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Recent Trends in Domestic Food Programs

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Participation and program costs discussed in this article compare the second quarter of fiscal year 1990 (January-March) with the same period in 1989. Recent data are reported as of June 1990 and are subject to revision.

Federal expenditures for the domestic food assistance programs for the second quarter of fiscal 1990 increased 14 percent over the same period in 1989—from \$5.4 billion to \$6.1 billion (table 1). The higher outlays primarily reflect cost-of-living increases in most programs.

Participation increased in the Food Stamp and the Women, Infants, and Children programs. Food distribution costs declined from a year earlier because fewer bonus commodities were available for distribution, particularly to schools.

Food Stamp Program

Average participation in the Food Stamp Program rose 5 percent, from 18.9 million to 19.9 million persons. Benefit costs and total program expenditures climbed 19 percent over 1989, with benefits totaling \$3.5 billion and total expenditures reaching \$3.9 billion.

Average monthly per-person benefits for food stamps, to help low-income households purchase a nutritionally adequate diet, increased from \$52.09 to \$58.97. These benefits, which are adjusted annually, are the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) for a family of four. In addition, maximum allotments in FY 1989 were 100.65 percent of the



A greater number of working mothers are using child care facilities, increasing the number of meals sold under the Child Care Food Program.

TFP, and allotments this fiscal year are 102.05 percent of TFP, as mandated by the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988.

Child Nutrition Programs

An average of 24.1 million children participated in the National School Lunch Program each school day during the second quarter of fiscal 1990, about the same level of participation as the previous year. Eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, which provide approximately one-third of the recommended dietary allowances for school age children, is determined by household size and income. Total lunches served during the quarter increased from 1.25 billion to 1.31 billion. This increase was due primarily to the greater number of school days in 1990. Meals served free

or at reduced prices increased from 47.3 percent to 48.2 percent of all lunches served.

Schools receive commodities and cash payments for every lunch served. In school year 1990, they received 13.25 cents worth of commodities per meal, compared to 12.25 cents in 1989. Schools also receive bonus commodities. During the January-March quarter of 1990, \$56.2 million worth of bonus commodities were distributed to schools, compared with \$101.1 million a year earlier. This 44-percent drop was largely due to reduced Government surplus stocks.

The School Breakfast Program provided subsidized breakfasts to an average

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Table 1. Benefit Costs of USDA Food Assistance Programs Have Increased During 1990¹

Programs	1988	1989	FY 1989 Quarters ²				FY 1990 Quarters ²	
			I	II	III	IV	I	II
Million dollars								
Family food								
Food stamps	11,149	11,676	2,902	2,954	2,925	2,895	3,488	3,527
Puerto Rico ³	883	912	228	228	228	228	235	235
Food distribution								
Indian reservations	47	52	12	14	13	13	12	13
Schools ⁴	830	771	272	298	120	82	191	249
Other ⁵	220	209	58	56	52	43	46	50
TEFAP ⁶	593	239	44	61	74	60	51	56
Cash-in-lieu of commodities ⁷	152	152	37	38	39	38	38	39
Child nutrition ⁸								
School lunch	2,908	3,006	904	932	772	398	959	1,041
School breakfast	474	512	151	155	134	72	173	189
Child care and summer food	648	744	148	157	187	252	172	187
Special milk	19	18	5	5	5	4	5	5
WIC ⁹	1,795	1,907	459	466	472	510	501	542
Total ¹⁰	19,718	20,197	5,220	5,363	5,020	4,594	5,871	6,135

¹Fiscal years, administrative costs are excluded unless noted. ²Preliminary, quarterly data may not add to annual total due to rounding. ³Puerto Rico Nutrition Assistance Program and the Northern Marianas block grant. ⁴National School Lunch, Child Care Food, and Summer Food Service Programs, and schools receiving only commodities. ⁵Commodity Supplemental Food Program and Elderly Feeding Pilot Projects, excluding bonus commodities, and donations to charitable institutions. ⁶Temporary Emergency Food Assistant Program. ⁷Child nutrition programs and Nutrition Program for the Elderly. ⁸Cash expenditures. ⁹Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children—includes administrative costs. ¹⁰May not add due to rounding.

Source: Food and Nutrition Service, Program Information Division.

of 4.08 million children during the second quarter of fiscal 1990, an 8-percent increase over the previous year. Total breakfasts served during the quarter increased from 201 million to 226 million. Free and reduced-price meals dropped from 86.9 percent to 86.5 percent of all breakfasts served. Total

expenditures for the program rose from \$154.9 million to \$188.6 million, a 22-percent increase.

Daily attendance at facilities offering the Child Care Food Program rose from an average of 1.4 million to 1.5 million children. The number of day care homes and child care centers in the program

increased from 147,000 to 150,000. Total meals served increased from 223.3 million to 251.5 million. The recently introduced adult care component of this program has increased significantly, from 752,000 adult meals served in second fiscal quarter 1989, to 1.9 million in

the same period in 1990. Total quarterly costs for the Child and Adult Care Food Program increased 19 percent, from \$176.7 million in 1989, to \$210.8 million in 1990.

Quarterly quantities of half-pints of milk served under the Special Milk Program at schools, child care institutions, and summer camps rose to 52.3 million in 1990, compared to 51.7 million in 1989. Total quarterly program costs were \$5.5 million in 1990 and \$5.0 million in 1989.

Supplemental Food Programs

Participation in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) reached a monthly average of 4.57 million persons in 1990, a new program high. This compares with 4.05 million a year earlier. WIC participation increased in all categories, with children having the greatest growth in average number of participants, from 1.89 million to 2.12 million.

Short Stocks Limit Distribution

Due to declining Government surplus stocks, cheese, rice, and nonfat dry milk are no longer distributed to the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program. Commodities available for limited distribution are flour, cornmeal, honey, and butter. In addition, canned pork, peanut butter, canned dry beans, and raisins are made available to households under the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988.

Program costs grew from \$465.9 million to \$542.2 million, a 16-percent increase.

From second fiscal quarter 1989 to second fiscal quarter 1990, costs of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program including women, infants, children, and the elderly increased 41 percent, from \$12.4 million to \$17.5 million. Like WIC, participation rose in all categories, but the greatest increase was in the num-

ber of elderly served, which increased 27 percent. Elderly participants now constitute 39 percent of the program.

Food Distribution Programs

Cost of food donations to persons on Indian Reservations and the Marshall Islands fell from \$13.6 million to \$13.1 million. Average participation dropped from 143,900 in 1989 to 142,900 in 1990.

Surplus food valued at \$27.4 million was distributed to charitable institutions in 1990, 27 percent less than the \$37.4 worth of commodities distributed in 1989.

USDA provides food and cash-in-lieu of commodities to the Nutrition Program for the Elderly, which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. In the second quarter of fiscal 1990, USDA provided a total of \$35.2 million worth of food and cash, including \$723,000 worth of bonus commodities. The program served an average of 922,000 meals daily in 1990, compared with 914,000 in 1989. ■