

# American Social Welfare Policy: A Pluralist Approach

## Chapter 17

### The Politics of Food Policy and Rural Life

# The Contradictions of American Food Policy

- Rates for both obesity & overweight are higher in lower socioeconomic groups
- The impact of obesity on America's healthcare system is also growing

# Hunger in the United States

- High food security households
- Marginal food security households
- Low food security households
- Very low food security households
- Cheap and plentiful food is an American tradition

# Governmental Food Programs

- SNAP (Formerly Called Food Stamps): A Description of the Program
- SNAP: Who Is in the Program, and What Does It Cost?
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

# Governmental Food Programs

- Other Food Programs
  - Snacks available in after-school programs
    - Through the NSLP and the CACFP, and The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004
- Have the Food Programs Worked?
  - Only about half of those eligible receive WIC benefits, but it saves & improves lives

**TABLE 17.1** U.S. Maximum Monthly SNAP Allotments, October 2011 to September 2012

Household Size	Maximum Allotment Level (48 states and DC)
1	\$200
2	\$367
3	\$526
4	\$668
5	\$793
6	\$952
7	\$1,052
8	\$1,202
Each additional person	+\$150

## Assets and Income

Calculating eligibility: Households may have no more than \$2,000 in countable resources, such as a bank account (\$3,000 if at least one person in the household is age 60 or older, or is disabled). Certain resources are not counted.

The gross monthly income of most households must be 130 percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines. For example, gross income includes all cash payments to the household, with a few exceptions. The gross income standard requirement is waived if an elderly or disabled person is part of the household.

The net monthly income must be 100 percent or less of federal poverty guidelines. Net income is figured by adding all of a household's gross income, and then taking a number of approved deductions for child care, some shelter costs and other expenses. Households with an elderly or disabled member are subject to the net income test, but can include other deductions such as medical costs. If the elderly or disabled are in a separate household, they are subject to the gross monthly income at 165 percent of the poverty level.

Countable assets include bank accounts, certificates of deposits, investments, and valuable artwork, antiques, and other valuables.

Countable assets do not include:

- Homesteaded property that the claimant intends to return to if they are in a nursing home, or property occupied by a spouse, siblings, minor child, or disabled child of any age.
- Personal effects and household goods up to \$2,000.
- As of October 2008, all education and retirement savings accounts are not included as countable assets.
- One automobile of unlimited value if used for employment (long distance travel, not daily commute), medical purposes, or as the family home. The SNAP program currently exempts any vehicle whose equity value is less than \$1,500. For other vehicles, SNAP rules count either the fair market value over \$4,650 or the equity value, whichever is greater. Some states use their TANF rules to determine vehicle eligibility, so these federal rules can vary from state to state.

**FIGURE 17.1** SNAP Eligibility and Benefit Guidelines, 2010

Countable income does not include:

- Allowed deductions such as a 20 percent deduction from earned income; a standard deduction of \$141 for households with one to three members (higher for some larger households), and a dependent care deduction when needed for work, training, or education. As of October 1, 2009, there is no longer a cap restricting the amount of deductions claimed for each dependent.
- Medical expenses for elderly or disabled members that are more than \$35 for the month if they are not paid by insurance or someone else.
- Legally owed child support payments.
- Shelter costs for homeless households of \$143 (some states only).
- Excess shelter costs that are more than half of the household's income after the other deductions. Allowable costs include the cost of fuel to heat and cook with, electricity, water, telephone, rent or mortgage payments, household insurance, and taxes on the home. (Some states allow a set amount for utility costs instead of actual costs.) The amount of the shelter deduction cannot be more than \$459 unless one person in the household is elderly or disabled.

### Legal Immigrants and Rules of Work

A person must be a U.S. citizen, a member of a small group of certain non-citizens, or an eligible non-citizen to qualify for food stamps.

