



# Strategic Goal 5

## Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health

USDA promotes America's health through food assistance for low-income people, and nutrition education, guidance and promotion for the general public and targeted groups. The Department teaches, informs and motivates Americans to use this information to improve their diets and physical activity patterns. USDA also expands research and scientific knowledge about the contribution of food and human nutrition to public health. By promoting better diets, reaching children early and ensuring access to healthy food, the Department contributes to the Nation's health.

USDA will contribute to significant improvements to the Nation's nutrition and health status through 2010 by its leadership and improved management of nutrition assistance programs. The Department is targeting:

- Improvements in access to Federal nutrition assistance programs as the centerpiece of the Federal strategy to reduce and prevent hunger among low-income people;
- Five-point increases in the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores of children and low-income people, and a two-point increase among the general public. HEI uses food-intake data to measure the quality and variety of the American diet;
- Sustaining peak performance in the Food Stamp Program (FSP), which provides resources via electronic debit cards to help participants improve their food-purchasing power, in partnership with States to minimize errors and prevent fraud and abuse; and
- Better management of all programs through improved performance measurement, including the measurement and reduction of erroneous payments.

### Strategic Result: Significant Change in the Nation's Nutrition Status

#### OBJECTIVE 5.1: ENSURE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

USDA nutrition assistance programs, which serve one in five Americans, are the focus of the Federal effort to fight hunger in the U.S. These programs include Food Stamps, the school meals programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). WIC provides supplemental food, nutrition education and referrals to health and social services. USDA purchases and distributes some commodity foods for the school meals programs. The Administration is committed to promoting and improving nutritional intake through increased access to and the use of these vital programs by eligible participants.

**Key Outcome:** The Reduction and Prevention of Hunger by Improved Access to Federal Nutrition-Assistance Programs

#### Performance Measures

##### 5.1.1 Percentage of eligible individuals participating in FSP

Baseline 2003
55.6 percent of eligible individuals participated in FSP, receiving 65.4 percent of all potential benefits.
Target 2010
68 percent of eligible individuals participate in the program, receiving 75 percent of potential benefits.

**5.1.2 Increase the WIC participation rate among eligible pregnant women and infants**

<b>Baseline 2003</b>
To be established in FY 2006.
<b>Target 2010</b>
To be established in FY 2006.

**5.1.3 The rate of food insecurity with hunger among low-income households (USDA is considering improvements to its food security measurement methodology, based on recommendations from the Committee on National Statistics)**

<b>Baseline 2003</b>
TBD
<b>Target 2010</b>
TBD

**Actionable Strategies**

- Develop and promote policy improvements that increase access to programs for eligible people;
- Support a strong national nutrition safety net by providing funding and purchasing and distributing commodity foods for Federal nutrition assistance programs;
- Increase awareness of the availability and value of Federal nutrition assistance among the general public, eligible people and key State and local decision makers; and
- Work with States to promote program access and ensure effective outreach and information.

**OBJECTIVE 5.2: PROMOTE HEALTHIER EATING HABITS AND LIFESTYLES**

The Nation faces significant public health issues related to the quality of America’s eating habits. One such issue is the increasing prevalence of excess weight and obesity. USDA intends to use its nutrition assistance programs and broader nutrition education efforts as key opportunities to promote healthier eating and more physical activity across the Nation.

**Key Outcome:** Eating Habits More Consistent with *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

**Performance Measures**

**5.2.1 Percentage of Americans with improved dietary habits**

<b>Baseline 2000</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62 percent HEI (Americans with income less than 130 percent of poverty)</li> <li>• 64 percent HEI (American children in households with income less than 185 percent of poverty)</li> <li>• 63.8 percent HEI (U.S. population, 2 years and older)</li> </ul>
<b>Target 2010</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 65.8 percent HEI (Americans with income less than 130 percent of poverty)</li> <li>• 65.8 percent HEI (American children in households with income less than 185 percent of poverty)</li> <li>• 65.8 percent HEI (U.S. population, 2 years and older)</li> </ul>

**5.2.2 Percentage of WIC postpartum women initiating breastfeeding**

<b>Baseline 2002</b>
48.3 percent of WIC postpartum women initiated breastfeeding.
<b>Target 2010</b>
60 percent of WIC postpartum women initiate breastfeeding.

