



# FOOD JOURNAL

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## MORE THAN 25 MILLION SEEK FOOD ASSISTANCE EACH YEAR

Last month, America's Second Harvest released *Hunger in America 2006*, a report documenting that more than 25 million Americans — including nearly nine million children and three million seniors — receive emergency food assistance through America's Second Harvest food banks. This represents an 8% increase since 2001. The study, the largest and most comprehensive ever conducted on domestic hunger, was based on 52,000 face-to-face interviews with people seeking emergency food assistance and more than 30,000 agency surveys.

- About 70% of the clients seeking emergency food assistance live below the federal poverty line.
- Nearly 40% have at least one adult working in their household.
- 70% of clients are living in food insecure households (33% of those clients reported experiencing hunger).

Many of the 52,000 clients who participated in face-to-face interviews for *Hunger in America 2006* reported having to make difficult choices between food and everyday necessities.

- More than 40% of the clients served report having to choose between paying for utilities or heating fuel and food.

- 35% had to choose between paying for rent or a mortgage and food.
- 32% report having to choose between paying for medical bills and food.

Volunteers and faith-based organizations are the lifeline of America's emergency food distribution system.

- More than 65% of food pantries and 40% of soup kitchens rely entirely on volunteers and have no paid staff.
- As many as 90% of food pantries, 86% of soup kitchens and 71% of shelters in the Second Harvest Network use volunteers.
- Nearly 75% of pantries, 65% of soup kitchens, and 45% of emergency shelters are run by faith-based agencies affiliated with churches, mosques, synagogues and other religious organizations.

"Food is a basic human need and right," said Jennifer Goodale, Vice President of Contributions, Altria Group, Inc. "As the sponsor of *Hunger in America 2006*, we hope the study will inform public policy, energize the response among the public and private sectors, and ultimately provide a better understanding of the complex issue of hunger and the millions of people it affects."

**For more information, visit  
[www.hungerinamerica.org](http://www.hungerinamerica.org).**

### FOOD ASSISTANCE EXPENDITURES AT RECORD HIGH

One in five Americans participates in at least one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) food and nutrition assistance programs during the year. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2005, almost \$51 billion, an estimated 55% of USDA's budget, supported the 15 programs providing children and low-income people with access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education. The FFY2005 expenditure levels represent a 10% increase from the previous fiscal year, the fifth consecutive increase. The Economic Research Service (ERS) is responsible for conducting studies and evaluations of USDA's food assistance programs. *The Food Assistance Landscape March 2006* uses preliminary data from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to examine trends in food assistance programs through FFY2005 (10/01/04 – 09/30/05).

The five largest programs — the Food Stamp Program (FSP), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) — accounted for 95% of USDA's total expenditures for food assistance. Most of the total increase between FFY2004 and FFY2005 was caused by the expansion of FSP, although each of the other four major programs expanded as well.

FSP, the largest of the programs, accounted for 61% of all food assistance spending in FFY2005. It provides monthly benefits for eligible participants to purchase approved food items at authorized foodstores. Unlike the other programs targeted toward specific categories of the population, food stamps are available to most needy households (subject to certain work and immigration status requirements) with limited income and assets. During FFY2005, spending totaled \$31.0 billion, a 14% increase over FFY2004, and an average 25.7 million people per month participated. The growth in

expenditures was due to both an increase in participation and an increase in the average per-person benefit.

WIC helps safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, and infants and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk, by providing a package of supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health care referrals. During FFY2005, spending for WIC totaled \$5.0 billion, 3% more than the previous year, with an average 8.0 million people per month participating. Half of all participants were children (age one to four years), while women and infants accounted for about 25% each.

NSLP provides nutritious low-cost or free lunches to schoolchildren. Schools participating in NSLP receive cash and some commodities from USDA. In return, the schools must serve lunches meeting Federal nutritional requirements and offer free or reduced-price lunches to needy children. Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the Federal poverty guidelines are eligible for free meals, and those whose families' incomes range between 130% and 185% of the poverty guidelines are eligible for reduced-price meals. During FFY2005, spending for NSLP totaled \$8.0 billion, a 5% increase over the previous year, with an average 29.6 million children participating each school day (about 60% of all children attending a participating school or institution). Half of the school lunches served were provided free to students and another 10% were provided at a reduced price.

