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Recent Trends in Domestic Food Programs

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Participation and program costs discussed in this article compare the October-December quarter of 1987 (the first quarter of fiscal year 1988) with the same period in 1986. Data for the most recent quarters are preliminary.

Federal expenditures for food and nutrition assistance to needy persons increased 3.6 percent, from \$4.98 billion in the first quarter of fiscal 1987 to \$5.16 billion in fiscal 1988 (table 1). Costs of virtually all major programs increased except the food distribution programs, which distributed less food to schools and the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program. Much of the added costs were due to higher benefit levels reflecting inflation's effect on food assistance.

Food Stamp Program

An average of 18.4 million persons participated in the Food Stamp Program monthly during October-December 1987, a 4.2-percent decline from a year earlier (table 2). However, total program costs increased 5.4 percent as benefits and administrative and other expenses rose.

Federal expenditures for benefits climbed \$140 million to \$2.79 billion in fiscal 1988. Average monthly benefits per person increased by \$4.34 to \$50.34, reflecting the annual cost-of-living adjustment. Administrative expenses rose by over \$9 million to \$258 million, while

other costs also increased from \$38 million to \$47 million. Total program expenditures rose from \$2.93 billion to \$3.09 billion.

First quarter fiscal 1988 costs for the Puerto Rico and Marianas Nutrition Assistance Programs increased from \$214 million to \$221 million because of the larger annual block grant appropriation.

Child Nutrition Programs

Participation and costs in all child nutrition programs increased in the first quarter of fiscal 1988 from a year earlier. Cash payments for these programs were \$1.15 billion, up 2.2 percent.

Average participation per school day in the National School Lunch Program rose 0.5 percent to 24.6 million children

Table 1. Benefit Costs of USDA Food Programs Rose in the First Quarter of Fiscal 1988¹

Programs	1986	1987	FY 1987 quarters ²				FY 1988 ²
			I	II	III	IV	I
<i>Million dollars</i>							
Family food							
Food stamps	10,605	10,500	2,646	2,697	2,639	2,517	2,786
Puerto Rico ³	825	856	214	214	214	214	221
Food distribution							
Indian Reservations	47	49	12	13	12	12	11
Schools ⁴	848	898	266	275	160	197	255
Other ⁵	287	214	53	54	40	67	62
TEFAP ⁶	846	846	218	210	208	210	212
Cash-in-lieu of commodities ⁷	145	145	39	39	37	30	38
Child nutrition ⁸							
School lunch	2,714	2,822	868	901	692	360	878
School breakfast	406	458	139	143	114	62	143
Child care and summer food	529	590	118	123	144	205	130
Special milk	15	15	4	4	4	4	5
WIC ⁹	1,582	1,679	406	417	421	435	427
Total ¹⁰	18,848	19,073	4,983	5,091	4,686	4,314	5,167

¹Fiscal years, administrative costs are excluded unless noted. ²Preliminary, quarterly data may not add to annual total due to rounding. ³Puerto Rico transferred from Food Stamp Program to substitute Nutrition Assistance Program July 1, 1982—represents appropriated amounts. Includes block grant for Northern Marianas. ⁴National School Lunch, Child Care Food, and Summer Food Service Programs, and schools receiving only commodities. ⁵Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Nutrition Program for the Elderly, and donations to charitable institutions. ⁶Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, initiated December 1981. 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: Monthly data from the Food and Nutrition Service.

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in 1988. The number of free lunches declined slightly from 10.2 million to 9.9 million and reduced price lunches decreased from 1.66 million to 1.64 million. Paid lunches rose to 12.9 million in the first quarter of fiscal 1988, an increase of 3.5 percent. The relative proportions of lunches served free and at reduced price fell from 41.7 and 6.8 percent to 40.7 and 6.7, respectively. Paid lunches increased from 50.8 to 52.6 percent. Cash payments to the school lunch program rose 0.7 percent to \$875 million.

Participating schools received commodities worth 12 cents per meal in fiscal 1988, compared to 11.25 cents in fiscal 1987. Commodities valued at \$147.3 million were distributed, up 6.2 percent. Schools also received bonus commodities from Government surplus stocks. Bonus commodities worth \$106.1 million were distributed during the period, a 15.2-percent decline from the same quarter of fiscal 1987.

