



2018 Farm Bill Primer: SNAP and Nutrition Title Programs

The Nutrition title of the farm bill typically reauthorizes a number of nutrition or domestic food assistance programs. These include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) and certain other programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). These programs (listed below, with additional detail in **Table 1**) were last reauthorized by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334). They are authorized through September 30, 2023. Farm bills since 1973 have included reauthorization of the Food Stamp Program (renamed SNAP in 2008).

Nutrition Programs Reauthorized in a Farm Bill

The major programs reauthorized in the 2018 farm bill were the following:

- SNAP and related grant programs (e.g., SNAP Employment & Training);
- Programs in lieu of SNAP: **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**, grants for certain territories;
- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**;
- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**;
- **Community Food Projects**;
- **Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**; and
- **Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI)** grants.

SNAP is the largest of USDA’s domestic food assistance programs, in both participation and spending (see **Table 1**).

Relationship with Child Nutrition Reauthorization

The authorizing statutes for the child nutrition programs (the National School Lunch Program and other institutional food service programs) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are typically reauthorized in a “child nutrition reauthorization”—not a farm bill. These programs were last reauthorized by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-96). However, recent farm bills have included some provisions related to food purchasing and distribution for schools. The 2018 farm bill extends funding for federal purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables for schools and service institutions and requires USDA to enforce “Buy American” requirements for school food purchases.

Funding

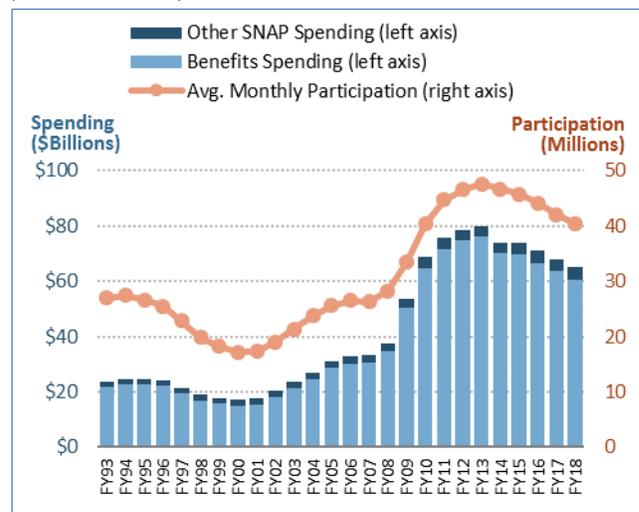
According to the Congressional Budget Office’s (CBO’s) projected costs at the time of the 2018 law’s enactment, the Nutrition title makes up approximately 76% of farm bill spending. SNAP is the vast majority of the title’s spending.

SNAP Funding

SNAP is authorized as open-ended mandatory spending and is funded through appropriations laws. As such, amending SNAP eligibility, benefits, or other program rules can have a budgetary impact. At the same time, the availability of appropriated funding also affects SNAP’s operation.

SNAP’s spending is largely driven by program participation, which can fluctuate due to economic conditions and program rules (see **Figure 1**). Approximately 95% of SNAP spending is for the benefits themselves, which are 100% federally funded. Administrative costs of eligibility determination are shared between the states and the federal government. Other SNAP spending includes funds for nutrition education and Employment and Training (E&T).

Figure 1. SNAP Participation and Federal Spending (FY1993-FY2018)



Source: CRS, using USDA-FNS administrative data.

Note: Data underlying this chart are available in CRS Report R42505, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits*.

Other Funding

The programs in lieu of SNAP (except for a small amount of FDPIR) are also mandatory spending. TEFAP’s “entitlement commodity” funds for food are mandatory spending, while the program’s administrative costs are discretionary. CSFP is discretionary spending. SFMNP receives mandatory funding from sources outside of annual appropriations bills.

SNAP in the 2018 Farm Bill

The 2018 farm bill was formulated and enacted amid contentious debate that centered on SNAP’s work requirements and other eligibility rules. The enacted 2018

farm bill had to reconcile significant differences between the House- and Senate-passed SNAP provisions, ultimately making few eligibility changes. On work-related rules, the enacted bill increases funding for and services provided in the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program and reduces available caseload exemptions from the time limit for “able-bodied adults without dependents.” Among other changes, the law included changes to SNAP’s Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) and error detection systems and increases in funding for TEFAP and FINI. The 116th Congress may play an oversight role as the Administration implements the 2018 Nutrition title’s changes to the law.

Related CRS Reports

CRS Report R42353, *Domestic Food Assistance: Summary of Programs*, by Randy Alison Aussenberg and Kirsten J. Colello

CRS Report R42505, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A Primer on Eligibility and Benefits*, by Randy Alison Aussenberg

CRS Report R45408, *The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): Background and Funding*, by Kara Clifford Billings

CRS Report R42054, *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Categorical Eligibility*, by Randy Alison Aussenberg and Gene Falk

Table I. Major Nutrition Programs in the 2018 Farm Bill

| Program | Authorizing Statute | Program Summary | FY2018 | |
|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| | | | Expenditures (in millions) (exceptions noted) | Participation |
| Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly, Food Stamp Program) | Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§1 et seq.) | Provides to low-income households electronic benefits redeemable for SNAP-eligible foods at SNAP-eligible retailers. Benefit amounts vary by household size and benefit calculation rules. Non-benefit SNAP funding for matching states’ administrative costs, Employment & Training, nutrition education, and other SNAP-related costs. Operates in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Virgin Islands; other territories receive nutrition block grants in lieu of SNAP. | \$64,989 | 40.3 million |
| The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) | Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§27); Emergency Food Assistance Act (§204(a)) | Provides food commodities (and cash support for storage and distribution costs) through states to local emergency feeding organizations (e.g., food banks). | \$623 ^a | Not available |
| Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) | Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 (§4(a)) | Provides supplemental monthly food packages to low-income elderly persons (primarily). | \$228 | 676,000 |
| Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) | Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§4(b)); Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 (§4(a)) | Provides, in lieu of SNAP benefits, food commodities to low-income households on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in Oklahoma or in designated areas near Oklahoma. | \$125 | 87,000 |
| Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) | Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (§4002) | Provides vouchers/coupons to low-income seniors to purchase fresh produce at farmers’ markets and other direct-to-consumer venues. | \$20.4 | 812,000 |
| Community Food Projects | Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (§25) | Competitive grants to nonprofit organizations for programs that improve access to locally produced food for low-income households. | \$9 | Not available |
| Gus Schumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program | Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (§4405) | Competitive grants for projects that increase low-income consumers’ purchase of fruits and vegetables by providing incentives at SNAP points of purchase or (added by 2018 farm bill) providing produce prescriptions to SNAP/Medicaid participants. | \$23 | Not available |

Source: Except as noted, participation and funding data from USDA-FNS Key Data Report, dated November 2018, based on data through September 2018. SFMNP funding and data displayed for FY2017 from USDA-FNS program website.

a. Includes bonus and entitlement purchases and spending on administrative costs.

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