

November 18, 2022

## Farm Bill Primer: SNAP and Nutrition Title Programs

The Nutrition title of the farm bill typically reauthorizes a number of nutrition or domestic food assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program). These programs were last reauthorized by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334). They are authorized through September 30, 2023. In a subsequent farm bill's Nutrition title, policymakers might revisit 2018 debates and decisions and consider new challenges and questions, including temporary changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The child nutrition programs (e.g., the National School Lunch Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children [WIC]) are typically reauthorized in a child nutrition reauthorization bill—not a farm bill.

### Nutrition Programs Typically Reauthorized in a Farm Bill

The major programs, included in several different permanent statutes, reauthorized in the 2018 farm bill were

- **SNAP** and related grant programs (e.g., SNAP Employment & Training);
- Programs in lieu of SNAP: **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**, **Nutrition Assistance Program** grants for several territories;
- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**;
- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**;
- **Community Food Projects**;
- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**; and
- **Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)** grants.

These programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), (except for GusNIP, administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture [NIFA]). SNAP is the largest of USDA's domestic food assistance programs, in both participation and spending. (See **Table 1** for statistics and program summaries.)

### Funding

According to the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO's) projected costs at the time of the 2018 law's enactment, the Nutrition title made up approximately 76% of farm bill mandatory spending.

SNAP is authorized as open-ended mandatory spending and is funded through appropriations laws. As such, amending SNAP eligibility, benefits, or other program rules can have a budgetary impact. At the same time, the availability of appropriated funding also affects SNAP's operation.

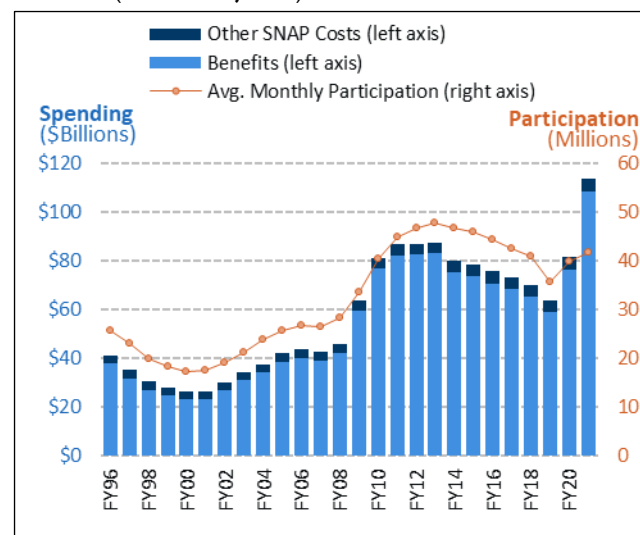
SNAP's spending is largely driven by program participation, which can fluctuate due to economic conditions and program rules (see **Figure 1**).

Approximately 95% of SNAP spending is for the benefits themselves, which are 100% federally funded.

Administrative costs of eligibility determination and benefit issuance are shared between the state/territory and federal government. Other SNAP spending includes funds for nutrition education and Employment and Training (E&T).

**Figure 1. SNAP Participation and Federal Spending, FY1996-FY2021**

Constant (inflation-adjusted) FY2021 dollars



**Source:** CRS, using USDA-FNS administrative data. Spending amounts in FY2021 dollars: Benefits adjusted using CPI-U Food at Home index; Other SNAP Costs spending in FY2021 dollars using CPI-U for All Consumers index.

**Note:** FY2020 and FY2021 include additional funding provided by COVID-19 pandemic response laws.

The programs in lieu of SNAP (except for a small amount of FDPIR) are also mandatory spending. TEFAP's "entitlement commodity" funds for food are mandatory spending, while the program's administrative costs are discretionary. CSFP is discretionary spending. SFMNP and GusNIP receive mandatory funding from sources outside of annual appropriations bills.

