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WHITE PAPER ON THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TEFAP) Final Report



August 2013

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that for three decades has helped supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including seniors, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost (USDA, FNS 2013a). A statutory funding formula allocates TEFAP resources to States based on indicators of need, including poverty and unemployment levels. States distribute USDA Foods to eligible recipient agencies, typically food banks. These agencies distribute the food to emergency feeding organizations that directly serve households and individuals in need.

TEFAP's State-administered infrastructure for distributing food to communities is well-integrated in the local emergency food assistance system. The program allows for distribution to those who need TEFAP foods most, particularly during economic recessions and disasters such as the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy in 2012. In recent years, TEFAP contributions to the emergency food assistance system have become increasingly important as other supports, such as private food donations, have not kept pace with demand. In addition, all USDA Foods offered through TEFAP are domestically grown, which supports farmers and rural communities.

TEFAP Serves Households and Individuals in Need

TEFAP participants¹ are a diverse group, with variable needs for emergency food assistance. They include low-income households and individuals (including families with children, seniors, and the newly unemployed) who obtain food for home consumption from food pantries, as well as low-income and homeless families and individuals who obtain meals from soup kitchens and shelters. Nationally, 5 percent of low-income households used a food pantry and 0.6 percent used a soup kitchen in 2011 (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a). In 2011, nearly 15 percent of all U.S. households and 38 percent of low-income U.S. households were food insecure, meaning their access to adequate food was limited by a lack of money or other resources (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012b). Among those households using emergency food assistance, roughly three-fourths are food insecure (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a; Mabli et al. 2010; Briefel et al. 2003).

TEFAP Serves Emergency Food Providers

An estimated \$547 million worth of food was made available to States in FY 2012, representing an increase of more than \$83 million from FY 2011 (USDA Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations, FY 2014). Congress appropriated more than \$308 million for TEFAP in FY 2012—more than \$260 million to purchase food and \$48 million for administrative support for State and local agencies. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) also purchases domestic agricultural products with funds authorized by Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935. These USDA Foods are “bonus” foods because they are not credited against food purchases with appropriated funds. A total of \$304 million worth of bonus foods was distributed through TEFAP in FY 2012.

¹ Limited data are available on the unique characteristics of TEFAP participants. TEFAP participants are defined here as those who obtain emergency food from emergency feeding organizations that may receive foods through TEFAP.

TEFAP distributed over 723 million pounds of USDA Foods in FY 2012. This included nearly 306 million pounds of fruits and vegetables, 180 million pounds of meat, 105 million pounds of milk and juice, 75 million pounds of grains, and 58 million pounds of other USDA Foods like soups, tomato-based sauces, eggs, and nut products. TEFAP foods account for approximately 20 percent of all foods distributed through Feeding America’s food banks and feeding agencies—a network that comprises almost 80 percent of all food banks in the country and served roughly 5.7 million people (or one in 50 Americans) in any given week in 2009 (Mabli et al. 2010). In 2009, TEFAP provided food to more than half of Feeding America food pantries and roughly one-third of its soup kitchens and shelters (Mabli et al. 2010).

TEFAP Serves Households and Individuals Who Do Not Participate in Other USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs

In 2009, more than one-third of TEFAP participants using soup kitchens and about one-fifth using food pantries obtained emergency food assistance from several sources but did not report participating in other nutrition assistance programs (Mabli et al. 2010). Households and individuals who obtain emergency food from multiple sources but not from other USDA programs may be the most heavily dependent on TEFAP-supported emergency food assistance. They are more likely to face homelessness, have very low food security, and suffer greater material hardships (Briefel et al. 2003). For participants who report using other USDA nutrition assistance programs, TEFAP supplements their benefits and may expand their ability to meet their nutritional needs (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a; Briefel et al. 2003).

TEFAP Provides Nutritious Foods to the Emergency Food Assistance System

USDA Foods available through TEFAP reflect USDA’s strides in making the foods consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, with reduced levels of fat, sodium, and sugar. For example, TEFAP offers low-sodium or no-salt-added canned beans and vegetables, and canned fruits are packed in extra-light sucrose syrup or slightly sweetened fruit juice. A 2012 study assessed the nutritional quality of TEFAP foods using two measures: (1) a Healthy Eating Index-2005 (HEI-2005) score and (2) the contribution of TEFAP foods to recommended USDA Food Patterns (Zimmerman et al. 2012). TEFAP foods as delivered (that is, as selected by States) received a score of 89 out of a possible 100 on the HEI-2005. By comparison, the 2005 U.S. food supply included a less nutritious mix of foods, receiving a total HEI-2005 score of 55. TEFAP foods provided roughly 70 percent or more of recommended amounts of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and oils for a 2,000 calorie diet, and more than 100 percent of the daily recommended amounts of specific food subgroups, including red and orange vegetables; legumes; refined grains; meat, poultry, and eggs; and nuts. Moreover, these foods were low in calories from solid fats and added sugars.

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including seniors, by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost (USDA, FNS 2013a). The inception of TEFAP in 1981 has been cited as a significant factor in the creation of the emergency food assistance system in its current form (Ohls et al. 2002). Moreover, substantial amounts of TEFAP foods have been distributed through the emergency food system during the last three decades (Ohls et al. 2002; USDA, FNS 2013a).