SBP provides low-cost breakfasts to schoolchildren, with students from low-income families receiving free or reduced-price meals under the same income-eligibility requirements as for NSLP. During FFY2005, an average 9.3 million children participated in SBP each school day (about 23% of all children attending a participating school or institution). Spending for the program totaled \$1.9 billion, 8% more than in FFY2004, making it the second fastest growing food assistance program. Almost three-quarters

(73%) of these breakfasts were provided free to students and another 9% were provided at a reduced price.

CACFP subsidizes healthy meals and snacks in participating child care centers and homes and adult daycare facilities. The providers of care are reimbursed for each type of qualifying meal (breakfast, lunch/supper, or snack) they serve. During FFY2005, expenditures for CACFP totaled \$2.1 billion, 4% greater than in FFY2004. A total of 1.8 billion meals were served, an increase of about 2% from fiscal 2004. About 60% of all meals served were in child care centers, 37% were in family child care homes, and 3% in adult care centers.

Economic and social conditions affect participation in and expenditures on the food assistance programs through their influence on: (1) the size of the eligible population; (2) the rate of participation among eligible people; and (3) benefit levels.

***More information can be found at  
[www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov) and [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov).***

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### **MEDICINAL HERBS POPULAR AMONG WIC CLIENTS**

February's *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, includes research from a Penn State paper, "Survey of Herbal Use by Kansas and Wisconsin WIC Participants Reveals Moderate, Appropriate Use and Identifies Herbal Education Needs" — the first study on herbal use by participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Nearly half of the low income, nutritionally-vulnerable Latino children surveyed were treated with herbs for common ills such as diaper rash, colic, teething symptoms, stomachaches, coughs and colds. Although herb use was higher among Latinos (48.4%), about a third of non-Latinos surveyed also used medicinal herbs for childhood illness. Most common were relatively low risk herbs, such as aloe vera, chamomile, garlic, peppermint, lavender, cranberry, ginger, Echinacea and lemon.

Dr. Barbara Lohse, who led the study, said, "Nutrition professionals and WIC educators have hesitated to talk about herbs for children because they feared that it would encourage acceptance and, perhaps, cause people to start using them. Our study has shown that more WIC clients than we thought are already using them, mostly in moderate and appropriate ways. However, because some herbal use has the potential to do harm, we urge herbal education in WIC clinics."

Of the 2,562 surveyed caregivers (in Kansas and Wisconsin), child herbal use was reported for 1,363 of the children, aged one week to 17 years. Participating caregivers consulted a variety of sources on the use of herbs, including family and friends, the news media, the Internet, medical doctors and other allied health professionals. Family was, by far, the most popular source overall and the only one for 46.9% of non-Latinos and 73.2% of Latinos.

Although most herbs the participants reported giving to children were those with relatively low risk, the effects of long term use and interactions with prescription and over-the-counter medications are unknown. In addition, ten herbs with known safety issues, including St. John's wort, kava and red clover, were also given to children and taken by the caregivers themselves.

The researchers write, "Although it may be tempting to say that, 'because little data exist on the safety of herbals during pregnancy, when breastfeeding, and in children, use of these products should be discouraged,' the reality is that herbals are widely used in these populations. Likewise, recent findings such as the inefficacy and adverse reactions from Echinacea use illustrate the need to provide an educational venue and to conduct educational research to formalize herbal education within the WIC clinic culture."

