



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Accomplishments 2009-2012

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Food and Nutrition

Last year, more than 47 million Americans lived in households that had difficulty putting food on the table and USDA helped provide a hunger safety net for these families. In times of record need, USDA has provided critical nutrition assistance to millions of families.

Fighting Hunger and Improving the Health of Our Families and Children

- The economic downturn resulted in a substantial increase in need for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – often known as a ‘food stamps’ – a critical tool to ensure access to healthy food for hardworking families as they get back on their feet. Nearly 50% of SNAP recipients are children and the elderly, and only 8% receive cash welfare.
- As the centerpiece of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! initiative to raise a healthier generation of kids, we led the effort to pass the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, historic legislation to allow us, for the first time in 30 years, the chance to make real reforms to the school lunch and breakfast programs by improving the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for nearly 32 million children who eat school lunch each day and the 12 million who eat breakfast at school.
- USDA’s efforts to improve and enhance the school food environment include:
 - Updated science-based school meal standards for the National School Lunch Program to increase fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy while reducing fats, sodium and sugars;
 - Performance-based funding increases of 6 cents per lunch for schools meeting the new meal standards; this is the first real increase in 30 years;
 - Provision of training and technical assistance to help schools meet improved standards. USDA is working closely with schools to move swiftly to make these reforms a reality in every school. Training and technical assistance materials can be found at www.usda.gov/healthierschoolday
- USDA’s WIC program helps ensure the good health of mothers and children, serving about half of all babies born in the United States. We have made historic improvements to the range of healthy food offered in the program including whole grains, fruits and vegetables – the first comprehensive changes in 30 years – based on expert scientific recommendations.
- During summer months, worked with more than 4,800 community sponsors to serve millions of meals to low-income children through the Summer Food Service Program.

Maintaining Excellence and Safeguarding the Taxpayer Dollar

- In June 2011, USDA released MyPlate, a new generation food icon acclaimed as a simple, powerful visual educational cue to promote healthier eating at mealtimes. It is supported by tools and resources at the ChooseMyPlate.gov, and is available for Spanish-language speakers as MiPlato. Over 5,500 community partners have joined together with USDA in helping promote MyPlate in communities across the country. In addition, USDA's SuperTracker, an online tool for planning and tracking physical activity and foods, surpassed 1 million registered users in just over a year of operation.
 - USDA encouraged more schools to promote healthy eating and exercise through the HealthierUS School Challenge, which currently has made awards to over 4,400 schools in 50 states for their achievements in improving school meals and the school nutrition environment.
 - SNAP—the nation's first line of defense against hunger—helps put food on the table for millions of low income families and individuals every month. The largest of USDA's 15 nutrition assistance programs, it has never been more urgently needed than it is today. SNAP is a vital supplement to the monthly food budget of more than 47 million low-income individuals. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children and more than 40 percent of recipients live in households with earnings.
 - USDA is engaged in major research to assess the impact of additional SNAP benefits as an incentive for the purchase of fruits and vegetables on healthier food choices among low-income Americans.
 - USDA has responded to more than 100 disasters since 2009 with disaster nutrition assistance for low-income Americans, mothers, infants and children. Those efforts delivered help to more than 1.3 million families when they most needed it.
- USDA has taken important steps to protect the taxpayers' investment in the SNAP program and make sure it is there for those who truly need it.
 - USDA helped the SNAP program reach a record level of payment accuracy: 96.2%. Payment errors are less than half what they were ten years ago, which has reduced improper payments by \$3.5 billion in 2011 alone. Furthermore, trafficking – the exchange of SNAP benefits for cash – has been reduced to about one cent on the dollar. We continue to invest in process improvements and state-of-the-art technology to increase efficiency and strengthen the integrity of SNAP.
 - USDA efforts have resulted in a significant reduction in trafficking – the exchange of SNAP benefits for cash. USDA initiated aggressive new tactics to protect the valuable taxpayer investment in SNAP by investigating illegal activity and removing bad actors from the program.
 - USDA also published a final rule in August 2012 which establishes standards and expectations regarding State matching requirements to prevent ineligible people from participating in the program.
 - In 2012 alone, FNS compliance analysts and investigators reviewed over 15,000 stores for compliance monitoring purposes. As a result, investigations were conducted on more than 5,000 stores nationwide to ensure program integrity.

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