

Increased Funding and Nutrition Guidelines are Needed to Strengthen the Charitable Food System in the 2023 Farm Bill

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) urges the following recommendations be implemented in the 2023 Farm Bill to mitigate hunger in the US, while simultaneously improving nutrition security.

Although most US households are food secure, meaning they have consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life, there are still many that experience food insecurity.¹ The charitable food system, our nation's network of emergency feeding programs, plays a critical role in feeding millions of Americans each year.² In 2021, over 50 million people relied on food banks and pantries for their next meal.³ As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact health and stability, and pandemic related food assistance programs end, communities continue to struggle with rising costs of basic necessities, including nutritious food.

At the same time, health care costs continue to soar, as rates of chronic disease, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer, remain high.^{4,5} In the US, six in ten adults have a chronic disease and chronic diseases are the leading causes of death and disability.⁶ As adults and children in food insecure households are at greater risk of developing chronic disease, it is imperative to address nutrition security at the federal level in order to strengthen the charitable food system and forge a path towards health equity in our communities.^{7,8,9}

Hunger in the US (2021)¹⁰

- Food Insecurity National Average - 10.2%
- Rates of food insecurity are higher than the national average for the following:
 - Black, non-Hispanic* households (19.8%)
 - Hispanic* households (16.2%)
 - Households with children headed by a single woman (24.3%) or man (16.2%)
 - Households with children (12.5%)
 - Southern region (11.4%)
- 53% of adults in food-insecure households were employed full-time¹¹

Charitable Food System Snapshot

- 371 food banks, 60,000 pantries¹²
- In 2021, 53 million people received food assistance¹³
- Food bank inventory – 58% donated, **23% government**, 19% purchased¹⁴

* Using terminology of the data source

Increase nutrition security within the charitable food system.

Recommendation: Adopt culturally-responsive nutrition guidelines for all USDA Food Distribution Programs.

- Comprehensive nutrition guidelines are currently absent from USDA Food Distribution Programs, including The Emergency Food Program (TEFAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).^{15,16,17}
- The statutes and regulations governing TEFAP, CSFP, and FDPIR should stipulate that the programs follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and include culturally appropriate options.
- Requiring nutrition guidelines could correct current nutritional quality disparities among USDA programs.¹⁸
- Nutrition guidelines would ensure the charitable food system is receiving health-promoting, culturally appropriate food that would better address the needs of the population served.^{19,20}

Recommendation: Increase TEFAP Farm to Food Bank (FTFB) funding to at least \$25 million annually. In addition, remove the state match requirement within the TEFAP FTFB program and allow for the purchase of food.

- The FTFB supply chain is a key opportunity to fight hunger and increase nutritious donations, while cutting food waste and supporting local agriculture.^{21,22}
- The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 established the TEFAP FTFB project grants which provide funding to state agencies to “pay for projects to harvest, process, package, or transport commodities donated by agricultural producers, processors, or distributors for use by emergency feeding organizations.”²³
- The current annual funding of \$4 million is not enough to support the full extent of FTFB opportunities in each state.²⁴ States like Maine and Pennsylvania rely on \$1-\$2.5 million in annual funding to have successful FTFB programs.^{25,26}
- Effective FTFB programs include Mainers Feeding Mainers, which was able to source 2.2 million pounds of nutritious food from local farmers, investing \$966,000 into Maine’s agricultural economy in 2021.²⁷

- Allowing TEFAP FTFB funds to be used for purchasing food can better support the participation of smaller producers.²⁸
- Currently, the TEFAP FTFB program requires a 50 percent match requirement from states that apply.²⁹ Eliminating the match requirement can allow less resourced states to access federal funds.

For more than 50 years, CSPI has been an influential force in the fight for a better food system. CSPI leverages our unique expertise to support passing policies that increase access to nutritious food, support healthy food and beverage choices, and ensure a healthy diet for all consumers.

For more information, please contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at policy@cspinet.org.

¹ Coleman-Jensen A, et al. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2021*. United States Department of Agriculture. 2022. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/104656/err-309.pdf?v=9944.3>.