***For more information, contact Penn State's College of Health and Human Development at 814/865-3831 or [healthhd@psu.edu](mailto:healthhd@psu.edu).***

### TEXAS SCHOOLS AWARDED \$1.3 MILLION FOR PRODUCE PROGRAMS

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs announced \$1.3 million in awards to 24 Texas public schools as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Schools will use the money to launch produce stands, plant fruit and vegetable gardens, or provide more fresh fruits and vegetables to students free of charge during the school day. Other projects include hosting fruit and vegetable fairs, recipe contests, cooking demonstrations, nutrition education and field trips to local fruit and vegetable farms. Some will integrate the program into the curriculum such as reading food labels, math calculations in burning calories, history lessons of early American fruits and vegetables served at Thanksgiving, writing 60-second "nutrition minutes" delivered during morning announcements, and the geography of the state's produce regions.

The program was open to elementary, middle and high schools across the state. When making the selections, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) considered school enrollment and geographic location to ensure selected schools represent a diversity of Texas schoolchildren. "This project takes healthy eating to new heights by creating exciting new ways to introduce fresh produce to students," Combs said.

The following 24 schools received funding:

Bowie Elementary School, Abilene ISD, **Abilene**, \$44,625.

Fletcher Elementary School, Beaumont ISD, **Beaumont**, \$49,073.

Miller Heights Elementary School, Belton ISD, **Belton**, \$30,529.

Canutillo Elementary School, Canutillo ISD, **Canutillo**, \$59,927.

Como-Pickton School, Como-Pickton ISD, **Como**, \$58,646.

Wilma Magee Intermediate School, Calallen ISD, **Corpus Christi**, \$49,600.

Irma Lerma Rangel Leadership School, Dallas ISD, **Dallas**, \$16,056.

Obadiah Knight Elementary School, Dallas ISD, **Dallas**, \$60,078.

Temple Elementary School, Diboll ISD, **Diboll**, \$44,324.

Worsham Elementary School, Aldine ISD, **Houston**, \$63,169.

Westfield High School, Spring ISD, **Houston**, \$330,015.

Sundown Elementary School, Katy ISD, **Katy**, \$57,515.

Lake Worth High School, Lake Worth ISD, **Lake Worth**, \$48,997.

Littlefield Primary School, Littlefield ISD, **Littlefield**, \$33,092.

Marfa Elementary School, Marfa ISD, **Marfa**, \$17,714.

Seven Hills Elementary School, Northwest ISD, **Newark**, \$31,961.

Nixon-Smiley Elementary School, \$30,378;  
Nixon-Smiley Middle School, \$23,594;  
Nixon-Smiley High School, \$21,107;  
Nixon-Smiley CISD, **Nixon**.

Central Elementary School, Palacios ISD, **Palacios**, \$41,384.

Valley View North Elementary School, Valley View ISD, **Pharr**, \$53,671.

Morrill Elementary School, Harlandale ISD, **San Antonio**, \$41,535.

Splendora Junior High School, Splendora ISD, **Splendora**, \$40,253.

West Texas Elementary School, Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD, **Stinnett**, \$22,086.

TDA is the state administrator for the school meals program in Texas. Details on the school meal programs and TDA's Square Meals initiative are available at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org).

**For more information, contact TDA toll free at 888/TEX-KIDS or send an e-mail to [squaremeals@agr.state.tx.us](mailto:squaremeals@agr.state.tx.us).**

## TAX TIME WARNING

Cashing in on the promise of a quick fix, millions of low-income American workers paid more than \$900 million in unnecessary fees and excessive interest when filing their 2004 taxes to expedite collection of tax refunds. An analysis of Internal Revenue Service data by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) found most Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL) customers were low-income taxpayers who claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable credit for low-wage earners, even though they only make up 17% of all taxpayers. Based on findings in states where CDF has offices, millions of dollars were spent in RAL fees and interest in order to receive tax refunds more quickly:

Washington, D.C. – over \$2.6 million

Mississippi – over \$25 million

South Carolina – over \$26 million

Tennessee – over \$29.4 million

Ohio – over \$35 million

California – over \$65.7 million

Texas – over \$111 million

For the 2003 tax year, about seven million workers nationwide purchased RALs — short-term, high-interest loans commercial tax preparers aggressively market to low-income tax filers in exchange for receiving their tax refunds sooner, usually within a few days. Some RAL providers deliver these high-priced loans on-the-spot.

