

Food and Nutrition Assistance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides children and needy families access to a more healthful diet through its food assistance programs and comprehensive nutrition education efforts, and provides farmers an outlet for the distribution of food purchased under farmer assistance authorities.

USDA's Food and Consumer Service administers 15 Federal food and nutrition assistance programs. These programs serve 1 in 6 Americans. This section describes the Food Stamp program, the cornerstone of the USDA food assistance programs; the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, which provide pre-school and school-aged children with nutritious meals that are free or provided at a greatly reduced price; and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), which provides food supplements, nutrition education, and health care referrals.

FCS programs are operated in a State-Federal partnership, in which the Federal Government is generally responsible for food costs for the programs and shares administrative costs with the States. FCS is responsible for interpreting Federal statutes,

issuing program regulations and instructions, establishing nationwide standards, and ensuring program integrity. FCS regional offices monitor State agencies to ensure the adequacy of their administration. States are responsible for determining the eligibility of needy persons to participate in nutrition assistance programs, as well as the delivery of services. States are also generally responsible for coordinating USDA nutrition programs with other local welfare, health care, and assistance programs. For example, in most States the welfare department operates the Food Stamp program, the education department operates the child nutrition programs, and the health department operates WIC.

For FY 1997, Congress appropriated \$43 billion for the 15 food and nutrition assistance programs, which represents 75% of the entire USDA budget of \$59.1 billion.

Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

- Food Stamp Program
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Summer Food Service Program
- Emergency Food Assistance Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Special Milk Program
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- Nutrition Program for the Elderly
- Commodity Distribution to Charitable Institutions and to Soup Kitchens and Food Banks
- Nutrition Education and Training Program
- Nutrition Assistance Program in Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands