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Recent Trends in Domestic Food Programs

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This article compares food program participation and costs for the January-March quarter of 1986 with the same 3 months of 1985. Preliminary data are reported as of May 1986 and are subject to revision. Entitlement and bonus commodities are included where applicable. Administrative costs are excluded unless noted.

Except for the Food Stamp Program (FSP), average participation in the USDA food programs either rose or remained constant during the first quarter of 1986 (table 1). The number of food stamp participants declined by about 660,500. Monthly FSP benefits averaged \$45.62 per person, compared with \$45.35 a year earlier. Federal expenditures for food stamp benefits amounted to \$2.7 billion in the first quarter of 1986 (table 2), and the Federal share of administrative costs totaled \$270.5 million.

Child Nutrition Programs

A daily average of 23.7 million students participated in the National School Lunch Program in the first quarter of this year, an increase of 0.5 percent. The average number of participants who received free and reduced-price lunches rose about 59,800 and 10,300, respectively, while the average number who paid the full price rose 64,000. During the first quarter of this year and last, free lunch recipients represented 42.6 percent of the total; reduced price, 6.7 percent; and full price, 50.6 percent.

Cash, entitlement commodities, and cash-in-lieu of commodities for the National School Lunch Program totaled \$983.6 million in the first quarter of 1986, up from \$954.1 million. In addition, schools received bonus commodities worth \$123.2



The number of half-pints of milk served under the Special Milk Program declined from 45.2 million in first-quarter 1985 to 43.1 million in the first quarter of this year.

million in the first quarter of 1985 and \$118.7 million in the same period of 1986.

The School Breakfast Program provided subsidized breakfasts to an average of 3.5 million participants per day in the first 3 months of 1986, a 1.9-percent increase from the previous year. Average participation among students receiving free and reduced-price breakfasts rose 2.1 percent, compared with 0.6 percent for those paying the full price for breakfasts. Federal expenditures rose 5.8 percent to \$123.9 million.

An average of 57.3 million meals were served under the Child Care Food Program during the first quarter of 1986, an increase of 3.3 percent from a year earlier. Approximately 78.1 percent of the meals were served free in 1986, 5.7 percent at reduced prices, and 16.2 percent at the full price. Meal costs and the value of commodities used in meal preparation increased 5.6 percent, from \$109.4 million to \$115.5 million.

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Table 1. Average Participation in USDA Food Programs

Program	Jan.- Mar. 1985	Jan.- Mar. 1986
	<i>Millions</i>	
Food Stamp Program	20.4	19.7
National School Lunch Program	23.6	23.7
School Breakfast Program	3.4	3.5
Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	3.1	3.3
Nutrition Assistance Program in Puerto Rico	1.5	NA
Child Care Food Program ¹	1.1	1.1
	<i>Thousands</i>	
Commodity Supplemental Food Program	139.2	141.0
Elderly Feeding Pilot Project	19.5	19.6
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations ²	140.0	146.3
Nutrition Program for the Elderly ¹	826.8	858.3

¹Average daily attendance in March. ²Includes needy families in Trust Territories. NA = Not available.

Source: Data from the Food and Nutrition Service.

The total number of half-pints of milk served under the Special Milk Program declined from 45.2 million in the first quarter of 1985 to 43.1 million. Federal expenditures totaled \$4.2 million in the first quarter of 1986, compared with \$4.3 million the previous year.

Supplemental Food Programs

The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Pro-

gram (CSFP) serve the same general population. WIC is available nationwide, whereas the CSFP currently operates in 12 States and the District of Columbia. Persons may not participate in both programs simultaneously.

Average participation in WIC rose 5.8 percent, from 3.1 million persons per month to 3.3 million. In the first quarter of 1986, children accounted for 50.4 percent of the participants; infants, 28.4 percent; and women, 21.3 percent. Food costs to-

taled \$318.7 million, a 6.8-increase from the first quarter of 1985.

The CSFP served an average of 141,000 persons per month in the first quarter of 1986, an increase of 1.3 percent. The distribution of participants in 1986 was: children, 65.7 percent; women, 19.3 percent; and infants, 15 percent. Food costs fell from \$9.7 million to \$8.3 million, largely reflecting a decline in the value of bonus commodities.

Average participation in the Elderly Feeding Pilot Project (which operates under the auspices of the CSFP) increased 0.6 percent to 19,600 persons. Food costs for the projects were \$534,300 in the first quarter of 1986, compared with \$544,000 a year earlier.

Food Distribution Programs

Participants in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations received food worth \$12.8 million in the first quarter of 1986, a 4-percent increase from the previous year. Participants include Native Americans and needy persons in the Trust Territories. Approximately 97 percent of the 146,300 participants in the first quarter of 1986 either lived on or near reservations.

Average daily attendance at centers participating in the Nutrition Program for the Elderly rose 3.8 percent to 858,290 persons. During the period, Federal expenditures increased from \$33.1 million to \$34.9 million. About 90 percent of the assistance was in cash.

Food valued at approximately \$206.8 million was distributed under the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program in the first quarter of 1986, down from \$260.1 a year earlier. This decline is largely due to a reduction in the amount of cheese that was distributed—from 120.6 to 101.5 million pounds. The program provides food to the needy while reducing Government stocks of surplus commodities. □

Table 2. Federal Cost of USDA Food Programs¹

Program	1983	1984	1985 ²	1985 ² (Quarters)				1986 ²
				I	II	III	IV	I
<i>Million dollars</i>								
Family Food								
Food Stamps	11,119	10,673	10,704	2,771	2,691	2,580	2,662	2,697
Nutr. Asst. Prog. in Puerto Rico ³	825	825	825	206	206	206	206	206
Food Distribution								
Food Distribution on Indian Reservations	36	43	49	12	12	12	12	13
Schools ⁴	821	828	851	273	159	144	275	270
Other ⁵	229	225	201	45	56	59	41	50
Temporary Emergency Assistance ⁶	1,106	1,057	908	260	253	189	206	207
Cash in lieu of Commodities ⁷	126	133	142	36	35	35	36	36
Child Nutrition ⁸								
School Lunch	2,443	2,552	2,608	807	644	327	831	835
School Breakfast	357	378	391	117	99	51	124	124
Child Care Food and Summer Food Serv. Prog.	407	454	499	101	119	173	106	108
Special Milk	17	16	16	4	4	4	4	4
WIC ⁹	1,194	1,417	1,512	368	375	382	387	396
Total ¹⁰	18,680	18,601	18,706	5,000	4,653	4,162	4,890	4,946

¹Calendar years. Administrative costs are excluded unless noted. ²Preliminary. Quarterly data may not add to annual total due to rounding. ³Puerto Rico transferred from the Food Stamp Program to a substitute nutrition assistance program on July 1, 1982. Includes special projects expenditures. ⁴National School Lunch, Child Care Food, Summer Food Service programs and commodity schools. ⁵Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Elderly Feeding Pilot Project, Nutrition Program for the Elderly, and donations to charitable institutions. ⁶ Initiated December 1981. ⁷Child nutrition programs and the 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: Data from the Food and Nutrition Service.