### Citizenship/Alien Status

- The 2002/2008 Farm Bill restores SNAP eligibility to most legal immigrants that have lived in the country for 5 years; or are receiving disability related assistance or benefits, regardless of entry date; or are children regardless of entry date.
- Certain non-citizens such as those admitted for humanitarian reasons and those admitted for permanent residence are also eligible for the program. Eligible household members can receive SNAP benefits even if there are other members of the household that are not eligible.

- Non-citizens that are in the U.S. temporarily, such as students, are not eligible.
- A number of states have their own programs to provide benefits to immigrants who do not meet the regular SNAP eligibility requirements.

### Work

With some exceptions, able-bodied, non-disabled adults must register for work, accept suitable employment, and take part in an employment and training program to which they are referred by the SNAP office. Failure to comply with these requirements can result in disqualification from the program. In addition, able-bodied adults between 18 and 49 who do not have any dependent children can receive SNAP benefits only for 3 months in a 36 month period unless they work or participate in a workfare or employment and training program other than job search or are participating in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation program. Between April 1, 2009 and September 30,

2010, the ARRA Act suspended this time limitation for non-disabled persons without dependents.

### Benefits

An individual household's SNAP benefit amount is adjusted according to the Thrifty Food Plan based on household location, and is equal to the maximum allotment for that household's size, less 30 percent of the household's net income. Households with no countable income receive the maximum allotment. The 2008 Farm Bill increased minimum monthly benefits for one and two person households to 8% of the maximum benefit for a one person household. The average monthly benefit was \$287 per household in FY2010.

*Source: E. Eslami, K. Filion & M. Strayer, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2010, Nutrition Assistance Program Report no. SNAP-11-CHAR (September 2011), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/2010Characteristics.pdf>.*

**FIGURE 17.1** (Continued)

**TABLE 17.2** SNAP Statistics, Selected Years, 1975–2011 (participants and cost figures in millions)

Year	Total Cost of SNAP	Number of Participants	Percentage of Population Using SNAP	Average Monthly Benefits per Person
1975	\$ 4,624	16.3	7.6	\$21.40
1978	5,573	14.4	6.5	26.80
1981	11,812	20.6	9.0	39.50
1984	13,275	20.9	8.8	42.70
1987	13,535	19.1	7.8	45.80
1990	17,686	20.0	8.0	59.00
1991	21,012	22.6	9.0	63.90
1993	23,653	26.9	9.3	67.97
1995	20,500	26.7	8.9	71.50
2000	16,956	17.1	6.0	72.77
2003	23,880	21.2	7.5	83.93
2007	33,204	26.5	8.8	95.63
2009	53,632	33.4	11.0*	125.31
2011	75,674	44.7	14.0*	133.85

\*N.B. These percentages are estimates and represent FY2009 and FY2011.

**TABLE 17.3** Gross and Net Income Eligibility Standards for the Continental United States, October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income (130 percent of poverty)	Net Monthly Income (100 percent of poverty)
1	\$1,180	\$908
2	1,594	1,226
3	2,008	1,545
4	2,422	1,863
5	2,836	2,181
6	3,249	2,500
7	3,663	2,818
8	4,077	3,136
Each additional member	+414	+319

\*Eligibility levels are higher for Alaska and Hawaii.

**TABLE 17.4** WIC Income Eligibility Guidelines, Effective from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 (48 contiguous states, DC, Guam, and territories)

Household Size	Annually	Monthly	Twice-Monthly	Bi-Weekly	Weekly
1	\$20,665	\$1,723	\$862	\$795	\$398
2	27,991	2,333	1,167	1,077	539
3	35,317	2,944	1,472	1,359	680
4	42,643	3,554	1,777	1,641	821
5	49,969	4,165	2,083	1,922	961
6	57,295	4,775	2,388	2,204	1,102
7	64,621	5,386	2,693	2,486	1,243
8	71,947	5,996	2,998	2,768	1,384
Each additional member	+\$7,326	+611	+306	+282	+141

\*Eligibility levels are higher for Alaska and Hawaii.