RALs are repaid from the tax refund, but the fees associated with them end up costing individuals a significant percentage of their refunds. Meanwhile, tax refunds from the federal government impose no fees or interest charges and e-filing with direct deposit is usually paid within two weeks of filing. In reducing the value of the refund taxpayers receive, RALs undermine the very purpose of the EITC, which is to help lift low-income families out of poverty.

**To read CDF's reports on RALs, visit [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).**

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**Share Our Strength's Great American Bake Sale.** Current sponsors of summer and after-school meal programs for children that utilize USDA reimbursements, and advocacy organizations that work with schools, community organizations, local businesses, and government officials and provide technical assistance to these programs are invited to apply between 03/01/06 and 04/15/06. For more information and eligibility criteria, visit the Great American Bake Sale website, [www.greatamericanbakesale.org](http://www.greatamericanbakesale.org).

**Nominate 2006 Hunger Champions.** The Food Stamp Outreach Coalition has announced the 2006 Hunger Champions Program, established to honor local offices that provide exemplary service in helping eligible clients obtain food stamps. Any individual, agency or organization which has worked, observed or has personal experience with a local food stamp office providing exemplary service to existing or potential food stamp clients may nominate that office to be honored as a Hunger Champion. All nominations must be submitted by 06/30/06. Get forms at local food stamp offices or download from [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/champions.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/champions.htm).

**Impact of Food Assistance on Nutrition.** The Nutrition Department of the University of California (Davis) is accepting proposals for programs to examine in 2006-2007 the impact of food assistance on nutrition. The research is sponsored by the Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The purpose of

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***The Food Journal welcomes your comments and ideas for stories. Call 800/992-9767, ext. 206, or e-mail comments and suggestions to [foodjournal@tcaa.org](mailto:foodjournal@tcaa.org).***

this small grants program is to stimulate innovative research in the area of food assistance by identifying nutritional indicators (anthropometric, biochemical, clinical, and dietary) that can be used to measure the impact of food assistance programs in the U.S. Proposals that analyze dietary and nutritional outcomes, particularly obesity, in the food assistance-eligible population are also accepted. The deadline for letters of intent is 04/03/06. Proposals must be mailed and postmarked by 05/01/06. See <http://nutrition.ucdavis.edu/USDAERS/> for details.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) announces the availability of *School Wellness Policy and Practice: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Students*, a guide for anti-hunger advocates, parents and school community leaders addressing the special concerns of low-income students in local school wellness policies. The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires every school district participating in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Programs to establish a local wellness policy by the start of the 2006-2007 school year. The guide provides sample policies, model programs and key research information that are important tools to address the nutrition concerns of low-income children and communities in the development of school wellness policies. The guide is intended to supplement the many existing tools available for designing school wellness policies, by providing strategies that address the unique needs of low-income students, families and communities. The guide may be accessed on-line at [www.frac.org/pdf/wellness\\_guide2006.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/wellness_guide2006.pdf).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration recently launched a new web-based resource for residents along the U.S.-Mexico border and others seeking information on health and human services for border communities. It can be found at <http://borderhealth.raconline.org>

and includes information on sources of health funding, grant-writing for health projects, health topics, links to health agencies in each border state, an overview of federal activities, and a searchable resource database.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in cooperation with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced the availability of a model Food Emergency Response Plan Template. The goal of the response plan is to enhance the protection of the nation's agricultural industry and food security through prevention, detection, response, and recovery. The plan template can be viewed at [www2.nasda.org/NR/rdonlyres/2EC4F1B6-9732-4187-8A1D-7024C6818CBE/858/NASDAFoodPlanTemplate020906.pdf](http://www2.nasda.org/NR/rdonlyres/2EC4F1B6-9732-4187-8A1D-7024C6818CBE/858/NASDAFoodPlanTemplate020906.pdf).

### CALENDAR

**Jun. 4 - 7, 2006: Texas Association for School Nutrition Annual Conference.** Austin Convention Center, Austin, TX. Go to [www.tsfsa.org](http://www.tsfsa.org) for more information.

