



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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REAL RESULTS FOR REAL PEOPLE: A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services ensures access to nutritious, healthful diets for all Americans. The nation's nutrition assistance programs provide a safety net to help the most vulnerable in our society meet their food needs. We also work to empower all consumers with knowledge of the link between diet and health and encourage consumers to make healthful food choices through nutrition education and promotion.



Under Secretary Eric M. Bost enjoys a school lunch with children in Arlington, VA.

Our goal is to continue a long history of helping families and individuals secure a nutritious diet, and build on this success with targeted improvements in three areas – increasing program access, promoting better eating habits, and strengthening stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Under President George W. Bush's leadership, we have achieved *real results for real people* across the Nation.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Sustained Commitment to the National Nutrition Safety Net

- Led USDA in reauthorizing the Food Stamp Program as part of Farm Bill reauthorization, securing a package that adds \$6.4 billion in new funding to nutrition assistance programs over a 10-year period. Successfully advocated for restoration of food stamp eligibility to many legal immigrants – a critical step in improving assistance for those who face hunger and in restoring fairness and equity. Supported successful implementation at the State level; 48 states have implemented one or more new options provided to simplify program administration and improve access.
- Worked with Congress through the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 to improve these programs based on three principles of good stewardship:
 - To ensure that all children have **access to nutritious meals**;
 - To address the problems of overweight and obesity and establish **lifelong healthy habits** in children; and
 - To ensure **high standards and integrity** in the Child Nutrition Programs.

Drawing on a nationwide series of outreach sessions that gathered input from 700 groups and individuals, FNCS offered recommendations to implement the principles of good stewardship resulting in concrete program improvements. Rule changes to simplify certification for free school meals for many low-income children and a new Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to improve children's diets and address the growing public health threat of obesity were among the provisions ultimately enacted.



Improved Access to Food and Nutrition Programs

- Served more participants in the major nutrition programs: In October 2004, over 8.9 million more people received food stamps, over 2.3 million more children ate a free or reduced price school lunch, over 1.8 million more children ate a school breakfast, and nearly 800,000 more people participated in WIC than in January 2001.



- Promoted food stamps through a national media campaign to support our commitment to ensure that all eligible people can receive benefits with dignity and respect. The *Food Stamps Make America Stronger* campaign placed English language radio spots in 25 major media markets and 3 State-wide radio networks, Spanish language ads in 75 locations, and ads on buses and bus shelters in 8 cities. Messages reached audiences in 30 States, leading to a 50-55% increase in information requests via the program's toll free number (1-800-221-5689).
- Awarded eight grants totaling \$1 million to community and faith-based organizations to study effective outreach strategies to inform and educate eligible low-income people not currently receiving food stamps about the program.
- Formed a Food Stamp Outreach Coalition to bring together national and local organizations interested in food stamp outreach and helped empower these groups to strengthen food stamp outreach. Food Stamp Program informational materials were made available in 35 different languages so that State and local groups can use them in community outreach efforts.
- Educated potential participants about program changes in the 2002 Farm Bill that expanded eligibility for legal immigrants through partnership meetings, 50 sixty-second capsules, guest appearances on weekly live call-in shows, and weekly columns in Spanish-language media. Efforts to publicize and implement these program changes brought over 150,000 participants into the program during the first year.
- Expanded implementation of Combined Application Projects to improve food stamp access for elderly and disabled people. Projects are underway in 5 states (South Carolina, Mississippi, New York, Texas and Washington) and approved in 4 others (Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and North Carolina). Seven additional States have submitted plans for review or been invited to develop a proposal.
- Awarded over \$10 million in grants to 11 State agencies in partnership with community-based and faith-based organizations to increase access to food stamps.
- As authorized by the Farm Bill of 2002, awarded \$48 million to States that demonstrate high or improved performance in administration of the Food Stamp Program.

- Ensured that food stamp recipients can use their food benefits at over 145,000 food stores throughout the United States by fostering partnerships with retailers, attending national and local trade shows, and providing information on participating in the program.
- Distributed a significant volume of commodities purchased in support of agriculture markets through the commodity assistance programs. The number of pounds of bonus commodities—largely fruits and vegetables—purchased for distribution through the Emergency Food Assistance Program to supplement the diets of low-income Americans rose by 50% between 2002 and 2004.
- Expanded the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program from 36 to 47 State agencies and doubled participation by eligible seniors from 400,000 to just over 800,000. The program now operates in 39 states, 6 Indian Tribal Organizations, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.



