

ADDRESSING THE FUTURE



Since its establishment in 1998, FANRP has become the Nation's foremost source of economic research on USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs. Integrating an intramural and extramural program of research has resulted in an extensive portfolio of successful research projects. In just a decade, these FANRP-based studies have resulted in an impressive body of research publications. Findings from the research projects have informed public debate on a wide range of issues on the various food and nutrition assistance programs, such as gauging the effectiveness of program targeting and delivery, program effects on the lives of needy Americans, and program dynamics and administration. FANRP has expanded understanding on other policy-relevant topics such as the programs' linkages with the economy, the impacts of welfare reform, the causes and consequences of childhood obesity, and the development of new dietary references. FANRP is the national leader of Federal research on food security in the United States and has played a leading role in research on the impacts of income volatility on food assistance.

While much has been accomplished, there is still much work to do. For example, FANRP's review of food and nutrition assistance research concluded that the effects of food and nutrition assistance programs on nutrition and health outcomes of participants are still largely uncertain. In some cases, program operations

changed substantially after most of the existing research was completed. In other cases, earlier research may have been based on outdated assessment methods. FANRP has begun to address these limitations by:

- 1) funding research that has contributed to the development of several new dietary reference standards, based on the latest scientific knowledge, that can be used in assessing and monitoring the diets and health of program participants as well as nonparticipants
- 2) establishing baselines from which to monitor the nutritional and health characteristics of Americans over time, focusing on the low-income population.

As new food and nutrition assistance policy issues continue to emerge, FANRP is laying the groundwork for future research and evaluations. Because FANRP recognizes that evaluating new issues is complicated by the difficulties and cost of collecting timely, representative data, we have made data development a major priority. Investments in new and ongoing data collections will provide the critical foundation for addressing emerging food and nutrition assistance issues in a timely manner. Adding a food and nutrition assistance dimension to large national surveys has proven to be one of our most cost-effective investments in expanding research capital. FANRP's annual identification of priority areas

of research makes certain that future projects will be topical and relevant.

Building on its successful first decade, FANRP will use its strong research base to provide scientifically rigorous and objective studies and evaluations. As in the past, FANRP studies will enhance understanding and help to shape the public debate on food and nutrition assistance programs and policies. The findings from all FANRP research will continue to be publicly available, widely disseminated, and transparent. By focusing on today's problems while addressing tomorrow's issues, FANRP will help ensure a healthy, well-nourished America.