



## USDA Food and Nutrition Service

Fighting Hunger & Improving Nutrition for Over 40 Years

### **FNS BACKGROUNDER**

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), formerly the Food and Consumer Service, administers the 15 nutrition assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. FNS provides children and impoverished Americans better access to food and a more healthful diet through its programs and nutrition education.

Nutrition education, combating hunger, and ensuring program access are top priorities in FNS' programs. Nutrition education underscores the effect of dietary choices and physical activity on a person's overall wellbeing. Outreach, in cooperation with partners, helps reduce barriers to participation and improves access to eligible individuals in need.

FNS programs currently serve one in every five Americans. And though it was established in August 8, 1969, many of the food programs originated long before its existence as a separate agency. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program, is the cornerstone of USDA's nutrition assistance and is a prime example. SNAP began in its modern form in 1961, but had its origins in the 1930s.

President Truman signed the National School Lunch Act in 1946 in response to claims that many American men had been rejected for World War II military service because of diet-related health problems. Today, NSLP provides legions of school children the opportunity of nourishment. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC), created in 1972 as a pilot program, has operated as a permanent nutrition assistance program since 1974. While The Needy Family Program,

now the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, was the central means of food assistance during that same era.

FNS works in partnership with the States in all its programs. States determine most administrative details regarding distribution of food benefits. Eligibility standards are national and set by law.

Congress appropriated \$82.1 billion for FNS programs in Fiscal Year 2009, including American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, accounting for well over half USDA's annual spending. For Fiscal Year 2010, the President's budget request for nutrition assistance, plus ARRA funds, totals \$92.2 billion.

This critical investment reduces hunger, provides nutrition education, and strengthens schools and child care programs.