

WHITE PAPER ON THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP) – SUMMARY

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that for three decades has helped supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including seniors, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. This white paper explains the program and describes some of its key results.

Background

A statutory funding formula allocates TEFAP resources to States based on indicators of need, including poverty and unemployment levels. States distribute USDA Foods to eligible recipient agencies, typically food banks. These agencies distribute the food to emergency feeding organizations that directly serve households and individuals in need.

TEFAP's State-administered infrastructure for distributing food to communities is well integrated in the local emergency food assistance system. The program allows for distribution to those who need TEFAP foods most, particularly during economic recessions and disasters such as the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

In recent years, TEFAP contributions to the emergency food assistance system have become increasingly important as other supports, such as private food donations, have not kept pace with demand. In addition, all USDA Foods offered through TEFAP are domestically grown, which supports U.S. farmers and rural communities.

Program Impacts

TEFAP serves households and individuals in need. TEFAP participants are a diverse group, with variable needs for emergency food assistance. They include low-income households and individuals (including families with children, seniors, and the newly unemployed) who obtain food for home consumption from food pantries, as well as low-income and homeless families and individuals who obtain meals from soup kitchens and shelters.

Nationally, 5 percent of low-income households used a food pantry and 0.6 percent used a soup kitchen in 2011.¹ In 2011, nearly 15 percent of all U.S. households and 38 percent of low-income U.S. households were food insecure, meaning their access to adequate food was limited by a lack of money or other resources.² Among those households using emergency food assistance, roughly three-fourths are food insecure.^{1,3,4}

TEFAP serves households and individuals who do not participate in other USDA nutrition assistance programs. In 2009, more than one-third of TEFAP participants using soup kitchens and about one-fifth using food pantries obtained emergency food assistance from several sources but did not report participating in other nutrition assistance programs. Households and individuals who obtain emergency food from multiple sources but not from other USDA programs may be the most heavily dependent on TEFAP-supported emergency food assistance.

TEFAP serves emergency food providers. An estimated \$547 million worth of food was made available to States in FY 2012, representing an increase of more than \$83 million from FY 2011. Congress appropriated more than \$308 million for TEFAP in FY2012—more than \$260 million to purchase food and \$48 million for administrative support for State and local agencies. USDA's

¹ Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. "Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2011." AP-058. USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2012.

² Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. "Household Food Security in the United States in 2011." ERR-141. USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2012.

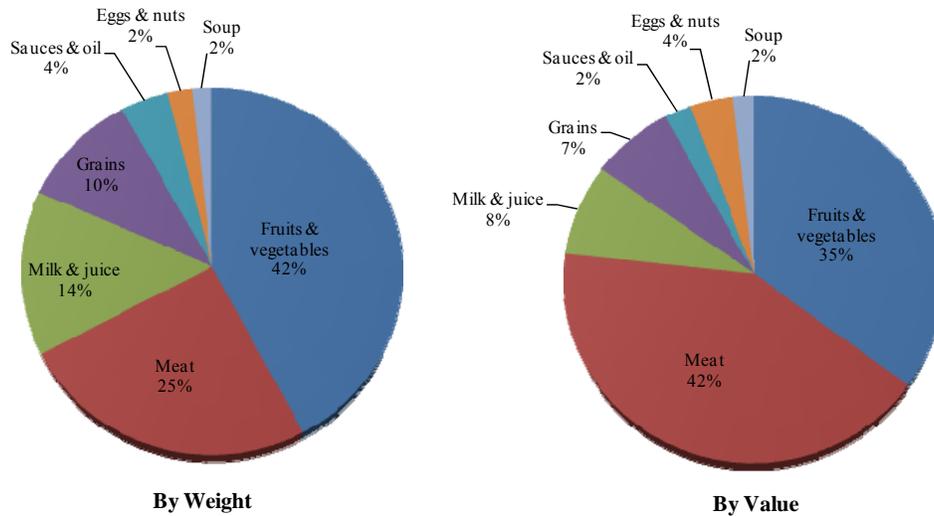
³ Mabli, James, Rhoda Cohen, Frank Potter, and Zhanyun Zhao. "Hunger in America 2010 National Report: Prepared for Feeding America." Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, January 2010.

⁴ Briefel, Ronette, Jonathan Jacobson, Nancy Clusen, Teresa Zavitsky, Miki Satake, Brittany Dawson, and Rhoda Cohen. "The Emergency Food Assistance System—Findings from the Client Survey: Final Report." E-FAN-03-007. USDA, Economic Research Service, July 2003. Available at [<http://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/45224/PDF>]. Accessed March 16, 2013.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) also purchases domestic agricultural products with funds authorized by Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935. These USDA Foods are “bonus” foods because they are not credited against food purchases with appropriated funds. A total of \$304 million worth of bonus foods was distributed through TEFAP in FY 2012. TEFAP distributed over 723 million

pounds of USDA Foods in FY 2012. This included nearly 306 million pounds of fruits and vegetables, 180 million pounds of meat, 105 million pounds of milk and juice, 75 million pounds of grains, and 58 million pounds of other USDA Foods like soups, tomato-based sauces, eggs, and nut products.

Percentage of TEFAP Entitlement and Bonus Foods by Weight and Value, FY 2012



Source: Processed Commodities Inventory Management System (PCIMS) delivery order and contract information, as listed in Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations, FY 2014.

TEFAP provides nutritious foods to the Emergency Food Assistance System. USDA Foods available through TEFAP reflect USDA’s strides in making the foods consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, with reduced levels of fat, sodium, and sugar. For example, TEFAP offers low-sodium or no-salt-added canned beans and vegetables, and canned fruits are packed in extra-light sucrose syrup or slightly sweetened fruit juice.

A 2012 study assessed the nutritional quality of TEFAP foods using two measures: (1) a Healthy Eating Index-2005 (HEI- 2005) score and (2) the contribution of TEFAP foods to recommended USDA Food Patterns.⁵ TEFAP foods as delivered (that is, as selected by States) received a score of 89 out of a possible 100 on the HEI-2005. By

comparison, the 2005 U.S. food supply included a less nutritious mix of foods, receiving a total HEI-2005 score of 55. TEFAP foods provided roughly 70 percent or more of recommended amounts of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and oils for a 2,000-calorie diet, and more than 100 percent of the daily recommended amounts of specific food subgroups, including red and orange vegetables; legumes; refined grains; meat, poultry, and eggs; and nuts. Moreover, these foods were low in calories from solid fats and added sugars.

For More Information

Cabili, Charlotte, Esa Eslami, and Ronette Briefel. *White Paper on the USDA’s Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research. Alexandria, VA: USDA, FNS, Office of Policy Support, August 2013.

⁵ Zimmerman, Thea Palmer, Sujata Dixit-Joshi, Brenda Sun, Deirdre Douglass, Jason Hu, Fred Glantz, and Elaine Eaker. “Nutrient and MyPyramid Analysis of USDA Foods in Five of Its Food and Nutrition Programs.” Report FD-12-USDAFOODS. Alexandria, VA: USDA, FNS, Office of Research and Analysis, January 2012.

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