

Recommendation 1: Make the Commodity Supplemental Food Program Available in Every State.

The 2007 Farm Bill should extend the authorization for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) through 2012 and incrementally increase CSFP appropriations to expand the program over the next ten years so that, by the end of this period, the benefits of the program are extended to nearly 500,000 more seniors. During the next five years, the 18 states that currently do not have the Program should be authorized to participate. Specific provisions should be included to require USDA to conduct an evaluation of the program in the third year and maximize caseload each year by making full use of CSFP inventory and carryover from preceding years, and accessing all available resources from bonus commodity holdings and CCC stocks. The new costs estimate for this recommendation is \$1.1 billion.

Rationale: Proper nutrition for seniors promotes health, treats chronic disease, decreases length of hospital stays and saves health care dollars. CSFP is a vital program, especially in states such as Pennsylvania with large and growing senior populations. CSFP was created to address hunger in specific population groups in a way that mutually promoted agriculture policy and alleviate hunger through the use of food commodities acquired by the government to support farm prices. The program is an important outlet for the types of food commodities supported under farm programs, as well as an increasingly important instrument in meeting the nutritional and dietary needs of special low-income populations. The boxes of prescribed foods are targeted to help meet the specific nutritional needs of very vulnerable populations. According to America's Second Harvest-The Nation's Food Bank Network, "Ensuring that these vulnerable Americans are able to access wholesome, nutritious foods through CSFP is extremely important, as hunger increases their risk for stroke, exacerbates pre-existing ill health conditions, limits the efficacy of many prescription drugs, and may affect brain chemistry increasing the incidence of depression and isolation." Criticisms of the program have included the fact that the program is not in operation in all states and the lack of program evaluation. Both are remedied in this recommendation.

Description: CSFP provides federal commodity food, nutrition education, and related services to pregnant and post-partum women, children under 6 (exclusive of WIC recipients), and senior citizens 60 and over each month who are at nutritional risk due to low income and poor diet. 90% of the current monthly participants are elderly. The program is currently in 32 States, 2 Indian Tribal Organizations, and the District of Columbia. Currently, five states have USDA approved plans and pending the necessary funds to begin operations. CSFP provides food and funds through state governments to food banks and other community organizations. CSFP food packages are designed to meet the specific nutritional needs of these vulnerable people and include fruits and vegetables, juices, meats, fish, peanut butter, cereals and grain products, cheese and other dairy products. In addition to federal resources, CSFP is supported at the community level by three million volunteer hours, hundreds of non-profit and faith based organizations and locally raised and donated resources. Consequently, CSFP can provide food packages with a retail value of about \$50 for a cost to the federal government of

approximately \$15. CSFP also provides for Food Stamp Program outreach and helps people unable to access food stamps including homebound seniors.

Mechanics: The recommendation calls for the expansion of CSFP to the five states with USDA approved plans in the first year and allows for the addition of five more states in each of the four subsequent years until CSFP is in operation in all states. To allow for a modest expansion CSFP during the next ten years, a 3.5% annual increase in administration and food costs and 5.5% annual growth in caseload are also recommended.

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