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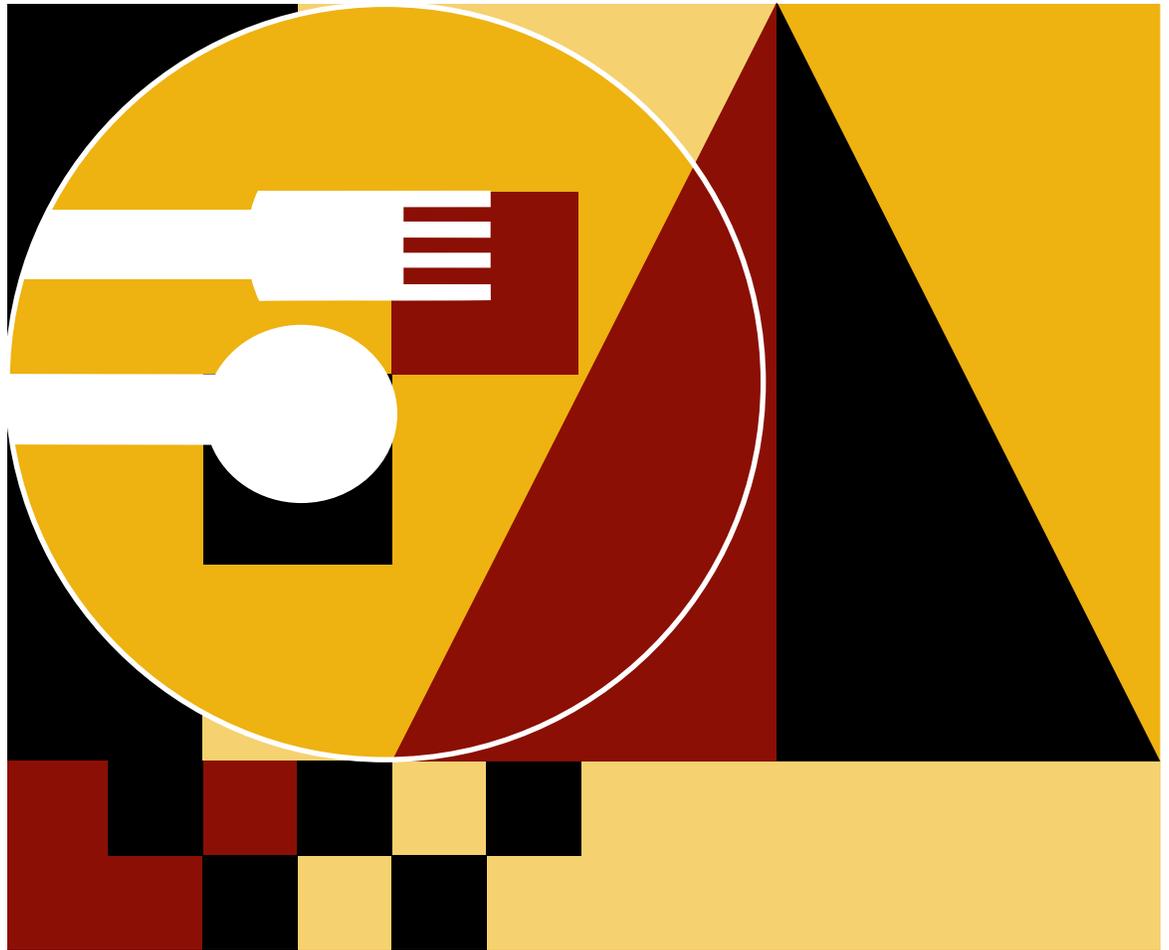
Economic
Research
Service



Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program

Final Report Fiscal 2009 Activities

Economic Research that Informs Food and Nutrition Assistance Policy



*Food Assistance & Nutrition
Research Program*

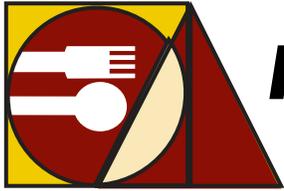
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Food Assistance & Nutrition Research Program

Chapter 1. The Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program

In 1998, USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) created the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP) to study and evaluate the Nation's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly the Food Stamp Program—the child nutrition programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC). Since its establishment, FANRP has become the premier source of economic research on food and nutrition assistance programs in the United States. FANRP has supported research on a wide range of policy-relevant food and nutrition assistance topics, resulting in over 700 peer-reviewed publications. FANRP has also enhanced national surveys by adding a food assistance dimension and broadened the participation of social science and nutrition science scholars in food assistance and nutrition policy issues.

This report provides a summary of FANRP and its activities in fiscal 2009. Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the program. Chapter 2 focuses on FANRP activities conducted in fiscal 2009 (October 1, 2008-September 30, 2009) and includes a discussion of the year's key research accomplishments along with a list of all FANRP-sponsored publications released during the year. Appendix A lists all the institutions, universities, and government agencies that have been awarded FANRP projects since FANRP started in 1998, and appendix B lists all the ongoing FANRP Projects funded prior to fiscal 2009.