- Launched a nationwide initiative to promote children's access to nutritious meals and snacks when school is not in session. Promoting the availability of summer feeding programs is critical, since only about 3.5 million children currently receive program meals during the summer, while nearly 16.5 million low-income children receive them during the school year.
- Worked as supporter, enabler, catalyst and collaborator with Faith-Based and Community Organizations to promote access to Federal nutrition assistance programs. FNCS developed a range of actions to promote a "federal friendly" environment, and to make funding more accessible, in order to improve program access and participation. For instance, FNCS signed a nationwide agreement with Angel Food Ministries that allows the faith-based food co-op to accept food stamps. Participants are able to purchase a healthy food box worth approximately \$50 for \$25. FNCS also helped to place a focus on hunger by having the subject specifically addressed in the White House Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) Conferences.
- Mobilized teams in wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks to ensure continued program access to affected families. Emergency food stamps provided \$4 million in benefits to over 32,000 people in New York City alone. Since then, emergency food stamps have provided help to victims of more than 16 natural disasters, including ice storms in Oklahoma (\$7.4 million for 26,000 households), flash floods in West Virginia (\$2 million for 7,600 households), hurricane relief in Louisiana (\$6.2 million for 23,277 households), and wind storms in Tennessee (\$3.7 million for 9,585 households). Most recently, nearly \$5.9 million worth of USDA commodities, infant formula and baby food as well as over \$269 million worth of emergency food stamps were provided to Florida and other States (Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina and Pennsylvania) affected by the August-September 2004 hurricanes.



PROMOTE HEALTHIER EATING HABITS AND LIFESTYLES

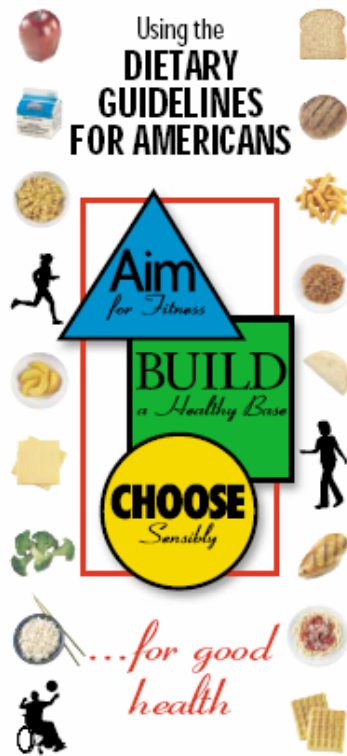
- Led efforts to support and motivate Americans to make concrete improvements in their diets and physical activities as part of the President's *HealthierUS* initiative. Key accomplishments include:



- An agreement with the National 5 A Day Partnership to pursue collaborative strategies with USDA to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Nutrition assistance programs provided over \$7 billion to support fruits and vegetable consumption among low-income children and families in fiscal year 2002. Developed and distributed *Fruits and Vegetables Galore – Helping Kids Eat More*, a technical assistance publication for school foodservice professionals packed with tips on planning, purchasing, protecting, preparing, presenting and promoting fruits and vegetables. This tool was developed to help schools encourage children to eat more fruits and vegetables as recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- A partnership between the Departments of Agriculture, Education and Health and Human Services to expand school-based efforts to help children and young people develop healthy eating and physical activity skills that will last a lifetime.
- Expanded efforts to combat childhood obesity through the Eat Smart. Play Hard.TM campaign. FNCS has distributed millions of new educational resources to schools, child care centers, WIC clinics, and food stamp offices, and launched a new web site with an average of 129,000 hits per month, featuring downloadable screensavers, PSAs and the Power Panther song.
- Launched the *HealthierUS* School Challenge, which encourages schools to take a leadership role in promoting healthy eating and active lifestyle choices. Schools that accept the challenge will be locally and nationally recognized by USDA based on school meal and other food and beverage sales on the school campus – to showcase their success, and encourage others to follow their lead.

- The first national nutrition education conference, to promote cross-program collaboration, offering more than 160 presentations, 60 poster sessions, and 36 exhibits to over 900 registrants. The next conference is scheduled for September 2005 and planning has already begun.





Partnered with Department of Health and Human Services to develop the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*—the cornerstone of Federal nutrition policy. An expert Advisory Committee reviewed the *Guidelines*, and made changes to reflect the most comprehensive, up-to-date science available to provide clear and useful nutrition information to consumers in the U.S.

- In addition, USDA began revision of the Food Guidance System (formerly known as the Food Guide Pyramid) that supports and communicates the *Guidelines*. The system was reviewed and is being revised to make sure its messages are clear and useful to American consumers. With 90% of the work completed on the Food Guidance System, USDA is poised to release the new food guide in early 2005 – continuing to fulfill USDA’s historic responsibility for guiding consumer food choices.

- Enhanced Americans’ ability to assess their diet—with USDA’s *Interactive Healthy Eating Index*. Over one million

Internet sessions using the *Index* were recorded this year. The *Index* (at www.cnpp.usda.gov) allows users to input their daily food intakes and receive a quick summary of the quality of their diet, as well as receive tailored recommendations that will help them improve their diet.

- Expanded the number of States participating in the optional nutrition education component of the Food Stamp Program to 52 in Fiscal Year 2004. USDA invested over \$188 million in Food Stamp nutrition education in Fiscal Year 2003, and launched an effort to improve coordination of the program nationwide.
- Conducted five national School Meals Initiative training workshops on monitoring school meals for compliance with nutrition standards, reaching approximately 500 FNS, State agency, contractors, and USDA-approved nutrient analysis software vendors.
- Partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop *Making It Happen: School Nutrition Success Stories*, which describes 32 schools and school districts that used innovative approaches to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages sold in schools outside of federally regulated meal programs.
- Developed a comprehensive breastfeeding peer counseling program to build upon and strengthen FNS’ existing *Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work* national breastfeeding campaign and projects. Also developed and distributed *Fathers Supporting Breastfeeding* materials, specifically targeted to African American fathers, in an effort to increase breastfeeding in African-American families.

