access for low-income college students

#### **H.R. 5227 (Lift the Bar Act of 2021)**

- Eliminate the five-year bar (i.e., waiting period) for access to SNAP and other federal programs
- Restore eligibility and access to critical services for immigrants with sponsors
- Include any individual lawfully present in the U.S. in the definition of "qualified noncitizen," which is used to determine eligibility for many federal programs

## SNAP has a range of extraordinary strengths, which include:

<p><b>SNAP DELIVERS ASSISTANCE</b> quickly and effectively to people recovering from natural disasters or economic crises.</p> 	<p><b>SNAP REACHES KEY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS</b> — the large majority are children, seniors, and people with disabilities.</p>	<p><b>SNAP REDUCES HUNGER</b> and food insecurity by providing low-income people necessary food money.</p> 	<p><b>SNAP IMPROVES DIETARY INTAKE</b> and health, especially among children and with lasting effects.</p>
<p><b>SNAP IS EFFICIENT,</b> using electronic benefits technology and regular channels of commerce.</p> 	<p><b>SNAP SUPPORTS WORK,</b> helping families struggling with low wages.</p>	<p><b>SNAP BOLSTERS LOCAL ECONOMIES</b> by increasing money spent for food at local retailers.</p> 	<p><b>SNAP LIFTS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE</b> out of poverty.</p>

- 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 9 meals for every one meal provided by the Feeding America network.
- Disaster SNAP (D-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 (EBT) cards, which can expedite and mainstream the relief process for victims.

### **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

TEFAP is a means-tested federal 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. Nutritious TEFAP food commodities are an essential resource for food banks. 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:** Include additional mandatory funding for TEFAP food in recognition of the sustained high need for food assistance at food banks nationwide. TEFAP mandatory funds should be authorized at least \$450 million per year in the next farm bill. TEFAP Storage and Distribution Funds should increase to reflect the actual distribution costs needed to \$200 million per year and TEFAP Infrastructure Grants should remain at \$15 million per year.

- TEFAP commodities accounted for approximately 30-40 percent of the food moving through Feeding America's food banks in fiscal year 2020-21. Food banks combine TEFAP with private donations to maximize TEFAP benefits far beyond the budgeted amount for the program. In this way, food banks exemplify an optimum model of a public-private partnership.
- TEFAP bonus commodity purchases provide support for agricultural markets when market support is needed and provides the nation's food banks with access to additional healthy food. Congress should ensure that USDA retains the authority to purchase bonus commodities in times of high need for emergency food relief in addition to times of low commodity prices so that the program is responsive to excess supply and excess demand.
- TEFAP has a strong impact on the farm economy. TEFAP purchases give commodity producers an average of 27 cents per dollar and that rises to 85 cents on the dollar for bonus commodity purchases made when agricultural markets need support, according to USDA's Economic Research Service. By contrast, only about 16 cents of every retail food dollar goes back to the farmer.

## Ensuring Equitable Food Access

### *Indian Country*

For American Indian and Alaska Native communities, disparities in food insecurity are a result of structural racism originating with colonization and continuing to the present. An astonishing 47 percent of Native American and Alaska Native respondents reported experiencing food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic according to the [Native American Agriculture Fund Food Access Survey](#). Congress can take steps in the Farm Bill to address this inequity and improve Tribal food sovereignty in food systems, including to:

- Collect and fully utilize race and ethnicity data for American Indian and Alaska Native individuals in the federal nutrition programs.
- End the ban that disallows participants to use benefits from the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and SNAP within the same month. FDPIR is the only commodity food program that cannot be used in conjunction with SNAP benefits.
- Enable Tribal governments to administer all federal nutrition programs, and allow Tribal organizations to expand Native-grown and culturally relevant food procurement options in federal nutrition programs.

### *Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories*

U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are excluded from SNAP, which prevents them from receiving the same nutrition assistance provided to other people in America with low-income. The capped Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) block grant leads to more restrictive eligibility requirements, lower monthly benefits, and greater instability in nutrition aid for these individuals and families than is available for other Americans under SNAP, a major inequity.

As Americans, Puerto Ricans and citizens of U.S. Territories deserve urgent and equitable food access and should not be subject to fewer benefits solely based on residency. As approved by the territories' leadership, Congress should provide a pathway for the successful transition from NAP to full participation in SNAP.

## Support Policies to Enable Easier Food Donation

Food waste represents lost resources and has negative impacts on the environment. The Farm Bill should support nonprofits that are trying to work closer with agriculture and food industry partners in order to connect nutritious food to people in need through streamlined federal policies and exploring innovative ways to further this work by:

- Removing the state match within the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank program, easing burden and making it economically feasible to participate. Congress should also allow payment for donated food to enable smaller growers and producers to participate in the program.
- Standardizing food donation guidelines to allow the donation of safe wholesome food regardless of the "sell-by" date. Currently 20 states do not allow the donation of food if it is past a "sell-by" date.
- Supporting innovative food rescue programs that help offset the cost to harvest, pack, and transport rescued food.

## Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

CSFP leverages government buying power to provide nutritious food boxes to thousands of seniors aged 60 years and above each month. Through the yearly appropriations process, funds are allocated for caseloads in each state. In FY 2020 approximately 692,467 seniors were set to receive CSFP boxes, however, additional funding in the American Rescue Plan allowed for 760,634 to be served in 2020. All 50 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and 5 Indian Tribal Organizations participate in CSFP.

- CSFP is an efficient, effective program. While USDA's cost to purchase commodities for this package of food is about \$20 per month, the average retail value of the package is \$50. Many seniors participating in CSFP are able to have their food boxes delivered directly to their homes or to senior centers nearby, an important benefit for those who are homebound, have limited mobility, or do not have convenient access to a grocery store.
- CSFP helps to combat the poor health conditions often found in seniors who are experiencing food insecurity and are at risk for hunger. CSFP food packages are specifically designed to supplement nutrients typically lacking in participants' diets, such as protein, calcium, vitamins A and C, and B vitamins. CSFP can play an important role in addressing the nutrition needs of low-income seniors.