FANRP Mission and Program Principles

Food assistance and nutrition programs receive substantial Federal funding and affect the lives of millions of Americans. For example, in fiscal 2008, monthly participation in SNAP averaged 28.4 million Americans at an annual cost of about \$38 billion.¹ On a typical school day, some 31.0 million children participated in the National School Lunch Program and 10.6 million children participated in the School Breakfast Program,

¹Participation and expenditure figures are from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

which together cost almost \$12 billion. On average, WIC served 8.7 million people each month at an annual cost of \$6 billion. At some point during the year, one in five Americans were estimated to participate in at least one of USDA's 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs. Expenditures for all of the food and nutrition assistance programs totaled almost \$61 billion in fiscal 2008, or about two-thirds of USDA's annual budget.

Given the significance of the food and nutrition assistance programs to both program participants and American taxpayers, it is important that FANRP provide objective, scientifically rigorous studies and evaluations to ensure that these programs operate effectively and efficiently. FANRP's mission is to conduct "economic research that informs food and nutrition assistance policy." Our goal is a high-quality, multidisciplinary program that focuses on today's problems while addressing tomorrow's issues. The program principles behind FANRP ensure the reliability and usefulness of the research.

FANRP Principles

- Research that meets the needs of all stakeholders—program participants, USDA, Congress, and the public.
- Integrated, comprehensive program that conducts research in the broader context of the current and future economic and social environments.
- Broad array of public and private entities directly involved in the research, evaluation, and review efforts.
- Integration of ERS staff expertise in the development, implementation, and accomplishment of research projects.
- Scientifically rigorous studies and evaluations with verifiable and unbiased results.
- Rigorous internal and external review of research results.
- Public availability of data.
- Wide distribution of research findings.
- Development and maintenance of continuous data sets.

Program Overview

FANRP has four key components: conducting research on food and nutrition assistance programs, supporting data development, expanding the research base, and disseminating research findings.

Research on Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

FANRP's research on the food and nutrition assistance programs targets the critical information needs of USDA, Congress, program managers, program participants, the research community, and the public at large. To address the needs of this diverse group, FANRP employs a multifaceted approach to identify priorities and carry out its research mission.

Intramural and Extramural Components

FANRP integrates an intramural and extramural research program. The intramural program, conducted by ERS staff, continues ERS's long and distinguished history of conducting rigorous, objective, and policy-relevant economic research. Through the use of contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements, FANRP's extramural program allows ERS to marshal the most innovative, creative, and forward-looking researchers possible and to use the resources of such institutions as the National Academy of Sciences, National Science Foundation, National Bureau of Economic Research, Urban Institute, RAND Corporation, and numerous universities across the country.² The extramural research is bolstered by close involvement with ERS staff. All studies, intramural and extramural, are strengthened by ERS's concentration of research expertise and specialized knowledge of USDA programs and policies.

Research Themes

Using a strong economic framework to guide the research, FANRP has expanded understanding on a wide range of food and nutrition assistance issues. Three core areas of research provide a foundation through which year-to-year priorities are determined:

- **Program Outcomes and Economic Well-Being of Participants**—USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs share the primary goal of ensuring the health of vulnerable Americans by providing access to a nutritionally adequate diet. Economic factors influence participant's behavior and the degree to which

program goals are achieved. Through changes in food expenditures, the programs also influence the economic well-being of participants, food security, the depth and severity of poverty, and income volatility.

- **Program Access and Economic Determinants of Participation**—USDA seeks to ensure access for all who are eligible to participate in its food and nutrition assistance programs. The extent to which eligible individuals participate in programs and the factors that influence those decisions are key to measuring how well the program is reaching its target population. FANRP provides information on the population served and on the eligible but unserved population to determine if the program is reaching those who are most vulnerable and in need of program resources. Analysis of the economic factors affecting program participation allows policymakers and program analysts to better anticipate and forecast fluctuations in program participation and can influence budgetary decisions for the program.
- **Program Dynamics and Efficiency**—With increased Federal Government focus on accountability and efficiency, reliable and unbiased information on how the Nation's food and nutrition assistance programs are administered and operated is increasingly important. An essential objective of FANRP is to provide research to policymakers that improves program operations. As such, FANRP has conducted a number of studies mandated by Congress. Because food and nutrition assistance programs interact with various industry sectors and markets, FANRP also conducts research on how the programs impact food prices and farm income.

In developing the annual research priorities, FANRP works closely with USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the agency responsible for administering the Department's food assistance and nutrition programs. FANRP also seeks input from a broad constituency of policy officials, researchers, practitioners, advocates, industry groups, and service providers.

In conjunction with these activities, FANRP sponsors an annual roundtable discussion, open to the public, to identify crucial research and information needs that would support food assistance and nutrition programs and to ensure the policy and program relevance of the annual research agenda. The fiscal 2009 roundtable discussion, "Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Conference: Emerging Issues and Recent Findings and Emerging Issues," was held December 4, 2008, at

²See appendix A for a list of all institutions, universities, and government agencies that have been awarded FANRP projects since its establishment in 1998.