## National School Lunch Program

The NSLP program provides lunches and the opportunity to practice skills learned in classroom nutrition education. NSLP is a federally assisted meal program that served 31 million children in around 100,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions in 2011.<sup>1</sup>

School districts and independent schools that take part in the lunch program receive cash subsidies and donated commodities from the USDA for each meal they serve. Free students are not charged, and reduced price students are not charged more than 40 cents for lunch. In return, educational institutions must serve lunches that meet federal requirements. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of poverty pay full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent. Local school food authorities set their own prices for full-price meals, but most operate their meal services as a nonprofit organization. Since the program began, more than 224 billion lunches have been served. The cost of the National School Lunch Program in FY2011 was \$11.1 billion.<sup>2</sup>

## School Breakfast Program (SBP)

The SBP provides breakfasts to promote learning readiness and healthy eating behaviors. In FY2010, 11.6 million children in more than 88,000 schools and institutions used the SBP every day, a federal program that provides states with cash assistance for nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential child care institutions. The program is administered at the federal level by the USDA through its FNS. State education agencies and local school food authorities administer the program at the local level.<sup>3</sup>

Breakfasts served as part of the SBP must meet the American Dietary Guideline recommendations, and provide one-fourth or more of the daily recommended levels for key nutrients that children need. They are also required to provide no more than 30 percent of calories from fat and less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat.<sup>4</sup> Research shows that children who have school breakfasts eat more fruits, drink more milk, and consume less saturated fat than those who don't eat breakfast or have breakfast at home.

**FIGURE 17.2** Other USDA Food Programs

Children whose families meet income criteria may receive free or reduced-price breakfasts. Those from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Children whose family income is between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. Those from families over 185 percent of poverty pay a full price, although their meals are still subsidized to some extent. Schools may not charge more than 30 cents for a reduced-price breakfast. Schools set their own prices for breakfasts served to students who pay the full meal price, although they must operate their meal services as a nonprofit organization. The cost of the SBP program in 2010 was \$2.9 billion.<sup>5</sup>

### Special Milk Program (SMP)

The SMP offers milk to children who lack access to other meal programs. The program provides milk to children in schools, some camps, and child care institutions that do not participate in other federal child nutrition meal service programs. Schools or institutions are limited to providing pasteurized liquid milk that is either fat free or low fat (1%). Milks must meet state and local standards, and contain FDA approved amounts of vitamins A and D.<sup>6</sup>

When local school officials offer free milk under the program, any child from a family that meets income guidelines for free meals and milk is eligible.

In 2011, 3,848 schools and residential care institutions, 782 summer camps, and 527 non-residential care institutions participated in the SMP. Each child's family must apply annually for free milk eligibility. In FY2011, over 66 million half pints of milk were served, which represents a significant reduction since 2007. This is due to the increased development of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The cost of the Special Milk Program in FY2011 was \$12.3 million.<sup>7</sup>

### Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The SFSP serves meals and snacks to low-income children during long school vacations. The FNS administers the SFSP at the federal level; state education agencies administer the program in most states, although in some areas the state health or social service department or an FNS regional office may be designated. Locally, SFSP is run by approved sponsors, including school districts, local government agencies, camps, or private nonprofit organizations. Sponsors provide free meals to a group of children at a central site, such as a school or a community center. States approve SFSP meal sites as open, enrolled, or camp sites. Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal

poverty level, making the children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Children 18 and younger may receive free meals and snacks through SFSP. Meals and snacks are also available to persons with disabilities who are over age 18 but who participate in school programs for mentally or physically disabled people. In 2009, more than 2.2 million children were served at almost 35,000 sites. Congress provided the Summer Food Service Program with \$357.9 million in funding in FY2009.<sup>8</sup>

### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP is a key source of support for serving nutritious meals and snacks in child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, after-school programs, shelters, and adult day care centers. The program provides reimbursement for food and meal preparation costs, ongoing training in the nutritional needs of children, and onsite assistance in meeting the program's strong nutritional requirements. In FY2011, 1.9 billion meals were served, and the cost of the program totaled \$2.7 billion.<sup>9</sup>

Current program eligibility requirements provide meals to persons who fall into one of the following categories:

