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Economic Research Service

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Food Stamp Participation does not Increase Children's BMI

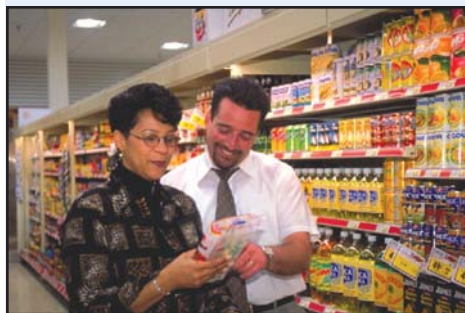
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Results from reviewed studies indicate that for most participants in the Food Stamp Program—children, nonelderly men, and the elderly—use of food stamp benefits does not result in an increase in either Body Mass Index (BMI) or the likelihood of being overweight or obese. However, for nonelderly women, who account for 28 percent of the food stamp caseload, some evidence suggests that participation in the Food Stamp Program may increase BMI and the probability of obesity. Different results for age and sex subgroups remain unexplained. Further, because food stamp benefits are issued to households, not individuals, mixed results across age and sex subgroups make it difficult to target policy alternatives to address potential weight gain among some participants while not affecting others in the household.



Convergence in Global Food Demand and Delivery

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR56/



Globalization and income growth are resulting in increasing similarities worldwide in diets and food delivery mechanisms. Using consumer food expenditure data and food vendors' sales data. The *Convergence in Global Food Demand and Delivery* demonstrates that food-purchasing patterns and food delivery mechanisms of high-income countries are being increasingly copied by both upper middle-income countries (Mexico and Poland, for example) and lower middle-income countries (Brazil and China, for example). The report analyzes food expenditures across 47 countries indicate significant convergence in consumption patterns for total food, cereals, meats, seafood, dairy, sugar and confectionery, caffeinated beverages, and soft drinks. That convergence reflects consumption growth in middle-income countries due to rapid modernization of their food delivery systems, as well as to global income growth.

- ▶ In addition to the full report, an audio podcast based on this report is also available.

Price of a Basic Healthy Diet Unchanged Relative to Unhealthy Choices

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR55/

An increase in the price of fruits and vegetables relative to less healthy foods could reduce consumers' incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables and result in less healthy diets. Whether such a change in relative prices and incentives has occurred in the United States is difficult to prove because of substantial quality improvements in many fresh fruits and vegetables. For commonly consumed fresh fruits and vegetables for which quality has remained fairly constant, analysis of price trends reveals a price decline similar to that of dessert and snack foods, according to the report *Price Trends Are Similar for Fruits, Vegetables, and Snack Foods*. This price trend evidence suggests that the price of a basic healthy diet has not changed relative to an unhealthy one, although a healthy diet might not include every fresh fruit or vegetable currently available.



Many Americans Not Meeting Dietary Recommendations

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB33/



This report examines major trends in the amount of food available for consumption in the United States between 1970 and 2005 using data from the ERS Food Availability (Per Capita) Data System. *Dietary Assessment of Major Trends in U.S. Food Consumption, 1970-2005*, estimates whether Americans are meeting Federal dietary recommendations for each of the major food groups by comparing the data with dietary recommendations in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the My Pyramid Food Guidance System. Findings show that many Americans do not meet the Federal dietary recommendations. To meet these recommendations, they would need

to substantially lower their intake of added fats, refined grains, and added sugars and sweeteners and increase their consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milk and milk products.



The Japanese Market for Oranges

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/FTS/2008/03Mar/FTS33001

Japan is a large market for U.S. orange exports, and most of Japan's orange consumption is supplied by U.S. exports. Orange consumption and imports grew until 1994, but have declined since. In trying to explain this decline, we found that demographic shifts are linked to changing orange consumption. While older birth cohorts eat more oranges, and younger ones eat fewer oranges; within each cohort, consumption increases with age. Income changes appear not to be major factors explaining the decline in orange consumption, but price changes appear to be potentially important. Even so, a downward trend in consumption, not explained by the demographic variables, prices, or income, may continue in the future.

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