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Domestic Food Programs

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Food Programs Update

Participation in the Food Stamp Program continued to increase during the first quarter of 1981. Preliminary data show an average of 22.8 million persons were receiving benefits; 1.7 million more than in the same period in 1980.

The value of food stamps issued during the January-March quarter of 1981 was \$2.8 billion—up 28 percent from the same period in 1980. The average monthly benefit per participant rose from \$35.22 in the first quarter of 1980 to \$41.65 in the first quarter of 1981.

Participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) has declined slightly since a year ago. An average of 26.4 million children received lunches under the NSLP during the first quarter of 1981. A year earlier, participation totaled 26.7 million children. In contrast, the number of children receiving school breakfasts rose by 7 percent during the same period. An average of 3.9 million children were participating in the School Breakfast Program in the first quarter of 1981.

Schools and childcare institutions participating in the child feeding programs received \$993.2 million in cash during the first quarter of 1981. In addition, these institutions received commodities valued at \$303.8 million and cash in lieu of commodities totaling \$7.5 million.

The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) are designed to alleviate malnutrition and related health problems. Both programs provide food assistance and nutrition education to low-income mothers and young children. The primary difference between WIC and CSFP programs is the delivery system for benefits. WIC agencies provide food directly to participants or give participants vouchers for specified foods at retail stores. In contrast, the CSFP supplies States with federally purchased commodities, thereby serving as an outlet for foods purchased under USDA's price support and surplus removal activities.

Eligible persons may participate in either the WIC program or the CSFP but cannot participate in both programs simultaneously. Eligibility for the WIC program is determined in a two-step process. Applicants must first meet income criteria and then must be deemed at nutritional risk. CSFP applicants, under current regulations, need only qualify on the basis of income. Further, children may receive benefits only up to 5 years of age in the WIC program, while the CSFP extends eligibility to 6 years of age.

WIC

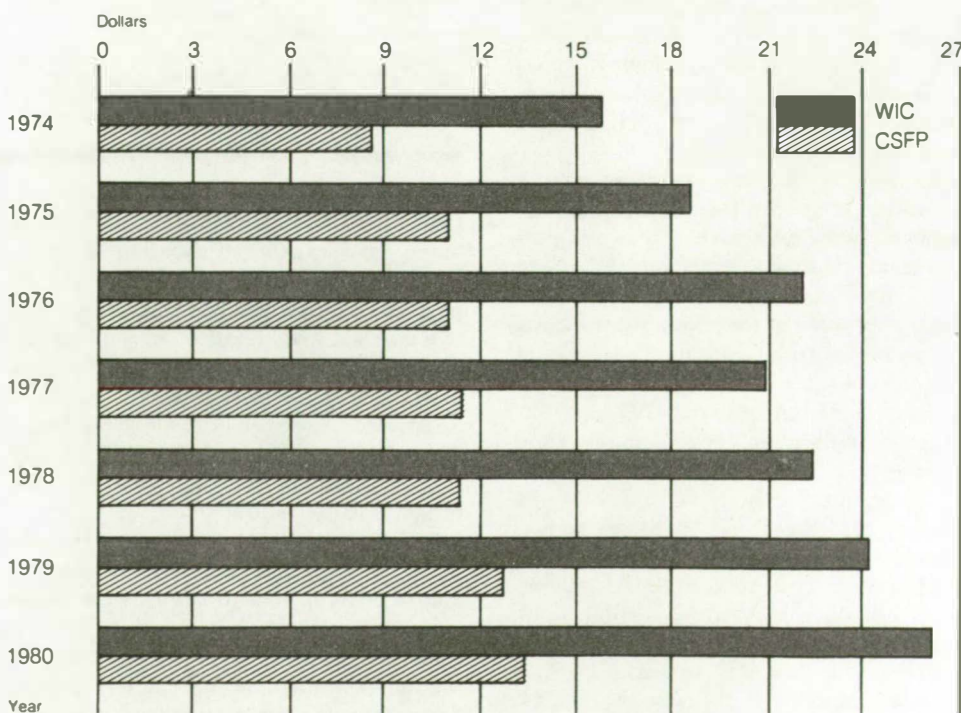
The WIC program was created in 1972 by Section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and was implemented in 1974. The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1980 extends the program through fiscal 1984. Federal cash assistance is provided through State health departments to local health clinics serving low-income areas. These clinics distribute supplemental food to pregnant, postpartum,

and breastfeeding women, and to infants and children up to 5 years of age.

