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Domestic Food Assistance ... At a Glance

The Federal Government spent a record \$27.1 billion on food assistance benefits in fiscal 1991, a 16.9-percent increase over 1990 (see table 2). The increase was almost entirely due to higher participation (up by 2.6 million) and costs (up by \$3.1 billion) of the Food Stamp Program.

Because the size and timing of the increase varied considerably, no single factor accounts for the growth. The most important factors include:

- An expansion of medicaid eligibility, bringing more people into contact with the welfare system and easing their way into the Food Stamp Program,
- A weakening economy during the recession,
- An increase in the number of legalized immigrants under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Other programs have increased, but not as fast. WIC program costs increased by 8.3 percent, and par-

ticipation rose by 8 percent. More free and reduced-price lunches accounted for a large part of the 8.7-percent increase in School Lunch Program costs. Costs for the School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are also sensitive to the status of the economy. When the economy slows, more children are expected to participate in subsidized meal programs at schools. The Child and Adult Food Care Program also continues to expand, in terms of both participants and program costs.

Increases in Food Stamp and WIC Benefits Lead Food Assistance Spending to Record Levels in Fiscal 1991¹

Programs	1990	1991	FY 1990 quarters*				FY 1991 quarters*			
			I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
<i>Million dollars</i>										
Family food:										
Food stamps	14,205	17,348	3,507	3,551	3,567	3,580	4,100	4,316	4,427	4,505
Puerto Rico ²	940	967	235	235	235	235	242	242	242	242
Food distribution:										
Indian reservations	51	51	12	13	13	13	12	13	13	13
Schools ³	620	687	193	242	96	87	215	263	107	101
Other ⁴	182	176	45	51	43	43	46	43	44	43
TEFAP ⁵	209	212	51	56	56	45	43	42	76	51
Cash-in-lieu of commodities⁶	156	156	38	39	40	39	38	38	41	39
Child nutrition:⁷										
School lunch	3,211	3,489	957	1,044	773	436	1,065	1,078	876	469
School breakfast	589	677	171	188	145	85	203	203	172	99
Child care and summer food	865	996	172	188	217	288	202	212	252	330
Special milk	19	20	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4
WIC⁸	2,116	2,293	500	548	518	549	520	560	581	635
Total*	23,163	27,072	5,887	6,163	5,708	5,405	6,693	7,016	6,839	6,524

*Data may not add to annual total due to rounding.

¹Administrative costs are excluded unless noted. ²Puerto Rico transferred from the Food Stamp Program to a substitute Nutrition Assistance Program on July 1, 1982. Data represent appropriated amounts. ³National School Lunch, Child Care Food, and Summer Food Service Programs, and schools receiving only commodities. ⁴Commodity Supplemental Food Program and Elderly Feeding Pilot Projects, excluding bonus commodities and donations to charitable institutions. ⁵The Emergency Food Assistance Program. ⁶Child nutrition programs and Nutrition Program for the Elderly. ⁷Cash expenditures. ⁸Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children—includes administrative costs. Source: Food and Nutrition Service, Program Information Division.