ERS in Washington DC. The conference agenda can be found at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/ConferenceCenter/FANRP/FANRPDec2008/Agenda.htm>.

Data Development

FANRP has made data development a major priority because timely access to policy-relevant data sustain research on food assistance programs and the environment in which they operate. Although it is not always possible to anticipate future policy issues, investments in new and ongoing data collections provide a critical foundation for addressing new and emerging food assistance issues. Adding a food assistance dimension to existing surveys has proven to be an especially effective investment in expanding research capital.

FANRP funding has enhanced food assistance data collection in a number of national surveys, including:

- American Time Use Survey (ATUS)
- Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals (CSFII)
- Current Population Survey (CPS) Food Security Supplement
- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)
- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten Class (ECLS-K)
- National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)

Brief descriptions of national surveys and data sets useful in food and nutrition assistance research are available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/data>.

Expanding the Research Base

FANRP's extramural research component uses two main mechanisms to promote research from a broad arena—the Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program and the RIDGE program.

The Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program

The Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program encourages new and innovative research

and joint projects with ERS researchers. The program awards grants and cooperative agreements between \$100,000 and \$400,000.

- Grants are awarded when the research project supports the general public good and does not require substantial involvement between ERS staff and the extramural researchers during the performance of the award.
- Cooperative agreements, awarded when the research project requires more substantial involvement between ERS and the extramural researchers, enable ERS staff to supplement their own expertise with the knowledge and resources of academic and private institutions.³

The program is announced publicly via the ERS website, ERS e-mail updates, and postings on various listservs (e-mail-based discussion forums). The proposal evaluation process includes peer review panels consisting of experts from academia, government, and the private sector. In addition to reviewer's comments, FANRP's

Electronic Database of all FANRP Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Information on the almost 250 projects funded through FANRP's Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program through fiscal 2009 has been compiled in an electronic database that can be accessed at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Projects/>

For each project, information is provided on year(s) funded, amount of award, project objectives, project status (i.e., completed or ongoing), topic area(s), data set(s) analyzed, and all peer-reviewed publications resulting from the research. For all ERS-published reports and articles a link to the full report is provided. The database is searchable by:

- Title
- Year initiated
- Topic
- Data set analyzed
- The exact word(s) or phrases contained in the project's title

³FANRP uses two types of cooperative agreements: cooperative research agreements and assistance-type cooperative agreements. In a cooperative research agreement, ERS staff and the extramural researcher(s) are close collaborators and contributors to support the research. In an assistance-type cooperative agreement, the extramural researcher(s) are responsible for conducting the greater part of the work on the project. Cooperative research agreements require both parties to contribute to the funding of the project; assistance-type cooperative agreements do not have this joint funding requirement.

selection process considers coverage of priority research areas, overlap between proposals and ongoing projects, program needs, potential benefits from research collaborations on particular projects, and availability of funding.

In fiscal 2006, FANRP implemented Grants.gov application procedures to the Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program. Grants.gov uses electronic technology to enhance the process of tracking Federal grant opportunities. Applicants can both search for and apply for grant funds online through a single access point (i.e., a common website), dramatically streamlining the application, review, and award process. Applications to the Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program are allowed in paper as well as in electronic form.

The RIDGE Program

Formerly known as the Small Grants Program, the program was renamed the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE) program in 2006. The new name better reflects the program's purposes: (1) to stimulate new and innovative research on food and nutrition policy issues and (2) to broaden the participation of social science scholars in the research effort.

The program supports both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore economic, nutrition, and health outcomes of participation in USDA food assistance programs as well as issues surrounding program implementation and delivery. RIDGE grants last for 1 year; most are in the range of \$20,000-\$40,000.⁴ Funded by ERS, the RIDGE program is administered in partnership with selected universities and their associated research institutes. Each institution takes a different aspect of food assistance, nutrition, or subgroup of recipients as its primary focus. From the program's

RIDGE Projects and Summaries

A list of all 188 completed RIDGE projects awarded through fiscal 2009 and their summaries, searchable by keyword(s), research institution, investigator, and year awarded, is available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Funding/RIDGEprojects.asp>

⁴FANRP sponsors an annual RIDGE Program Conference in which grant recipients present the results of their work on food assistance programs, food security, and nutrition. A copy of the agenda for the 2009 conference held on October 15-16, 2009, at ERS in Washington, DC, can be found at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/ConferenceCenter/FANRP/FANRPOctober09/agenda.htm>.

inception in fiscal 1998, up to fiscal 2009, RIDGE was administered through five academic/research institutions. The five institutions and their area of focus were as follows:

The Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, University of Chicago—Interactions between food assistance and other welfare programs and linkages between the macroeconomy and food assistance.

Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin—Understanding the relationships among the food assistance safety net, poverty, and well-being.

The American Indian Studies Program at the University of Arizona—The relationship between family poverty and food assistance programs among Native Americans.

The Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University—The relationship between food assistance and rural people, families, and communities in the South.

The Department of Nutrition at the University of California, Davis—The impact of food assistance programs on nutritional risk indicators (clinical, anthropometric, biochemical, and dietary), food purchasing practices, and food insecurity.