- Children at or under the age of 12
- Children of migrant workers at or under the age of 15
- Persons of any age who have a disability (as determined by the state) and are enrolled in an eligible institution serving participants who are mainly 18 years or under
- Persons aged 18 years or under in emergency shelters
- Persons aged 18 years or under enrolled in approved "at-risk" after-school care programs
- Functionally impaired adults or adults aged 60 or over who are enrolled in adult day care centers

Moreover, institutions must determine income eligibility categories for each participant in order to determine if they receive free or reduced cost meals. Participants in households whose income is at or below 130 percent of the poverty line will receive free meals, and participants in households between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line will received reduced cost meals. Children whose families have already been approved for programs such as SNAP and TANF are automatically eligible for free meals.<sup>10</sup>

FIGURE 17.2 (Continued)

## The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP was first authorized to distribute surplus commodities in 1981. The 1988 Hunger Prevention Act required USDA to purchase additional commodities for low-income households and local emergency feeding organizations. The amount of food states receive is dependent on their number of unemployed and number of persons living below the poverty line, thus ensuring that states who have a larger low-income proportion of their population receive more assistance.

TEFAP provides USDA commodities to states who distribute the food through local emergency food providers. Available foods vary depending on market conditions. Each state determines the criteria for household eligibility, and may adjust income criteria based on need in the state. Eligibility criteria may include participation in existing food or other assistance programs for which income is considered as a basis for eligibility. In 2012, Congress provided \$308.25 million for TEFAP.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: National School Lunch Program*, August 2012. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: National School Lunch Program*, August 2012. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: The School Breakfast Program*, October 2011. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/AboutBFast/SBPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: The School Breakfast Program*, October 2011. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/AboutBFast/SBPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: The School Breakfast Program*, October 2011. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/AboutBFast/SBPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: Special Milk Program*, August 2012. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/milk/AboutMilk/SMPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Program Fact Sheet: Special Milk Program*, August 2012. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/milk/AboutMilk/SMPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Frequently Asked Questions: Summer Food Service Program*, Last Modified April 11, 2012. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/FAQs.html>.

<sup>9</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "The Food Assistance Landscape: FY2011 Annual Report," Economic Information Bulletin, no. 93 (March 2012) Retrieved August 2012 from [http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/376910/eib93\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/376910/eib93_1_.pdf).

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, "The Food Assistance Landscape: FY2011 Annual Report," Economic Information Bulletin, no. 93 (March 2012) Retrieved August 2012 from [http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/376910/eib93\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/376910/eib93_1_.pdf).

<sup>11</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, *Child and Adult Care Food Program*, Last Modified February 21, 2012. Retrieved August 2012 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/CACFP/aboutcacfp.htm>.

# Farming in the United States

- Governmental Farm Policies
  - Farm Security and Rural Investment Act
- Biofuels, Fracking, and Farming
- The Face of U.S. Farming
  - The changing landscape of U.S. farming
  - Farm incomes
  - The graying of U.S. farms

# Farming in the United States

- Consolidation and control
- Women and farming
- Rural health and food quality
- Farm subsidies
- Efficiency

# Farmworkers

- Demographics
- Education and language
- Labor and conditions
- Wages and poverty
- Use of social services
- Housing

# Issues in American Farming

- The Corporatization of American Farming
  - Leads to closed markets
    - Where prices are fixed not by open, competitive bidding but by negotiated contracts
- Genetic Engineering
  - Example: Corn
- Global Trade

# Issues in American Farming

- Food Safety
- Local Selling
- Organic Farming
  - The fastest growing sector of American agriculture
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Climate Change

## Facts About Corporate Agriculture

- By 2007, the largest 12 percent of farms generated 84 percent of all U.S. farm output.
- In 2005, the top 10 commercial seed companies controlled more than 50 percent of the world's commercial seed sales. This was an increase of 17 percent in only two years.
- The top 10 biotech companies control 75 percent of world biotech crop sales. This is also an increase of 50 percent in two years.
- Among pesticides manufacturers, the top six companies account for 70 percent of the global market.
- The top ten pesticide manufacturers control 84 percent of the pesticide market.
- Among agrochemical companies, the top ten control 80 percent of global sales.
- In the vegetable seed market, one corporation dominates: Monsanto. It controls 31 percent

of bean seed sales, 38 percent of cucumber seed sales, 34 percent of hot pepper sales, 29 percent of sweet pepper sales, 23 percent of tomato seed sales, and 25 percent of onion seeds.