**Sep. 27-29, 2006: Food Safety Education Conference.** Adam's Mark Hotel, Denver, CO. International, Federal, state, and local experts will present cutting edge information on at-risk and other populations. Registration form at [www.fsis.usda.gov/Denver2006/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Denver2006/). For further information, e-mail [Denver2006@nsf.org](mailto:Denver2006@nsf.org).

### FEDERAL REGISTER

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 03/03/06, p. 10914. USDA proposes a rule under which state agencies would collect and report information related to faith-based and community organizations currently participating and applying to participate in Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) nutrition assistance programs. This information would be added to existing collections for the affected programs

and would enable FNS to identify the faith-based and community organizations participating in FNS programs, determine the level of participation of faith-based and community organizations, ensure that FNS' programs are open to all eligible organizations, and evaluate the effectiveness of its technical assistance and outreach efforts. It will not adversely impact the application or participation of any organization or institution currently participating in, or seeking to participate in FNS nutrition assistance programs. Comments, referencing Docket ID Number 403, must be received by 06/01/06 to [snpproposal@fns.usda.gov](mailto:snpproposal@fns.usda.gov), fax 703/305-2879, or mail Keith Churchill, Section Chief, Child and Adult Care and Summer Food Service Programs, Policy and Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, FNS, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Rm. 634, Alexandria, VA 22302, or through [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). For more information, contact Keith Churchill, above address, or by phone, 703/305-2590.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 03/06/06, p. 11209. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announces the availability of a draft guidance entitled "Guidance for Industry: Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Fresh-Cut Fruits and Vegetables." It complements FDA's current good manufacturing practices (CGMP) regulations by providing specific guidance on processing fresh-cut produce to minimize microbial food safety hazards of most fresh-cut fruits and vegetables sold to consumers in ready-to-eat form. Submit requests for single copies (with a self-addressed adhesive label and referencing Docket No. 2006D-0079) to the Office of Plant and Dairy Foods (HFS-306), Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, 5100 Paint Branch Pkwy., College Park, MD 20740, call 301/436-1400, or fax 301/436-2651. Submit written comments on the draft guidance and proposed information collection, referencing Docket No. 2006D-0079, by 05/05/06 to the Division of Dockets

Management (HFA-305), FDA, 5630 Fishers Lane, Rm. 1061, Rockville, MD 20852, or electronically at [www.fda.gov/dockets/ecomments](http://www.fda.gov/dockets/ecomments). For more information, contact Amy Green at 301/436-2025 or [amy.green@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:amy.green@fda.hhs.gov).

- USDA, 03/07/06, p. 11373. FNS invites comments on information collection regarding the National Hunger Clearinghouse Database Form under contract with World Hunger Year. Comments must be received by 05/08/06 to Pam Phillips, Director, Consumer and Community Affairs, Office of Communications and Governmental Affairs, FNS, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Rm. 912, Alexandria, VA 22302. For more information, contact Pam Phillips 703/305-2298.

### TEXAS REGISTER

- Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), 03/10/06, p. 1590. Department of State Health Services (DSHS) proposes changes concerning current good manufacturing and good warehousing practice in manufacturing, packing, or holding human food. The new section and amendments are necessary to update current practices in regard to food safety during manufacturing and storage and distribution. Comments must be submitted by 04/09/06 to Julie W. Loera., Manager, Foods Group, DSHS, 1100 West 49th St., Austin, TX 78756, 512/834-6670, or [Julie.Loera@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:Julie.Loera@dshs.state.tx.us). For further information, call 512/458-7111 x 6972.
- HHSC, 03/10/06, p. 1654. DSHS adopts, without changes, the repeal of sections and new sections concerning the regulation of retail food establishments as published in the 08/26/05 *Texas Register*. New rules are needed to reflect the current science and knowledge regarding best practices, emerging pathogens and new retail food technologies and are consistent with the current FDA model Food Code ([www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fc05-toc.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fc05-toc.html)). Effective 03/15/06. For more information, call 512/458-7111 x 6972.



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