In fiscal 2009, FANRP announced the recompetition of the grants that fund the partner institutions in the RIDGE Program. The recompetition provides renewed focus on economic aspects of food and nutrition assistance research and consolidates the RIDGE Centers from the current five institutions to two—one center focusing on food and nutrition assistance research at the national level (the RIDGE Center for National studies) and the second center targeting specific populations (the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies). Subject to the availability of funds, initial-year grants will be approximately \$250,000 each for the RIDGE Center for National Studies and the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies. The deadline for submission of applications was September 15, 2009. The awards will be announced in fiscal 2010.

Research Dissemination

In accordance with program principles, FANRP strives to make all of its research readily available and in accessible formats for a variety of technical and non-technical audiences. To do this, FANRP uses publications and hosts and participates in various conferences. ERS-produced reports are the primary vehicle for

documenting and showcasing FANRP research. ERS publishes an array of outputs for a variety of purposes and audiences. In 2005, ERS revamped its publication series. Economic Research Reports (ERRs) are a departmental series and are available in both paper and electronic form.⁵ These technical or semitechnical reports present original economic analysis, findings, and implications primarily for public decisionmakers and researchers.

Other departmental series include Economic Briefs (EBs) and Economic Information Bulletins (EIBs). These nontechnical publications, intended for a broader audience, provide concise, timely insights from recent ERS research. *The Food Assistance Landscape* is an EIB that is published annually. It provides an overview of USDA's domestic food assistance programs, including recent program statistics, information on related economic and social indicators, and highlights of recent FANRP research (Oliveira, 2009).

Contractor and Cooperator Reports (CCRs) result from FANRP's extramural research program.⁶ The views expressed in CCRs, unlike reports in the departmental series, are those of the authors and not necessarily those of ERS or USDA. In addition to the series of reports, articles on food assistance and nutrition-related topics are often featured in the ERS magazine, *Amber Waves*.

FANRP research targeted to narrower, more technical audiences can be found in a wide range of peer-reviewed professional journals.

Each year, ERS staff also present findings from FANRP research at numerous professional meetings across the country. The meetings are sponsored by such groups as the American Association of SNAP Directors, the National WIC Association, the School Nutrition Association, the American Public Human Services Association, the National Association for Welfare Research and Statistics, the Society for Nutrition Education, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, and the American Agricultural Economics Association.

To encourage interaction among researchers and policymakers, FANRP organizes and sponsors conferences and workshops. Two are held annually—the RIDGE Program Conference and the Food Assistance Research Conference: Recent Research and Emerging Issues. Other conferences, often co-sponsored with other institutions, are hosted to address timely and policy-relevant topics. For example, in previous years, FANRP hosted conferences on Income Volatility and Implications for Food Assistance Programs, Food Security Measurement and Research, Rural Dimensions of Welfare Reform, and the Economics of Obesity.

Electronic Database of FANRP-Supported Research

FANRP has compiled a web-accessible database of all peer-reviewed reports and articles based on FANRP-supported research published at ERS and elsewhere. The database is searchable by:

- Title
- Lead author
- Topic
- Year of publication
- Data set analyzed
- Word(s) or phrases contained in the publication's bibliographic citation

For all ERS-published reports and articles, a link to the full report is provided. The database can be accessed at www.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/ResearchFindings/

⁵ERRs replaced the Food and Nutrition Research Report (FANRR) series.

⁶CCRs replaced the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program's E-FAN series.

Chapter 2. Fiscal 2009 FANRP Activities

This chapter describes FANRP activities in fiscal 2009.⁷ The first section focuses on FANRP's extramural program and includes a description of all FANRP projects funded in fiscal 2009. The second section summarizes some of the key research accomplishments resulting from FANRP's extramural as well as intramural components. The third section provides citations of all FANRP-sponsored publications published during the year.

Extramural Research Program, Fiscal 2009

To meet the program needs of the Department and promote research from a broad arena, FANRP uses several different funding mechanisms in its extramural programs, including grants and cooperative agreements, interagency agreements, and contracts. Except for the continuation of a visiting scholar program initiated in fiscal 2008, all FANRP extramural funds in fiscal 2009 were redirected to a new survey of food choices and acquisition patterns by U.S. households. This redirection of funds was a unique, one-time opportunity to invest in critically needed research data.

The National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey

In fiscal 2009, FANRP contributed \$4,270,000 toward a contract to design, develop, and carry out the National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS) with a nationally representative sample of all U.S. households.⁸ ERS will collaborate with Mathematica Policy Research in designing and implementing the survey. This effort will be carried out with the support of ERS's Consumer Data Program and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

For this project, food acquisition refers to obtaining food from any and all sources, including foods obtained for free (e.g., at an emergency food kitchen or through one of USDA's school meals programs). A subset of food acquisition occasions involves food purchases—i.e., instances in which the vendor/source of food receives payment, regardless of whether the payment is from the household's own income or from a government program, such as SNAP or WIC. The survey will track food acquisition activities for all household members for at least 7 days. Food prices will also be obtained

from the respondents. In addition, information on food assistance program participation, household food security status, meal patterns, height and weight of household members, location of residence, nutrition knowledge, food access, shopping behaviors, and income volatility and the demographics of the household and its members will be collected.

