







## The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and The State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)

Government distribution of surplus commodities (especially cheese) began in 1981. In 1988 Congress expanded the program and required the USDA to purchase additional commodities for low-income households and local emergency feeding organizations. The State Food Purchase Program was created during the economic recession of the early 1980s as a complement to the federally funded TEFAP program. Now, it is the larger of the two programs.

TEFAP is high quality food, consisting of canned fruits, juices, beef and pork, instant milk, dry pasta and baking mix to name just a few things. It is stored in five distribution centers across the state, ready for counties to accept delivery. The counties then distribute the product to food pantries and soup kitchens. SFPP provides grants to be used by county governments or their designated "lead agencies" to purchase, process, repackage, transport or store food products, and to distribute that food to soup kitchens, food pantries, homeless shelters, and other charitable food programs.

 <p>Who can provide the service?</p>	<p>Churches, community groups, civic groups, and other non-profit organizations can distribute these foods. Interested programs should call the "lead agency" in their county and ask how to begin receiving these commodities. To obtain the name of the lead agency in your county, call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-787-2940 or call the Pennsylvania Hunger Action Center at 717-233-6705.</p>
 <p>How is it financed?</p>	<p>The SFPP is a state-funded program to augment the foods available for distribution within the charitable food network. The SFPP is a line item in the state budget for \$18 million and the money is distributed to the counties. TEFAP food comes to Pennsylvania from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. About \$5.0 million in food is funded annually by a congressional appropriation; additional "bonus commodities" are made available to Pennsylvania by the USDA from time to time through purchases it makes to support commodity prices. The value of bonus commodities coming to Pennsylvania fluctuates from year to year in the range of \$5 - \$10 million.</p>
 <p>Who can receive this service?</p>	<p>In Pennsylvania recipients must be below 150% of the poverty level to receive TEFAP and SFPP food. About 300,000 households receive food assistance from either SFPP or TEFAP each quarter.</p>
 <p>What is provided?</p>	<p>A variety of nutritious foods including meat, poultry, dairy, vegetables, fruits, and grains are part of this program. Products include perishable, non-perishable, and frozen. Pantries distribute foods by the bag (a few days' supply) at weekly distributions, or in boxes for less frequent distributions.</p>
 <p>Contact</p>	<p>Charitable food programs that serve people up to 150% of the poverty level are chosen by the county's lead agency.</p> <p>To inquire about the SFPP or the TEFAP lead agency in your county, call the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-787-2940 or the PA Hunger Action Center at 717-233-6705. To identify the charitable food programs in your area, call the Community Action Agency in your county.</p>
 <p>Suggestions for advocacy</p>	<p>In July, 2007, the PA General Assembly cut SFPP by \$750,000. Let your state representatives know how much this program is needed and that its funding level should be restored.</p>