**5.2.3 Percentage of elementary and secondary schools offering meal options consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

<b>Baseline 1999</b>
82 percent of elementary schools and 91 percent of secondary schools offered meal options to students consistent with the <i>Dietary Guidelines</i> .
<b>Target 2010</b>
All elementary and secondary schools will offer meal options to students consistent with the <i>Dietary Guidelines</i> .

(*The Dietary Guidelines* recommend a healthy diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products; includes lean meats,

poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts; and is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars).

### Actionable Strategies

- Promote the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, use an evidence-based system to plan for and develop the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, revise the Healthy Eating Index so that scores are based upon up-to-date nutrition guidelines, and re-engineer Federal nutrition guidance.
  - Move from paper to Web-based nutrition guidance;
  - Build new partnerships;
  - Promote effectiveness and acceptance of DGA by monitoring and analyzing food consumption; and
  - Conduct research on preventing obesity.
- Update Nutrition Assistance Programs based on the new *Dietary Guidelines*.
  - Redesign the “Thrifty Food Plan” used to determine food stamp benefit levels;
  - Develop and implement changes in school meal patterns and nutrition standards;
  - Develop and implement changes to the WIC food packages;
  - Revise program materials and guidance;
  - Update nutrition curricula for children; and
  - Train State and local cooperatives to implement program changes and new guidance.
- Leverage nutrition assistance to promote healthful lifestyles and healthy weight.
  - Promote breastfeeding in WIC;
  - Promote healthy school nutrition and local school wellness policies (Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge, technical assistance to schools seeking to make improvements);
  - Improve nutrition education and promotion in FSP;
  - Promote increased intake of fruits, vegetables,

- whole grains, and low-fat dairy products;
- Develop and expand cross-program nutrition promotion and education efforts, including developing common messaging; and
- Work with State partners to integrate nutrition and physical activity promotion within and across the programs.

### OBJECTIVE 5.3: IMPROVE NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

USDA is strongly committed to maintaining a high level of integrity and efficiency in nutrition assistance programs. The Department also works proactively to prevent errors and other problems.

New communication and e-commerce technologies present a prime opportunity for USDA to serve its customers and work with its partners more effectively. The Department plans to make, and will encourage State and local partners to make, targeted, cost-effective investments to enable it to bring its programs and business into the digital age. For example, USDA recently completed conversion of the Food Stamp Program to electronic benefit transfer (EBT), a system that allows recipients to authorize transfer of their Government benefits from a Federal account to a retailer account to pay for products received. For the future, USDA is working to expand the use of EBT in the WIC program.

**Key Outcome:** Fewer Dollars Lost Through Program Errors

#### Performance Measures

##### 5.3.1 Food Stamp Program payment accuracy rate

<b>Baseline 2004</b>
94.1 percent accuracy rate in food stamp payments.
<b>Target 2010</b>
94.6 percent accuracy rate in food stamp payments.

### 5.3.2 Number of States providing services electronically to increase efficiency and ease-of-use

Baseline 2004
Four States deliver WIC benefits to some participants via electronic benefit transfer (EBT).
Target 2010
Four States will deliver WIC benefits to all participants electronically. Ten additional States will test WIC EBT systems.

### 5.3.3 Number of States using a Web-based Food Stamp Program pre-screening tool

Baseline 2005
17 States.
Target 2010
All States.

### 5.3.4 Rate of administrative errors in school meals eligibility determination

Baseline 2005
4 percent.
Target 2010
3 percent.

### Actionable Strategies

- Sustain peak performance in FSP through training of State employees, technical assistance, penalty collections and anti-trafficking efforts;
- Measure and reduce improper payments;
- Improve program oversight and performance measurement;
- Improve operations, customer service and new policies, technologies and business processes;
- Support development of national WIC EBT standards and test the viability of alternative WIC EBT technologies, including online, real time point-of-sale transactions; and
- Continue promoting a Web-based eligibility “pre-screening” tool that allows recipients to determine their potential FSP eligibility.

### Key External Factors

Efforts to reduce hunger and improve diet depend on coordination between USDA and Federal, State and local partners, and effective implementation by partners with program standards and rules. Competing demands on tight State budgets may affect the availability of administrative resources for some efforts. USDA’s ability to improve dietary habits is influenced strongly by the emphasis the Nation as a whole places on healthy eating. This includes the kinds of products and practices found in the food marketplace.