The survey will gather unique, detailed data not previously available to researchers. Particular attention will be paid to low-income households in the data collection. It is critical for USDA to better understand the food acquisition behaviors of low-income, program-eligible households in order to serve this segment of the population with efficient and effective programs. Among the issues the data from the survey can be used to address are:

- What participants in SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program, buy and how much it costs.
- How participation in food assistance programs influences food purchases.
- The relationship between food purchase decisions and levels of food security.
- How price and income influence food choices and the dietary quality of food purchases.
- How access and retail outlet choice and location influence food purchases and the resulting dietary quality of purchases.
- The influence of nutrition knowledge on food purchases.

The base contract includes the collection of the required information for low-income households (including both households participating in SNAP and nonparticipating households). Among the options to the base contract is the collection of pertinent information for higher income households.

Data collected from the survey will be made publicly available and will provide the basis for future research. FANRP's Competitive Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program and the RIDGE program are expected to resume in fiscal 2010, subject to the availability of funds.

⁷See appendix B for a list of some of the ongoing FANRP projects funded prior to fiscal 2009.

⁸The project also received additional ERS funds apart from FANRP.

Table 1—FANRP Extramural Research Projects, Fiscal 2009

| Research Projects/Awards | Objective | Estimated Cost |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Food Choices: Economic Determinants and Consequences</i> | | |
| The National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Study <i>Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.</i> | To design, develop, and carry out a nationally representative survey to collect information on the food purchases and acquisition patterns of U.S. households. The survey will (1) describe the food and beverage purchases and acquisition patterns of the population universe and subgroups; (2) characterize the nutritional quality of households' food purchases and acquired food; (3) characterize the nature of food access of the population universe and groups; (4) estimate the influence of income and prices on food purchases, including to the extent possible, income, own-price, and cross-price elasticities for purchased food items (both home and away); (5) assess levels of food security of the population universe and subgroups using the 30-day, adult food security measure; (6) assess levels of knowledge about diet, nutrition, and health; and (7) assess why food purchase and food security outcomes differ for SNAP participants and low-income nonparticipants and identify the factors that account for those differences. | \$4,270,000 |
| <i>Amendments to Ongoing Projects</i> | | |
| Visiting Scholar Program <i>George Washington University</i> | To examine the feasibility of linking food assistance program administrative data to existing national surveys. Underreporting of program participation in national surveys is well documented. Linking administrative data to surveys, such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation, can improve management of food and nutrition assistance programs by increasing understanding of the characteristics of program participants and eligible nonparticipants. Additional funding was provided to extend the analysis to determine the feasibility of linking SNAP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) administrative data to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). | \$120,815 |

Key Research Accomplishments, Fiscal 2009

Findings from FANRP's intramural and extramural programs were published in over 60 ERS research reports or peer-reviewed scientific journals in fiscal 2009. This section presents highlights from some of these publications in the areas of program outcomes and economic well-being of participants, program access and economic determinants of participation, and program dynamics and efficiency.

Program Outcomes and Economic Well-Being of Participants

- Each year since 1998, FANRP has published an annual statistical report on the level of household food insecurity in the United States that informs policymakers and the public about the extent to which U.S. households consistently have economic access to enough food. The 2007 household food security report indicated that, throughout the year, 88.9 percent of U.S. households were food secure, meaning that they had access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members (Nord et al., 2008). The remaining 11.1 percent (13 million households) were food insecure at least some time during the year. These households, at some time during the year, had difficulty providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of resources. About one-third of food-insecure households (4.7 million, or 4.1 percent of all U.S. households) had very low food security. In these households, the food intake of some household members was reduced and their normal eating patterns were disrupted because of the household's food insecurity. Just over half of all food-insecure households participated in one or more of the three largest Federal food and nutrition assistance programs—SNAP, the National School Lunch Program, and WIC—during the month prior to USDA's annual Food Security Survey.
- Another study focused on food insecurity in households with children (Nord, 2009). The study found that nearly 16 percent of households with children were food insecure sometime during 2007, including 8.3 percent in which children were food insecure and 0.8 percent in which one or more children experienced very low food



security. About 85 percent of households with food-insecure children had a working adult, including 70 percent with a full-time worker. Fewer than half of households with food-insecure children included an adult educated past high school. Thus, job opportunities and wage rates for less educated workers are important factors affecting the food security of children. In 2007, Federal food and nutrition assistance programs provided benefits to four out of five low-income, food-insecure households with children.