- As of 2004, Monsanto accounted for 88 percent of the total land acreage producing genetically modified (GM) seeds: 91 percent of GM soybean lands; 97 percent of GM maize lands; 63.5 percent of GM cotton lands; and 59 percent of canola.
- Among grocery retailers, one company, Wal-Mart, is four times the size of its nearest competitor in terms of food sales, and bigger than the combined sales of the next four leading retailers.

Sources: The International Forum on Globalization, "The Rise and Predictable Fall of Globalized Industrial Agriculture", 2007. Retrieved July 2008 from <http://www.ifg.org/pdf/ag%20report.pdf>; R.A. Hoppe & D.E. Banker, "Structure and Finances of U.S. Farms: Family Farm Report, 2010 Edition", Economic Information Bulletin, no. 66 (July 2010), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Services. Retrieved from [http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/184479/eib66\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/184479/eib66_1_.pdf)

**FIGURE 17.3** Facts About Corporate Agriculture

## What the Food Labels Mean

- *Organic:* Regulated by the USDA, the National Organic Standards assure that food products contain at least 95 percent organic ingredients and that no synthetic growth hormones, antibiotics, pesticides, biotechnology, synthetic ingredients, or irradiation were used in production or processing. Organic labels can be found on produce, dairy, meat, processed foods, condiments, and beverages.
- *Fair trade:* Fair trade standards are enforced by the Fairtrade Labeling Organization International (FLO). Fair trade products are produced in accordance with several guidelines. For example, workers must receive decent wages; and housing, health, and safety standards must be adhered to. Workers must have the right to join trade unions, and child or forced labor is prohibited. Crops must also be grown, produced, and processed in an environmentally friendly manner. Fair trade standards have been established for coffee, tea, cocoa, honey, bananas, orange juice, and sugar. Some producers have established alternative fair trade-type labels. Most are little more than marketing pitches.
- *Free farmed:* This certification program was created by the American Humane Association in 2000 to ensure that animals raised for dairy, poultry, and beef products are treated in a humane manner. These guidelines ensure that livestock have access to clean and sufficient food and water as well as a safe, healthy living environment.
- *Feel good buying (not certified):* Some meat and dairy products are now being marketed as hormone free. In dairy products, this means that the farmer has chosen not to inject their cows with the artificial growth hormone called rBGH. On beef products, this label indicates that the animal was raised without growth hormones or steroids.

**FIGURE 17.4** What the Food Labels Mean?

- *Raised without antibiotics:* This meat and dairy label indicates that the animal was raised entirely without the use of low-level and/or therapeutic doses of antibiotics.
- *GE free, non-GMO:* Food products that use GE Free or Non-GMO labels are regulated by individual companies, distributors, or processors. Often, the companies require certification or affidavits from farmers that the materials were not genetically modified in any way.
- *All natural:* There is no universal standard or definition for this claim.

- *Free range:* This label claims that a meat or poultry product (including eggs) comes from an animal that was raised in the open air or was allowed to roam. However, the regulations do not specify how much of each day animals must have access to fresh air. In poultry, the USDA considers five minutes adequate exposure to be considered free range. In beef, the use of the label is completely unregulated or standardized.

*Source:* Adapted from Farm Aid, Inc., "Issues in Farming," 2004. Retrieved November 2004 from [www.farmaid.org/site/PageServer?pagename=info\\_facts\\_global](http://www.farmaid.org/site/PageServer?pagename=info_facts_global). Used by permission.

# Conclusion

- The production, distribution, and consumption of food:
  - Historically rooted in political economy
- SNAP