- Implemented a highly successful pilot program to promote fresh fruit and vegetable consumption among the Nation's schoolchildren by offering healthy new snack choices to students. The pilot was made a permanent Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program by recent Child Nutrition reauthorization legislation, making free fresh and dried fruits and fresh vegetables available at schools in 8 States and 3 Indian reservations.
- Developed standards to improve nutrition services for WIC participants nationwide, helping State agencies benchmark the quality of their nutrition services, identify areas needing improvement, and assess and encourage positive changes.
- Developed a web-based course, WIC Learning Online, which provides continuing education, training and resources for all State and local WIC staff on nutrition topics, customer service and communication skills and nutrition education counseling.
- Provided leadership and support to collaborate, share lessons and exchange best practices with other countries on promoting food security and addressing obesity. Key activities include:
 - Implemented the U.S. - Mexico Partnership for Nutrition Assistance, which enlists the participation of Mexican embassy consulates to help FNS educate eligible Mexican nationals and Mexican-Americans living in the United States about nutrition assistance programs.
 - Collaborated with the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Agency for International Development, the World Food Program and the Five-A-Day Program to provide technical assistance on nutrition programs in South Africa, Hong Kong, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Israel, Japan, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and several other countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean.
 - Helped to represent the Department and the Nation in international bodies such as the Codex Alimentarius and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization to improve international nutrition standards and programs.



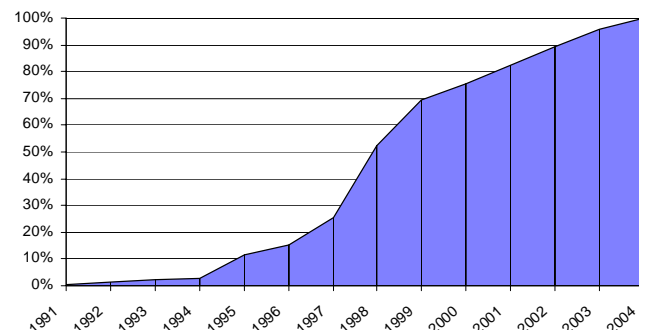
Under Secretary Bost visits with school children in South Africa

IMPROVE FOOD PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Expand Electronic Government

- Expanded electronic benefits transfer (EBT) to reach all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. EBT uses debit-card technology to allow FSP recipients to use their benefits to purchase food items at retail stores, eliminating the need for paper coupons, enhancing convenience and dignity for participants, improving service for retailers, and offering new tools to promote integrity. Also provided EBT to

Food Stamp Benefits Delivered through EBT



WIC participants in five States through the use of smart card technology and continued to study on-line magnetic stripe card technology.

- Brought nutrition assistance customer service into the digital age through GovBenefits (<http://www.govbenefits.gov>), a citizen-centered guide to government assistance and benefits, including food stamps, school lunch and breakfast, WIC, and nutrition assistance in Puerto Rico.
- Launched *Food Stamps Step1*, a new prescreening tool available in both English and Spanish that enables anyone with access to the Internet to determine their eligibility for food stamps and get an estimate of their potential monthly benefit.
- Implemented a web-based system for all States to order and track USDA commodities. and commodity complaints. Two States are piloting the system allowing their school districts to directly enter orders.
- Launched the PartnerWeb, a web-based system to facilitate communication and information exchange between USDA and its nutrition assistance program partners.
- Modernized the information system the agency uses to authorize food retailers to accept food benefits. The system also monitors the value and flow of food stamp benefits through food retailers and tracks activities to ensure retailer compliance with program regulations.

Improve Financial Management



- Achieved the highest ever level of food stamp payment accuracy while delivering over \$21.4 billion in benefits in 2003. Overpayments were reduced to about 5 percent of all benefits issued and underpayments were reduced to less than 2 percent, for a combined error rate of 6.64 percent.
- Reduced the rate of food stamp trafficking to less than 2.5 cents of each benefit dollar issued. The cost of trafficking is down by one-third since 1996-98, down by half since 1993.
- Achieved clean financial statements throughout Under Secretary Bost's tenure, reflecting continuous support of the President's initiative to improve financial management.

Improve Human Capital Management

- Acted on commitment to secure a highly qualified and diverse leadership team: about 60 percent of FNS' senior leadership are women or minorities.

- Continued development of FNCS employees to succeed to positions of leadership through the FNS Leadership Institute. Including the class of 2004, 99 employees have completed the program since its founding in 1999. A recent review found that the Institute's components, when benchmarked against best practices, approach the "state-of-the-art" for comparable employee development efforts.
- Worked toward a more diverse workforce for the future through the 1890 and Public Service Leaders Scholarship Programs (PSLS). In 2004, FNCS sponsors 5 scholars from the 1890 program, and 4 scholars from the PSLS program. In 2005, FNCS plans to sponsor 5 1890 scholars and 5 PSLS scholars.