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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) through September 30, 2023, and then were subsequently extended to September 30, 2025, via two, one-year extensions (P.L. 118-22, P.L. 118-158). In a subsequent farm bill's Nutrition title, policymakers might revisit past debates and decisions and consider new issues.

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

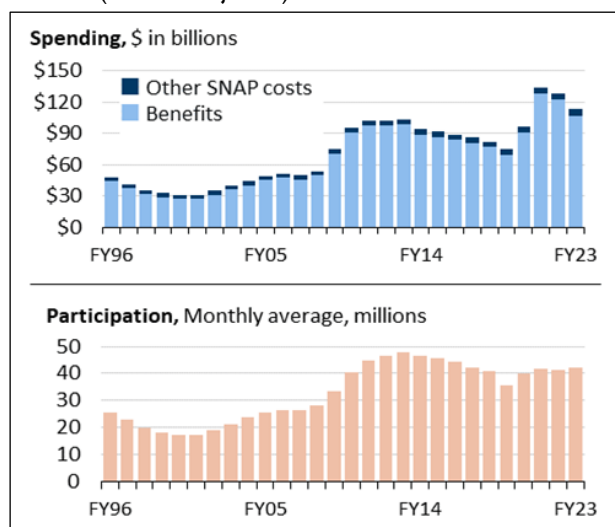
According to the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO's) June 2024 estimate of projected costs for farm bill programs for FY2025-FY2034, the Nutrition title makes up approximately 81% of farm bill mandatory spending.

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 generally driven by program participation, which can fluctuate due to economic conditions and program rules (see **Figure 1**). In recent years, during and after time-limited pandemic-era benefit increases, federal spending declined while participation was steady. 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-FY2023

Constant (inflation-adjusted) FY2023 dollars



Source: CRS, using USDA-FNS administrative data. Spending amounts in FY2023 dollars: Benefits adjusted using CPI-U Food at Home index; Other SNAP Costs spending in FY2023 dollars using CPI-U for All Consumers index.

Note: FY2020-FY2023 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.

Nutrition in Recent Farm Bills

Congressional consideration of the 2018 (Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018; P.L. 115-334) and 2014 farm bills (Agricultural Act of 2014; P.L. 113-79) included 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. Among other policies, the 2018 law required periodic re-evaluations of the Thrifty Food Plan (the basis of the maximum SNAP benefit). The Biden Administration's 2021 implementation of this provision (increasing SNAP benefit amounts by approximately 21%) has been a recent point of contention. Aside from SNAP policies, recent farm bills increased federal resources for emergency feeding organizations (through TEFAP) and low-income households' purchase of fruits and vegetables (through GusNIP).

Work towards a farm bill in the 118th Congress (e.g., House Agriculture Committee bill H.R. 8467 and Senate Agriculture Committee chairwoman bill S. 5335) indicated an interest in a range of new SNAP and non-SNAP

nutrition program policies that may be considered again in the next Congress.

Related CRS Reports:

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*

CRS Report R48167, *The 2024 Farm Bill: H.R. 8467 Compared with Current Law*

Table 1. Major Nutrition Programs in the 2018 Farm Bill

Program	Authorizing Statute	Program Summary	FY2024	
			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.	\$99.8 billion (actual costs) (mandatory)	41.7 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.	\$2.962 billion (mandatory)	1.42 million in an average month (FY2023)
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§27); Emergency Food Assistance Act (§204(a))	Provides USDA-purchased food commodities (and cash support for storage and distribution costs) through states to local emergency feeding organizations (e.g., food banks).	\$2.29 billion ^a (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.	\$389 million (discretionary)	716,000 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.	\$165.0 million (mandatory)	53,000 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)	758,000 (FY2022)
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)	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 (mandatory)	Not available

Source: Participation and actual costs data from September 2024 USDA-FNS Key Data Report, dated December 13, 2024; FY2024 data from this source is preliminary. Appropriations data from P.L. 118-42 and/or P.L. 115-334. SFMNP funding and data displayed for FY2022 from USDA-FNS program website.

a. Includes bonus and entitlement food purchases; excludes spending on administrative costs.

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