



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Accomplishments 2009-2011

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Food and Nutrition

Nutrition Assistance to Fight Hunger

In 2010, 48.8 million Americans lived in households that had difficulty putting food on the table and USDA helped provide a hunger safety net for these families. In these times of record need, USDA provided critical nutrition assistance to 1 in 4 Americans.

- The economic downturn resulted in a substantial increase in need for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – often known as a ‘food stamps’ – a critical tool to ensure access to healthy food for hardworking families as they get back on their feet. More than 50% of SNAP recipients are children and the elderly, and only 8% received cash welfare. In 2010 alone, SNAP helped lift 3.9 million Americans – including 1.7 million children – out of poverty.
 - USDA encouraged policy changes in 24 states to eliminate barriers keeping eligible low-income working families out of the SNAP program, while increasing administrative flexibility for States. In 2010, low-income Americans were 6% more likely to be enrolled in SNAP than in 2009.
 - USDA played a critical role in supporting the 37 million Americans that rely upon our nation’s food bank system, providing 700 million pounds of food as well as other resources.
- USDA has taken important steps to protect the taxpayers’ investment in the SNAP program and make sure it is there for those who truly need it.
- USDA helped the SNAP program reach a record level of payment accuracy: 96.19%. Payment errors are less than half what they were ten years ago, which has reduced improper payments by \$3.3 billion in 2010 alone. Furthermore, trafficking – the exchange of SNAP benefits for cash – has been reduced to about one cent on the dollar. We continue to invest in process improvements and state-of-the-art technology to increase efficiency and strengthen the integrity of SNAP.
 - USDA initiated aggressive new tactics to protect the valuable taxpayer investment in SNAP by investigating illegal activity and removing bad actors from the program. In fiscal year 2010, the program investigated about 850,000 cases of recipient fraud, and more than 5,000 suspicious stores. This resulted in over 44,000 persons being disqualified from SNAP and 931 retailers being permanently barred from accepting benefits. USDA also instituted new, tougher sanctions for those who sell SNAP benefits online through social media such as Craigslist and Facebook.

Improving the Health of Our Families and Children

- As the centerpiece of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative to raise a healthier generation of kids, we led the effort to pass The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, historic legislation to allow us, for the first time in 30 years, the chance to make real reforms to the school lunch and breakfast programs by improving the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for nearly 32 million children who eat school lunch each day.

USDA's efforts to improve and enhance the school food environment include: updated school meal standards to increase fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy while reducing fats, sodium and sugars; science-based standards for all foods and beverages sold on campus; performance-based funding increases for schools – the first real increase in 30 years; and training and technical assistance to help schools meet improved standards. USDA is working closely with schools to move swiftly to make these reforms a reality in every school.

- USDA's WIC program helps ensure the good health of mothers and children, serving about half of all babies born in the United States. We have made historic improvements to the food in the program including whole grains, fruits and vegetables – the first comprehensive changes in 30 years – based on expert scientific recommendations.
- USDA released – with HHS – the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, an update of the Nation's fundamental nutrition policy to reflect the latest science on diet, health and physical activity. To help families make healthier food choices, USDA released MyPlate, a new generation food icon acclaimed as a simple, powerful visual cue to promote healthier eating at mealtimes. It is supported by tools and resources at the ChooseMyPlate.gov, and is available for Spanish-language speakers as MiPlato. Over 5,500 community partners have joined together with USDA in helping promote MyPlate in communities across the country.

- USDA encouraged more schools to promote healthy eating and exercise through the HealthierUS School Challenge, which has recognizing over 2,100 schools educating more than one million students for their achievements in improving school meals and the school nutrition environment.
- USDA has focused improving children's access to food during the summer, when school meals are not available and too many kids go hungry. Our intensive outreach and promotion efforts for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), helped us reach over 173,000 more children with double digit percentage increases in program sponsors and feeding sites between 2008 and 2010. We also launched a series of demonstrations to test enhancements to SFSP; the use of EBT benefits for the SFSP; and household-based summer food benefits; results from the initial projects showed substantial (19-35%) increases in participation as compared to the prior year.
- USDA is engaged in major research to see if we can promote healthier food choices among low-income Americans by offering additional benefits for purchasing fruits and vegetables.

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