### SNAP in the 2018 Farm Bill

Congressional consideration of the 2018 farm bill included contentious debate centered on SNAP's work requirements and other eligibility rules. The enacted 2018 farm bill reconciled significant differences between the House- and Senate-passed SNAP provisions, ultimately making few eligibility changes. On work-related rules, the enacted bill increased funding for and services provided in the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program and reduced

caseload exemptions from the time limit for “able-bodied adults without dependents.” Among other changes, the law required periodic re-evaluations of the Thrifty Food Plan (the basis of the maximum SNAP benefit) and increased funding for TEFAP and nutrition incentives.

## The COVID-19 Pandemic

The 116<sup>th</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses’ pandemic response laws have provided supplemental funds and policy changes for SNAP and many of the other farm bill nutrition programs. Many of these policies are tied to a COVID-19 public health emergency declaration. Policymakers may consider ways to continue these policies or ease the transition.

## Related CRS Reports

CRS Report R42353, *Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs*

CRS Report R42505, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits*

CRS Report R45408, *The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): Background and Funding*

CRS Report R46681, *USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*

**Table 1. Major Nutrition Programs in the 2018 Farm Bill**

Program	Authorizing Statute	Program Summary	FY2021	
			Appropriations (exceptions noted)	Participation
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly, Food Stamp Program)	Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§1 et seq.)	Provides to low-income households electronic benefits redeemable for SNAP-eligible foods at SNAP-eligible retailers. Benefit amounts vary by household size and benefit calculation rules. Non-benefit SNAP funding for matching states’ administrative costs, Employment & Training, nutrition education, and other SNAP-related costs. Operates in 50 states, District of Columbia, Guam, and U.S. Virgin Islands.	\$113.8 billion <sup>a</sup> (actual costs) (mandatory)	41.6 million in an average month
Nutrition Assistance Block Grants	Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§28)	Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands receive capped funding to administer respective nutrition programs under terms negotiated with Memoranda of Understanding with USDA.	\$2.058 billion <sup>b</sup> (mandatory)	868,000 in an average month
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§27); Emergency Food Assistance Act (§204(a))	Provides food commodities (and cash support for storage and distribution costs) through states to local emergency feeding organizations (e.g., food banks).	\$1.58 billion <sup>c</sup> (actual costs) (mandatory and discretionary)	Not available
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 (§4(a))	Provides supplemental monthly food packages to low-income seniors.	\$325 million <sup>b</sup> (discretionary)	662,000 in an average month
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§4(b)); Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 (§4(a))	Provides, in lieu of SNAP benefits, food commodities to low-income households on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in Oklahoma or in designated areas near Oklahoma.	\$87.8 million <sup>b</sup> (mandatory)	48,000 in an average month
Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)	Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (§4002)	Provides vouchers/coupons to low-income seniors to purchase fresh produce at farmers’ markets and other direct-to-consumer venues.	\$20.6 million (mandatory)	726,000 (FY2020)
Community Food Projects	Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§25)	Competitive grants to nonprofit organizations for programs that improve access to locally produced food for low-income households.	\$5 million (mandatory)	Not available
Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) program	Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (§4405)	Competitive grants for projects that increase low-income consumers’ purchase of fruits and vegetables by providing incentives at SNAP points of purchase and (added by 2018 farm bill) providing produce prescriptions to SNAP/Medicaid participants.	\$45 million <sup>b</sup> (mandatory)	Not available

**Source:** Participation and actual costs data from August 2022 USDA-FNS Key Data Report, dated November 10, 2022. Appropriations data from P.L. 116-260, Division B and/or P.L. 115-334. SFMNP funding and data displayed for FY2020 from USDA-FNS program website.

- FY2021 total includes COVID-19 pandemic supplemental appropriations and/or policy changes that authorize increased spending.
- Displayed figure does not include supplemental funding provided in COVID-19 response acts in FY2021. See CRS Report R46681, *USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*.
- Includes bonus and entitlement purchases and spending on administrative costs.

**Randy Alison Aussenberg**, Specialist in Nutrition Assistance Policy

**Gene Falk**, Specialist in Social Policy  
**Kara Clifford Billings**, Analyst in Social Policy

IF12255

---

## Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.