

### Background

Through its food distribution programs, USDA purchases a variety of food including fruits, vegetables, meat, grains, and dairy products for distribution directly to needy households or for use in congregate feeding programs that help Americans obtain access to nutritious food and support American agriculture. These USDA Foods are distributed to help supplement the diets of:

- children participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP),
- women, infants, children, and elderly participating in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP),
- low-income Native Americans participating in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and
- needy individuals seeking assistance from food pantries and soup kitchens and participating in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

This report contains nutrient and food group analyses of the USDA Foods distributed through the NSLP, CACFP, CSFP, FDPIR, and TEFAP in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009.

### Data and Methods

The study was conducted at two levels. The first examines the nutrient and food group content of the USDA Foods *offered* to State and local administering agencies in FY 2009. The second assesses the nutrient and food group content of the USDA Foods selected by administering agencies and participants (i.e., foods *delivered* to those groups).

At both levels of analysis, the study constructed representative USDA Foods profiles for the NSLP, CACFP, CSFP, FDPIR, and TEFAP using the lists of foods available for each program, records of foods distributed, and data contained in the following nutrient and food group databases:

- USDA Food and Nutrient Database for Dietary Studies, version 4.1,

- USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, release 23, and
- USDA MyPyramid Equivalents Database.

The study contains a food group analysis and develops a Healthy Eating Index (HEI) score for USDA Foods distributed through each program. For the NSLP, CSFP, and FDPIR, the study also includes a participant-level nutrient analysis.

### Key Findings

#### Commodity Supplemental Food Program

CSFP delivers individual food packages that provide a balanced mix of USDA Foods to supplement the diets of program participants.

- **As offered, the CSFP infant food package provided at least 97 percent of the recommended Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) for all of the key vitamins, minerals, and macronutrients examined in the report.** As delivered, the package provided no less than 89 percent of these nutrients.
- **As delivered, CSFP packages for nonelderly women and children contained about one-third (32 percent) of participants' total food energy needs.** CSFP offered and delivered substantially higher percentages of DRI recommendations for protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A and C, and B vitamins including folate.
- **As delivered, CSFP packages for elderly participants contained about one-quarter (23 percent) of total energy needs.** As offered and as delivered, CSFP packages for elderly participants contained one-third or more of the recommended DRI for protein, calcium, vitamins A and C, and several B vitamins.

#### Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

FDPIR provides nutritionally balanced household food packages to eligible participants as an alternative to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

- **As delivered, FDPIR packages provided participants with most (86 percent) of their energy needs.** As offered, FDPIR packages provided 99 percent of participants' energy needs.

- **FDPIR offered and delivered at least 100 percent of the DRI recommendations for protein, carbohydrates, vitamin C, several B vitamins, and iron.** FDPIR packages offered and delivered between 23 and 96 percent of the DRI recommended amounts of fiber, calcium, potassium, and vitamins A, D, and E.

### National School Lunch Program

USDA Foods provided to school-age children through the NSLP are intended to supplement much larger USDA cash reimbursements for program meals. Schools select from a wide variety of USDA Foods to help meet NSLP nutrient and meal pattern requirements.

- **USDA Foods selected by schools provided 28 percent of the average child's Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein** – almost the entire regulatory standard for NSLP lunches.
- **USDA Foods offered to schools provided 9 percent of the average child's energy need.** As offered, USDA Foods contributed between 4 and 16 percent of the average child's RDA for all vitamins and minerals examined in the study.

### Child and Adult Care Food Program

CACFP centers, like schools, can select from a wide variety of USDA Foods that help them meet regulatory meal pattern requirements and supplement cash reimbursements.

- **CACFP centers selected more fruit, 39 percent by weight, than any other group of USDA Foods.** Meat (23 percent by weight), cheese (17 percent), grains (11 percent), and vegetables (8 percent) were also popular choices.
- **Fruit accounted for a much smaller fraction of USDA Foods offered through CACFP (5 percent by weight).** Grains (29 percent by weight), vegetable oil (24 percent), and meat (15 percent) were the biggest contributors to the mix of USDA Foods offered through CACFP.

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program

TEFAP delivers USDA Foods to the States for distribution to organizations that serve individuals and households in need of assistance. USDA Foods

delivered to the States reflect items in greatest demand by food banks and similar agencies.

- **Measured by weight, vegetables and meat accounted for 17 percent of USDA Foods offered and 43 percent of the USDA foods delivered through TEFAP.** Milk, cereal, and oil accounted for 30 percent of USDA Foods offered by weight, but only 8 percent of USDA Foods delivered.
- **Juice was equally important to the mix of USDA Foods offered and delivered through TEFAP.** By weight, juice accounted for 18 percent of USDA Foods offered through TEFAP; it accounted for 17 percent of USDA Foods delivered.

### Healthy Eating Index

FDPIR and CSFP provide nutritionally balanced packages of USDA Foods to program participants. USDA Foods offered and delivered through these programs include a broad mix of fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein products. HEI-2005 scores for these programs reflect that balance. FDPIR packages achieved an HEI-2005 score of 85.3, as delivered, in FY 2009. CSFP packages delivered to elderly participants scored 76.6; packages delivered to nonelderly women and children scored 73.9. These compare to an HEI-2005 score of 58 for the average American diet.

NSLP, CACFP, and TEFAP administrators select USDA Foods to fill their needs for specific products. Nevertheless, selections by program administrators tend to draw from all of the food groups offered by USDA. USDA Foods delivered through NSLP achieved an HEI-2005 score of 74.9. USDA Foods delivered through CACFP scored 71.3. The score for USDA Foods distributed to States through TEFAP was 88.9.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, "Nutrient and MyPyramid Analysis of USDA Foods in the NSLP, CACFP, CSFP, TEFAP, and FDPIR" by Thea Palmer Zimmerman, Sujata Dixit-Joshi, Brenda Sun, Deirdre Douglass, Jason Hu, Fred Glantz, Elaine Eaker. Project Officer Dennis Ranalli. Alexandria, VA: January 2012.

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