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At a Glance:

Domestic Food Assistance

During the first 6 months of fiscal 1997 (October 1996-March 1997), USDA's spending on domestic food-assistance programs declined to \$18.9 billion, almost 4 percent less than in the same period in fiscal

1996. If this trend continues for the entire year, it will mark the first decline in annual food-assistance program expenditures since fiscal 1982. In fiscal 1996, total food-assis-

tance expenditures grew about 1 percent over fiscal 1995.

Three programs—the Food Stamp Program, the National School Lunch Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for

Table 1
Food-Assistance Program Outlays Decline in First Half of Fiscal 1997

Program	Fiscal 1996 expenditures		First half of fiscal 1997 expenditures ¹	
	Total	October-March	October-March	Change from half first of fiscal 1996
	Million dollars		Million dollars	Percent
Food stamp-related programs	25,473.9	12,873.8	11,813.4	-8.2
Food stamp program ²	24,325.8	12,299.7	11,223.9	-8.7
Nutrition assistance programs ²	1,148.1	574.1	589.5	2.7
Child nutrition programs ³	8,372.7	4,777.8	4,907.4	2.7
National school lunch	5,340.9	3,287.3	3,355.1	2.1
School breakfast	1,118.4	666.1	709.2	6.5
Child and adult care ²	1,533.8	775.6	796.9	2.7
Summer food service ²	249.7	4.1	NA	NA
Special milk	16.8	8.9	9.2	3.4
Supplemental food programs	3,784.5	1,820.7	1,970.2	8.2
WIC ²	3,685.2	1,773.5	1,917.8	8.1
Commodity supplemental food program ²	99.3	47.3	52.4	10.8
Food donation programs	307.8	151.6	196.2	29.4
Food distribution on Indian reservations ²	70.2	33.9	33.9	0
Nutrition program for the elderly	145.6	71.7	74.3	3.6
Disaster feeding	.7	.4	.2	-50.0
TEFAP ⁴	44.9	16.6	83.4	402.4
Charitable institutions and summer camps	11.0	8.7	4.3	-50.6
Soup kitchens and food banks ⁴	35.3	20.4	0	-100.0
All programs ⁵	38,044.4	19,676.7	18,938.3	-3.8

Notes: NA = Not applicable. ¹Data are reported as of March 1997 and are subject to revision. ²Includes administrative expenses.

³Total includes the Federal share of State administration expenses. ⁴In fiscal 1997, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Food Donation Programs to Soup Kitchens and Food Banks were combined into a single program. They are reported under TEFAP.

⁵Total includes Federal food program administration expenses. Source: USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—accounted for 87 percent of total food-assistance expenditures.

Most of the decrease in total food-assistance outlays during the first half of fiscal 1997 was due to the contraction of the Food Stamp Program. The program's outlays of \$11.2 billion during the first half of fiscal 1997 were 9 percent lower than the same period the previous year. This decrease was largely the result of the continuing decline in program participation, which fell from an average 25.9 million people per month during the first 6 months of fiscal 1996 to 23.8 million during the first half of fiscal 1997. Some of this decline in participation can be

attributed to the Nation's favorable economic conditions and low unemployment rate. However, the decrease in the number of Food Stamp Program participants probably was due also in part to the initial effects of the welfare reform legislation passed in 1996. The welfare reform law made most legal immigrants ineligible for food stamps by September 1997, and many of these may have been leaving the program gradually since the passage of the law in August 1996. Newly imposed time limits on benefit receipt by unemployed adults without children also have lessened the rolls in the first half of fiscal 1997.

Expenditures for the National School Lunch Program totaled \$3.4 billion in the first half of fiscal 1997, a 2-percent increase over the same period in fiscal 1996. WIC increased 8 percent to \$1.9 billion during the first half of fiscal 1997, reflecting a 5-percent increase in participation and a 4-percent increase in average per-person benefits.

Overall expenditures for food donation programs during the first half of fiscal 1996 increased 29 percent. However, there was a great deal of variation in the change in outlays for the individual programs. As a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the Food Donation Program to Soup Kitchens and Food Banks and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) were combined into a single program. For reporting purposes, fiscal 1997 expenditures for this new program are reported under TEFAP.

—For more information, contact Victor Oliveira at (202) 694-5434. ■