² Feeding America. *Charitable Food Assistance Participation in 2021*. 2022. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Charitable%20Food%20Assistance%20Participation%20in%202021.pdf>.

³ Feeding America, 2022.

⁴ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. *National Health Expenditure Accounts – Historical*. December 15, 2021. <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/NationalHealthAccountsHistorical>.

⁵ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. *About Chronic Diseases*. CDC. July 21, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm>.

⁶ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2022.

⁷ Gregory C, Coleman-Jensen A. *Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Healthy Among Working-Age Adults*. United States Department of Agriculture. 2017. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf>.

⁸ Gundersen C, Ziliak JP. Food Insecurity And Health Outcomes. *Health Affairs*. 2015;34(11):1830-9.

⁹ Weinreb L, et al. Hunger: its impact on children's health and mental health. *Pediatrics*. 2002;110(4):e41.

¹⁰ Coleman-Jensen A, 2021.

¹¹ USDA Economic Research Service. *Food Security in the U.S. – Interactive Charts and Highlights*. September 7, 2022.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/interactive-charts-and-highlights/#disability>.

¹² Chris Costanzo. How Many Food Banks Are There? *Food Bank News*. January 8, 2020. <https://foodbanknews.org/how-many-food-banks-are-there/>.

¹³ Feeding America, 2022.

¹⁴ Feldman M, Schwartz MB. *A Tipping Point*. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. 2018. <https://mazon.org/wp-content/uploads/MAZON-Report-TippingPoint.pdf>.

¹⁵ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *The Emergency Food Assistance Program*. 2020. https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/tefap-program-fact-sheet-2019_1.6.20.pdf.

¹⁶ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *Commodity Supplemental Food Program*. 2019. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/csfp-program-fact-sheet-2019.pdf>.

¹⁷ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations*. 2020. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/fdpir-program-fact-sheet-2020-for%20website.pdf>.

¹⁸ Friedman E, Johnson J. *Policy Approaches to Healthier Food Banking*. Center for Science in the Public Interest. 2021. <https://www.cspinet.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/PolicyApproachestoHealthierFoodBankingFINAL.pdf>.

¹⁹ Feeding America, UCONN Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. *IMPROVING NUTRITION IN THE CHARITABLE FOOD SYSTEM: A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE*. 2021. <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Improving-Nutrition-in-the-Charitable-Food-System-A-Review-of-the-Evidence-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁰ Natural Resources Defense Council. *Expanded Client Survey Assessment: Baltimore City*. 2019. <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/food-rescue-baltimore-assessing-current-landscape.pdf>.

²¹ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *The Emergency Food Assistance Program Farm to Food Bank Project Grants*. November 10, 2021. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/farm-to-food-bank-project-grants>.

²² Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine. *Annual Report*. 2021. https://www.gsfb.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2021GSFBAnnualReport_website_lores.pdf.

²³ USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2021.

²⁴ Legal Information Institute. *7 U.S. Code § 7507 - State and local supplementation of commodities*. Cornell Law School. n.d. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/7/7507>.

²⁵ Good Shepherd Food Bank. *Governor signs bill to continue funding for Mainer's Feeding Mainer's program*. July 1, 2019. <https://www.gsfb.org/blog/2019/07/01/governor-signs-bill-to-continue-funding-for-mainers-feeding-mainers-program/>.

²⁶ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Office of the Governor. *Governor Tom Wolf Executive Budget 2021-2022*. 2021. <https://www.budget.pa.gov/Publications%20and%20Reports/CommonwealthBudget/Documents/2021-22%20Proposed%20Budget/2021-2022%20Executive%20Budget%20Book.Web%20Version.UPDATED.030421.pdf>.

²⁷ Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine, 2021.

²⁸ Clippinger E. *States are Investing in Farm to Food Bank Programs*. FoodPrint. January 30, 2020. <https://foodprint.org/blog/states-are-investing-in-farm-to-food-bank-programs/>.

²⁹ USDA Food and Nutrition Service. *TEFAP State Plan Requests and Allocations for FY 2023 Farm to Food Bank Projects*. August 12, 2022. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/fy23-farm-food-bank-projects-state-plan-requests-allocations>.

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