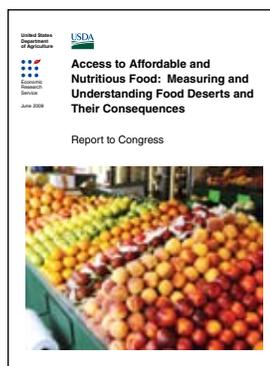
- One of the most worrisome aspects of the growing tide of obesity in the United States is the high rate of overweight among children. Over one in five young children, ages 2 to 5, are at risk of being overweight. As the number of young children participating in WIC has increased over time, the number of overweight children has increased as well. A report by Ver Ploeg (2009) examined whether these increases were related. That is, does WIC participation contribute to the problem of overweight among U.S. children? Results from the study based on data covering the years from 1988-1994 and 1999-2006 show no association between WIC participation and Body Mass Index (BMI) or the probability of being at risk of overweight.
- Gleason et al. (2009) examined the dietary patterns of school meal program participants and nonparticipants and the relationship between school meal participation and children's Body Mass Index (BMI). School Breakfast Program (SBP) participants ate more low-nutrient energy-dense (LNE) baked goods and more calories at breakfast than did nonparticipants. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participants had lower intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and a lower percentage of calories from LNE foods and beverages than did nonparticipants. Overall, NSLP participation was not significantly related to students' BMI, although participants were less likely to be overweight or obese than nonparticipants among Black students but more likely to be so among "other race" students. SBP participants had significantly lower BMI than did nonparticipants, possibly because SBP participants are more likely to eat breakfast and eat more at breakfast, spreading calorie intake more evenly over the course of the day.
- Americans' diets, particularly those of low-income households, fall short of government recommendations in the quantity of fruits and vegetables consumed. Some proposals suggest that a price subsidy for those products would encourage low-income Americans to consume more of them. Dong and Lin (2009) estimated that a 10-percent subsidy would encourage low-income

Americans to increase their consumption of fruits by 2.1-5.2 percent and vegetables by 2.1-4.9 percent. The annual cost of such a subsidy for low-income Americans would be about \$310 million for fruits and \$270 million for vegetables. And most would still not meet Federal dietary recommendations.

- Changing small factors that influence consumer choice may lead to healthier eating within controlled settings, such as school cafeterias. A report by Just et al. (2008) describes a behavioral experiment in a college cafeteria to assess the effects of various payment options and menu selection methods on food choices. The results indicate that payment options, such as cash or debit cards, can significantly affect food choices. College students using a card that prepaid only for healthful foods made more nutritious choices than students using either cash or general debit cards. How and when individuals select their food can also influence food choices. College students who preselected their meals from a menu board made significantly different food choices than students who ordered their meals while viewing the foods in line.

Program Access and Economic Determinants of Participation

- Limited access to nutritious food and relatively easier access to less nutritious food may be linked to poor diets and, ultimately, to obesity and diet-related diseases. In 2008, Congress directed USDA to conduct a 1-year study to examine the extent of the problem of limited access to affordable and nutritious food in the United States. The resulting Report to Congress indicates that access to a supermarket or large grocery store is a problem for a small percentage of households (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). About 2.3 million, or 2.2 percent of all households, live more than a mile from a supermarket and do not have access to a vehicle. An additional 3.4 million households, or 3.2 percent of all households, live between one-half to 1 mile and do not have access to a vehicle. Urban core areas with limited food access were characterized by higher levels of racial segregation and greater income inequality. In small towns and rural areas with limited food access, the lack of transportation infrastructure was the most defining characteristic.



- Moore et al. (2009), investigated factors that influence students' participation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program using recently collected data on a large, nationally representative sample of students certified for free and reduced-price meals during the 2005-06 school year. Results show that, although eligible students are very likely to participate in the programs (i.e., pick up the meal offered that day), eligible elementary school students are more likely to participate than are middle or high school students. Likewise, students who like the taste of the meals are more likely to participate than are students who do not like the taste. In addition, if students now eligible for reduced-price lunches were instead given free lunches, they would participate more than they do now. The same was not strictly the case, however, for breakfast. Finally, the study suggests that analysts should use caution in relying on parents' reports of a student's participation to estimate yearly school meal participation. Parental reports of the previous day's or previous week's participation tend to overstate participation, which results in higher reported annual participation rates than is true according to administrative data.

- Participation in the School Breakfast Program is much less common than participation in the National School Lunch Program, even among children with access to both programs. A report by Bartfeld et al. (2009) examined the determinants of participation in the School Breakfast Program among third grade public school students, as well as the impacts of the program on food insecurity and children's risk of skipping breakfast. The study found that students are more likely to participate when breakfast is served in the classroom, when time available for breakfast in school is longer, and when they come from lower income or time-constrained households. Children with access to the School Breakfast Program are more likely to eat breakfast in the morning, which may enhance food security among families at the margin of food insecurity.
- A report by Moffitt and Ribar (2009) examines how earnings variability affects Food Stamp Program participation and how the effects differ depending on a household's income position relative to the eligibility threshold. The study uses survey data from a longitudinal survey of low-income families with children living in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio. The data have been linked to administrative case records on program participation. The study estimates longitudinal fixed-effect regression models of the times that households spend on food stamps and distinguishes between households that appear to be eligible

or ineligible for food stamps based on longer run income data. The study found that temporary earnings increases and higher annual earnings variability reduce participation for households with low levels of permanent income. Higher annual earnings variability also reduces program participation for higher income households, but the effect is smaller in magnitude.