Eligibility is based on income and nutritional status. Income standards are set by the States and by law must fall between 100 and 185 percent of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) nonfarm poverty guidelines. In July 1981, the guidelines were set at \$8,460 per year for a family of four. The States also set standards for assessing women and children who are nutritional risks. Among the factors considered are anemia, dietary habits, and abnormal patterns of growth, such as underweight or obesity.

Studies suggest that the target population for the WIC program have diets deficient in protein, iron, calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Thus, the WIC food packages are designed to provide these nutrients. There are six types of packages comprised of foods selected to reflect the age and individual nutritional needs of participants. Packages

Average Monthly Benefits per Person—WIC and CSFP



contain foods such as iron-fortified cereal, eggs, juice, milk, cheese, dry beans, peas, and peanut butter.

Most WIC clinics provide participants with vouchers redeemable for specified foods at authorized grocery stores. However, some clinics distribute the foods directly to participants by making home deliveries or requiring participants to pick up food packages at the clinic or at a warehouse.

The number of clinics providing WIC benefits rose from 5,784 in fiscal 1979 to 6,701 in fiscal 1980. The clinics are operated by State health departments or comparable State agencies and by Indian agencies. The WIC program provided benefits to an average of 2.2 million persons during the first quarter of 1981; of these 52 percent were children. Infants and women accounted for 27 and 21 percent of WIC participants, respectively.

WIC program funds are allocated among the States based on a formula reflecting the number of children under 5 years of age below 200 percent of the OMB poverty guideline and the infant mortality rate in each State. During the year, unused funds are periodically recovered and reallocated among the States. By law, 20 percent of the total program funds (excluding funds appropriated for program evaluation) are available for State and local administrative costs and nutrition education.

Nutrition education is an integral part of the WIC program. Under the program, participants are taught what foods are most nutritious and how to include these foods in their daily diets. At least 17 percent of the funds appropriated for administrative costs are used for nutrition education. One-half of 1 percent of the annual program funds, not to exceed \$3 million, can be used for program evaluation and demonstration projects.

The average monthly food cost in the January-March quarter of 1981 per participant was \$28.29. During the same period, total program costs totalled \$232.1 million.

CSFP

The CSFP, initiated in fiscal 1969, is currently authorized through fiscal 1984.

Federal Cost of USDA Food Programs

Item	1978	1979 ¹	1980					1981 ²
			1	2	3	4	1	
Million dollars								
Food stamps								
Total issued	8347	7111	9001	2224	2260	2265	2252	2846
Bonus stamps	5261	7108	9001	2224	2260	2265	2252	2846
Food distribution³								
Needy families	13.7	22.2	24.3	4.7	5.9	6.9	6.7	6.7
Schools ⁴	577	720	910	301	219	155	236	304
Others ⁵	64	85	107	27	32	28	21	26
Child nutrition⁶								
School lunch	1877	2102	2394	751	562	306	775	776
School breakfast	191	243	307	92	73	42	101	106
Special food	246	281	359	53	76	162	68	74
Special milk	139	146	139	48	37	19	35	36
WIC⁷	422	569	804	175	192	205	233	232
Total⁸	8790	11277	14047	3674	3457	3188	3727	4406

¹Annual totals computed from monthly data beginning with 1979. Previously obtained from quarterly data supplied by FNS.

²Preliminary.

³Cost of food delivered to State distribution centers.

⁴Includes Summer Food Service Program.

⁵Includes supplemental food, institutions, elderly persons.

⁶Money donated for local purchases of food. Excludes non-food assistance.

⁷Includes Child Care and Summer Food Service programs.

⁸Excludes those food stamps paid for by the recipient.

Under the CSFP, USDA donates foods to State agencies for distribution to low-income infants, children up to age 6, pregnant women, postpartum mothers (up to 6 months), and breastfeeding mothers (up to 12 months) who are eligible to participate in local, State, or Federal health or welfare programs. New regulations allow the States to establish nutritional risk standards and residency requirements as conditions for program participation.

CSFP participants receive individually prescribed supplemental foods. The quantity and varieties of these foods are determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. Typical foods that are distributed under the program are infant formula, farina, egg mix, peanut butter, canned meat and poultry, and canned vegetables, fruits, and juices.

In addition to donating commodities, the Federal Government also provides cash assistance to State and local agencies to offset the administrative costs of operating the CSFP. Up to 15 percent of the value of commodities distributed under the program can be used for administrative costs, such as participant certification, food delivery, and nutrition education.

Twenty-three project areas in 10 States and the District of Columbia operated a CSFP in fiscal 1980. During that period, an average of 102,300 persons received commodities valued at \$18.7 million. In the first quarter of 1981, participation reached an average of 114,200 persons, while food costs totalled \$5.2 million. ■