

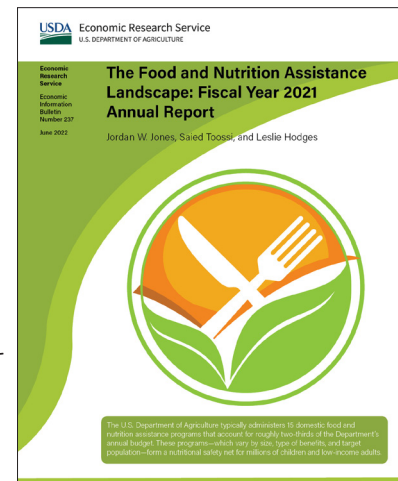


The Food and Nutrition Assistance Landscape: Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Report

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What Is the Issue?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs that together affect the lives of millions of people and account for roughly two-thirds of USDA's annual budget. In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2020 and continuing into FY 2021, USDA implemented additional temporary programs and numerous policy changes that expanded the scope and coverage of existing programs. As a result, participation in and spending on these programs changed substantially. This report examines trends in USDA's largest U.S. food and nutrition assistance programs through FY 2021 (October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021). This report also documents policy changes that took effect throughout FY 2021 and trends in economic and social indicators affecting participation in and spending on food and nutrition assistance programs. It also summarizes two recent USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) studies: one that examines the prevalence of household food insecurity in the United States in 2020; and another that examines the expansion of free meal sites targeting children in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.



What Did This Study Find?

- Spending on USDA's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs in FY 2021 reached a historic high of \$182.5 billion, 43 percent greater than the previous inflation-adjusted high of \$127.5 billion in FY 2020. The increase in spending was primarily driven by increases in USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) spending (see summary figure).
- On average, 41.5 million people participated in SNAP each month, 4 percent more than in the previous fiscal year. A temporary benefit increase, the expansion of emergency allotments, and higher participation contributed to a historic high in Federal SNAP spending of \$113.8 billion, 44 percent more than in FY 2020.
- On average, 6.2 million people participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) each month, nearly the same as the previous fiscal year. Total WIC spending was \$5.0 billion, 1 percent more than in FY 2020.
- Pandemic-related disruptions to child nutrition programs resulted in 8.4 billion total meals being served across the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care

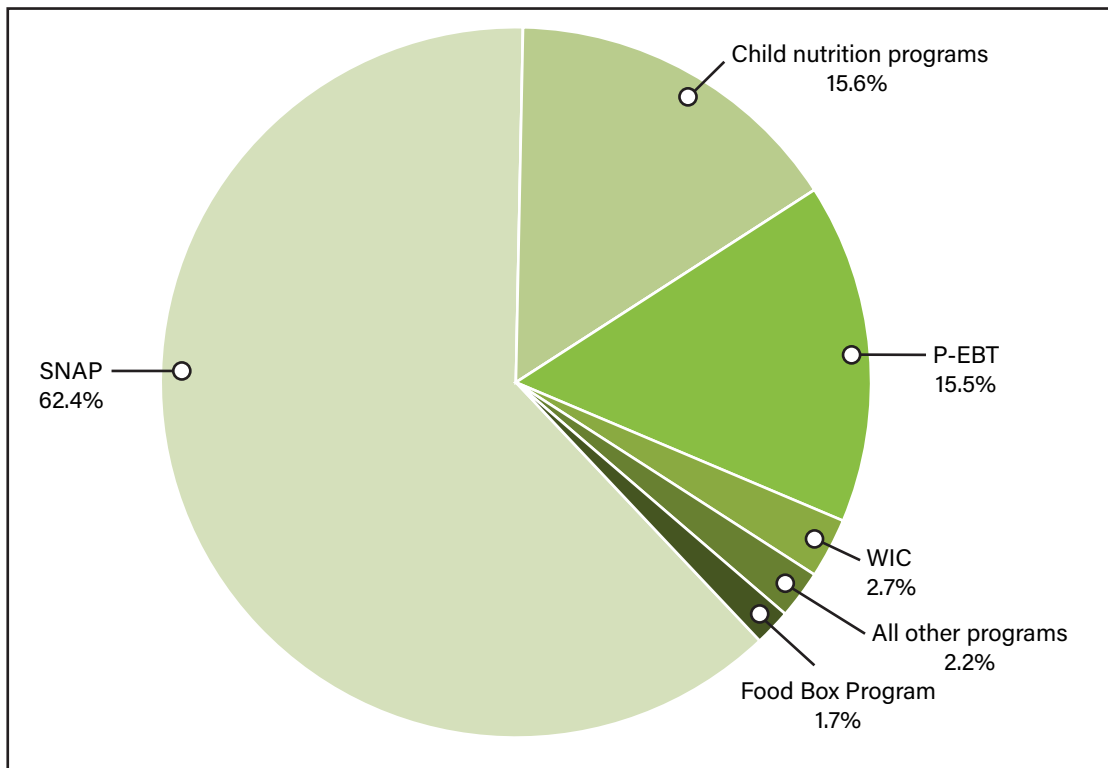
ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The number of meals served through SFSP increased to 3.0 billion, about 133 percent greater than in FY 2020. Total spending on these programs was \$26.8 billion, 27 percent more than in FY 2020.

- USDA continued to operate two temporary programs in FY 2021. P-EBT benefits were issued to eligible families at a cost of \$28.3 billion, or 162 percent greater than the amount issued in FY 2020. The Farmers to Families Food Box Program distributed about 73.1 million boxes of produce, dairy, and meat products to food banks and other charitable organizations nationwide at a cost of \$3.0 billion.

USDA food and nutrition assistance spending by program, FY 2021

SNAP and P-EBT accounted for nearly four-fifths of food and nutrition assistance spending



FY = fiscal year; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Child Nutrition Programs = National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, related State administrative expenses, and other related child nutrition costs; P-EBT = Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer; All other programs = nutrition family assistance grants to Puerto Rico, the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa; the Commodity Supplemental Food Program; the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; the Nutrition Services Incentive Program; the Special Milk Program; Disaster Feeding; The Emergency Food Assistance Program; and nutrition programs administration; Food Box Program = Farmers to Families Food Box Program.

Note: Figure based on preliminary data from the January 2022 Program Information Report (Keydata) released by USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in April 2022; and information provided by USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service and USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service.

How Was the Study Conducted?

This report uses preliminary data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service and USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service to examine program trends through FY 2021, adjusting for inflation where appropriate to make historical comparisons and indicating when inflation adjustment takes place. It uses supplementary data to examine economic and social indicators.