Participation in the School Breakfast Program increased 1.4 percent to 3.73 million in the first quarter of fiscal 1988. The number of free breakfasts rose from 3.065 million to 3.074 million, while reduced price breakfasts rose from 178,000 to 187,000 and paid breakfasts, from 434,000 to 467,000 per day. Approximately 81.9 percent of all breakfasts were served free in the first quarter of 1988, down from 83.3 percent. Total program costs amounted to \$145 million in the October-December quarter, a 4.6-percent increase from a year earlier.

Table 2. Elderly People Accounted for the Increase in CSFP Participation

Program	Average participation October-December ¹	
	1986	1987
<i>Millions</i>		
Food Stamp Program	19.2	18.4
School Lunch Program	24.3	24.6
School Breakfast Program	3.7	3.7
WIC	3.4	3.5
Child Care Food Program	1.2	1.2
<i>Thousands</i>		
Commodity Supplemental Food Program	175.6	211.9
Food Distribution on Indian Reservations	143.8	139.9
Nutrition Program for the Elderly	852.2	883.8

¹First quarter of 1987 and 1988 fiscal years.

The Child Care Food Program continued to grow. Average daily attendance increased from 1.18 million in December 1986 to 1.22 million in December 1987, and the number of outlets grew from 105,292 to 113,402. Most of the increase took place in private day-care homes as opposed to institutional child-care centers. The total number of meals served rose 7.3 percent to 193.3 million. Federal cash expenditures rose by \$13 million to \$131.2 million. Total program costs, including commodities

and administrative costs, climbed from \$132.9 million to \$147.2 million over the same period.

Fifty-one million half-pints of milk were served in the first quarter of fiscal 1988, a substantial 29.3-percent increase from the previous year. This increase reflects a changed regulation that makes the Special Milk Program available to kindergarten students attending split-day sessions who do not have access to other meal services in schools. Increased participation, higher payment rates, and proportionately greater amounts of free milk all contributed to raise total program costs from \$3.7 million in fiscal 1987 to \$5.0 million a year later.

Supplemental Food Program

Participation in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) averaged 3.46 million during October-December 1987, up from 3.40 million a year earlier. Approximately 31,000 more women and 47,000 more infants participated in the program than in the previous year, but 33,000 fewer children. The childrens' share of overall participation dropped from 49.0 percent to 47.5 percent. Monthly benefits in the WIC program averaged \$33.42, up from \$32.02 the previous year. Food costs totaled \$346 million, up 5.8 percent, and total program costs reached \$427.1 million, up 5.2 percent.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) provides supplemental

food packages to low-income pregnant and post-partum women, children up to age 6, and elderly people. Average participation for the program increased from 175,600 to 211,900. All of the increase was accounted for by an average of 38,400 more elderly participants. Participation by women, infants, and children actually declined from 134,800 to 132,600. The total value of entitlement food distributed through CSFP increased 16.2 percent to \$9.73 million in the first quarter of fiscal 1988.

Food Donation Programs

USDA provides food assistance to other programs to the diets of needy people. Food packages are distributed on a monthly basis to low-income families living on, or near, Indian reservations and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands. Average program participation dropped from 143,800 in fiscal 1987 to 139,900 in fiscal 1988, due in part to a Federal phase out of the program in two of the Trust Territories. Food costs, including bonus commodities, fell from \$12.2 million to \$11.5 million in the same period.

The Nutrition Program for the Elderly (NPE) is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services and receives donated foods and cash-in-lieu of commodities from USDA. Approximately 58.3 million meals were served under this program in the first quarter of fiscal 1988, compared with 55.4 million a year earlier. Total USDA expenditures for NPE were \$36.6 for the quarter, a 4.7-percent increase over \$34.9 million spent the previous year.

As one of its ongoing programs, USDA provides surplus and bonus com-

modities to charitable institutions. In the 1988 period, commodities valued at \$40.8 million were distributed to eligible institutions, such as orphanages and nursing homes not covered by other USDA programs. In comparison, \$38.2 million worth of commodities were distributed to these institutions in the first quarter of fiscal 1987.

Food costs for the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) declined from \$218.1 million in fiscal 1987 to \$211.8 million in 1988.

This program distributes surplus USDA commodities through the States to needy people throughout the country. Due to the depletion of Government surplus stocks, honey, rice, and cheese are no longer offered through this program, and dry milk will be distributed on a month by month basis. Cornmeal, flour, and butter will continue to be distributed. TEFAP is presently due to expire at the end of fiscal 1988, although legislation is pending to continue the program. ■

WIC participation averaged 3.46 million people a month during October-December 1987.