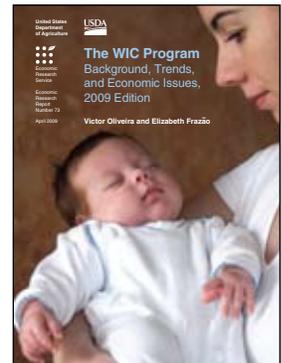
- Mablí et al. (2009) used a unique combination of State panel data and qualitative interviews to examine the economic and policy factors associated with the sharp increase in the number of Food Stamp Program participants between 2000 and 2006. This period is particularly interesting because the rise in participation between 2003 and 2006 occurred while the national economy was improving. The study found that higher numbers of participants were associated with higher State unemployment rates and lower State labor force participation rates and minimum wages. The introduction of food stamp policies designed to expand eligibility and ease reporting also increased the number of participants. In addition, program outreach efforts were associated with higher caseloads in times of low unemployment. Interviews with State Food Stamp Program administrators and staff at community-based organizations reinforce the quantitative findings and point to declining local economic conditions and high-quality program outreach as the main sources of caseload growth.

Program Dynamics and Efficiency

- SNAP—formerly the Food Stamp Program—is designed to provide low-income families with increased food purchasing power to obtain a nutritionally adequate diet. As in most other Federal Government assistance programs, benefits are adjusted in response to rising prices—in this case, rising food prices. Hanson and Andrews (2008) estimated the reduced purchasing power of the maximum food stamp benefit for fiscal years 1997-2008 and the first month of fiscal 2009 (October 2008). They concluded that the current method of adjustment results in a shortfall between the maximum food stamp benefit and the cost of a nutritionally adequate diet as specified by USDA's Thrifty Food Plan. During fiscal year (FY) 2007, the shortfall in the caseload-weighted maximum benefit for the program grew from \$7 in October 2006 to \$19 in September 2007. In FY 2008, the amount grew from almost \$8 in October 2007 to \$34 in July 2008 and to \$38 in September 2008. In an average month, food stamp households faced shortfalls of over \$2 in FY 2003, \$12 in FY 2007, and \$22

in FY 2008. These losses in food purchasing power account for 1 percent, 4 percent, and 7 percent of the maximum benefit in each respective year.

- The Food Stamp Program is intended to help low-income households afford a nutritionally adequate diet. Welfare (cash assistance) and food stamp policies have changed significantly since the 1990s. Klerman and Danielson (2009) examined 1990-2004 data to consider how the policy changes and the changing economic climate have affected the food stamp caseload over time. Results show that the food stamp caseload shifted sharply from nearly half receiving cash benefits from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to less than a fifth. The share of the caseload not receiving cash benefits from either TANF or Supplemental Security Income (nonpublic assistance, or NPA) increased sharply. The NPA caseload rose when the economy was weak and was sensitive to reporting requirements for the Food Stamp Program (for example, how often participants must be recertified as eligible). The decline in the share of the food stamp caseload that receives TANF is not well explained by the changes in the economy or program policies.
- WIC is USDA's third-largest food and nutrition assistance program, accounting for 10 percent of total Federal spending on food and nutrition assistance. About half of all infants and a quarter of all children ages 1-4 in the United States participate in the program that provides low-income women, infants, and children with supplemental food, nutrition education, and referrals to health care and other social services. A report by Oliveira and Frazao (2009) describes the WIC program—how it works, its history, program trends, and the characteristics of the population it serves. It also examines current issues facing WIC, focusing mainly on those with important economic implications. These issues include WIC's effect on the health of participants, continued program expansion, Federal funding and State incentives, the relationship between WIC and childhood obesity, and increasing infant formula costs.
- The WIC program has economic ramifications that extend beyond program recipients. For example, to the extent that WIC increases total food expenditures, WIC also affects the country's farm sector.



A report by Hanson and Oliveira (2009) estimated the revenues that farmers derive from sales of WIC foods and the number of farm jobs needed to produce these foods. Results indicated that in fiscal 2008, the \$4.6 billion of food purchased with WIC vouchers generated \$1.3 billion in farm revenue. Because WIC participants would have purchased some of these foods with their own money in the absence of the program, the net addition to farm revenue from WIC is estimated at \$331 million and the net increase in full-time-equivalent farm jobs at 2,640.

- Since 1972, WIC has provided free infant formula to low-income families. Today, infant formula purchases through the WIC program account for over half of all infant formula purchased in the United States. Beginning in the late 1980s, WIC agencies, in an effort to contain rising program costs, secured rebates from formula manufacturers through sole-source contracts for the infant formula they purchase. During 1980-2002, infant formula did not substantively change but real wholesale prices nearly doubled. A report by Betson (2009) examined the impact of providing free formula through the WIC program and its use of sole-source contracts to control program costs on the wholesale price of infant formula. The findings show that providing free formula to low-income families is the primary factor in the growth in real wholesale prices of formula and that sole-source contracts not only have reduced the cost of formula to the Government but also have retarded wholesale price growth.

Fiscal 2009 FANRP Publications

This section provides a list of all publications sponsored by FANRP (either directly or through the RIDGE Program) released in fiscal 2009. Two categories of publications are listed: (1) monographs and journal articles, and (2) working/discussion papers. Electronic copies of all ERS publications are available at www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/.

Monographs and Journal Articles

Agarwal, S., V. Sethi, P. Gupta, M. Jha, A. Agnihotri, and M. Nord. "Experiential Household Food Insecurity in an Urban Underserved Slum of North India," *Food Security*, Vol. 1, No. 3, September 2009.

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Appendix A. Institutions, Universities, and Government Agencies Awarded FANRP Projects, Fiscal 1998-2009

Institutions

Abt Associates Inc.
ACNielsen
Altarum Institute
ATMS
Boston Medical Center
Brookings Institution
Cancer Research Center of Hawaii
Channing Laboratory, Brigham and Woman's Hospital
Child Trends
Children's Hospital Medical Center (Cincinnati)
Committee on National Statistics
Health Systems Research
Information Resources, Inc.
IQ Solutions
Life Sciences Research Organization
Lewin Group
Macro International
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
National Academy of Sciences
National Bureau of Economic Research
National Science Foundation
ORC Macro, Inc.
Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation
RAND Corporation
Research Triangle Institute, Inc.
Resource Network International
Rockefeller Institute of Government
Society for Nutrition Education
Sphere Institute
United Nations University Centre
Urban Institute
World Health Organization

Universities

Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Auburn University
Baylor University
Boston University
Bryn Mawr College
Carnegie Mellon University
Cornell University

George Washington University
Harvard University
Indiana University
Iowa State University
Johns Hopkins University
Northwestern University
Louisiana Tech University
Medical College of Georgia Research Institute, Inc.
Middle Tennessee State University
North Carolina State University
Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Ohio State University
Oregon State University
Mississippi State University
South Dakota State University
Syracuse University
Texas A&M University
Tufts University
Tulane University
University of Arizona
University of Baltimore
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Davis
University of Chicago
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Illinois
University of Kansas Medical Center
University of Kentucky
University of Massachusetts
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota
University of Missouri
University of Notre Dame
University of North Carolina
University of Nevada
University of New Mexico
University of Oregon
University of South Carolina
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Tennessee
University of Utah
University of West Virginia
University of Wisconsin
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Yale University

Government Agencies

Agricultural Research Service, USDA
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA
Food and Drug Administration
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
National Agricultural Library, USDA
National Center for Education Statistics,
U.S. Department of Education

South Carolina Social Services
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
USDA Graduate School
Virginia Department of Social Services

Appendix B: Selected Ongoing FANRP Projects Funded Prior to Fiscal 2009

Through its annual identification of priority research areas, FANRP responds to immediate as well as long-term research needs. The following is a list of some of the important ongoing research projects funded by FANRP in previous years, sorted by program/topic.

Food Stamps/SNAP

- Assessing Effects of Food Stamps on Child Outcomes When Program Participation Is Misreported
- Effective Tax Rates and Guarantees and Food Stamp Program Participation
- Food Stamp Program Eligibility and Participation: A Comparison of Census Surveys and Administrative Data
- Interactions Between the Food Stamp Program and the Economy
- Long-Term Effects of Food Stamp Receipt During Childhood on Adult Outcomes
- State Trends in Food Stamp Program Eligibility and Participation Among Elderly Individuals

School Meals

- Economic Determinants of School Meal Participation
- Effects of Change From Universal-Free to Eligibility-Based School Breakfast Program
- Effects of Immigration on WIC and National School Lunch Program Caseloads
- The Effects of Subsidized School Meals on Childrens' Diet Quality

WIC

- Access to Healthy Foods: The Role of Market Competition, WIC Policy, and Vendor Attitudes
- Effects of Changes in WIC Food Packages on Redemptions
- Impact of Food Stamps and WIC on Health and Longrun Economic Outcomes

- The Effect of WIC on Household Food Expenditures: Assessing Available Data

Food Security

- Childrens' Food Security and Intakes from School Meals
- Employment, Home Meal Production, Food Spending, and Food Security in Food Stamp Households
- Food Sufficiency, the Role of Food Stamp Program Participation, Duration, and Policies

Obesity

- Effects on Childhood Obesity of Participation in Multiple Nutrition Assistance Programs
- The Multiple Contexts of Food Insecurity: Evaluating the Impact on Child Energy Balance
- The Role of Time Use in Promoting Healthy Energy Balance

Behavioral Economics

- Altering Social and Convenience Costs To Improve Students' Lunch Choices
- Identifying Behavioral Economics Factors Affecting Food Consumption

Other

- Food Stamp, NSLP, and WIC Underreporting in Household Surveys: Comparing Aggregates and Assessing the Implications
- Measuring Consumption Response to Prices in a Dynamic Model of Consumer Food Purchase Behavior
- The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations: Still an Acceptable Alternative to Food Stamps?

For more information on these projects, see the FANRP Project Descriptions Database on the ERS website at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/Projects/>.