A. Brief History of TEFAP

In 1981, TEFAP was first authorized to distribute surplus commodities under the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program in order to help supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including seniors. In 1983, the Emergency Food Assistance Act stated that TEFAP would provide other types of surplus foods. In 1988, in response to the depletion of some of the surplus foods used by TEFAP, the Hunger Prevention Act appropriated funding specifically for the purchase of commodity foods for TEFAP. In 1990, the name of the program was officially changed to The Emergency Food Assistance Program. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 changed TEFAP by (1) combining it with commodity distribution programs for charitable institutions and emergency feeding organizations (EFOs), (2) defining a formula for allocating TEFAP foods to States, and (3) requiring that a portion of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (then known as the Food Stamp Program) appropriations be used for TEFAP food purchases.

B. TEFAP Foods and Program Structure

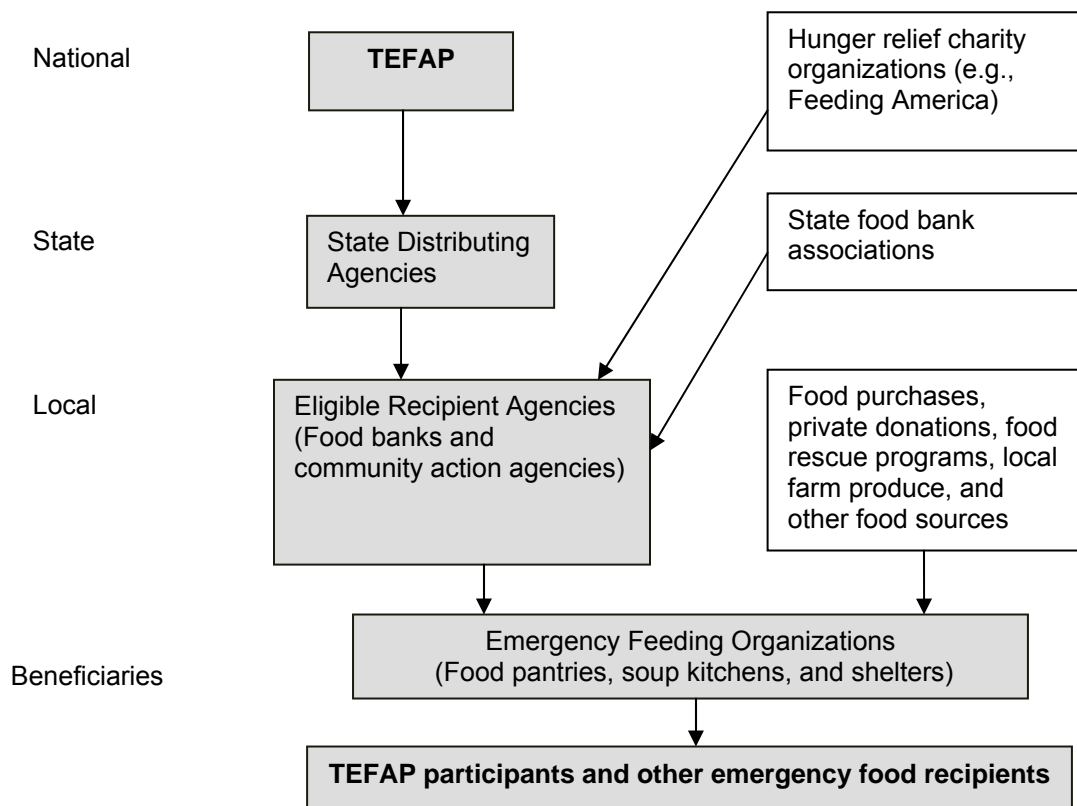
USDA makes a wide variety of domestically produced foods available to States through TEFAP. USDA Foods are purchased by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Farm Service Agency. TEFAP food funds are applied toward the costs of USDA Foods, referred to as "entitlement" foods. AMS also purchases domestic agricultural products with funds authorized by Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935. These purchases support farm income and relieve downward pressures on prices. These USDA Foods are "bonus" foods because they are not credited against each State's entitlement. Available TEFAP foods include meats, vegetables, fruits, juices, beans, cereals, grains, and nuts. Most foods are shelf stable and do not require further processing prior to distribution, although frozen meats are distributed to organizations with freezers. A list of TEFAP entitlement foods available to State agencies for fiscal year (FY) 2013 is included in Appendix A.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), which administers TEFAP, coordinates food processing and packaging, State food orders and delivery, and the distribution of administrative funds. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the pathways through which TEFAP foods flow from USDA to households and individuals in need. States are entitled to a specific allotment of TEFAP foods based on poverty and unemployment indices.² States manage the distribution of

² An overview of State funding allocation procedures and accountability policies is included in Appendix B.

TEFAP foods through a network of eligible recipient agencies (ERAs), including food banks and community action agencies. ERAs coordinate the distribution of food to EFOs, which include food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Just over half of EFOs are led by faith-based organizations or religion-affiliated nonprofit agencies, and about one-third are led by private nonprofit organizations (Mabli et al. 2010). Faith-based organizations are more likely to run food pantry and kitchen programs, whereas private nonprofit organizations are more likely to run shelter programs. EFOs provide TEFAP foods to low-income households and individuals at times of need. EFOs may provide prepackaged foods for home consumption or serve meals prepared with TEFAP food ingredients to eligible clients. EFOs receive other food sources from private donations, food rescue programs, local farm produce, or other sources; they may also purchase food.

Figure 1. The Flow of Emergency Food from TEFAP and Other Sources to TEFAP Participants and Other Emergency Food Recipients



Note: This figure does not capture food pathways during times of disaster. Shaded boxes indicate the flow of foods through TEFAP. Community action agencies may directly serve TEFAP participants and other emergency food recipients.

Each State establishes criteria for determining which households are income eligible to receive TEFAP foods for home consumption to ensure that assistance is provided to the households most in need. States may use income eligibility criteria from means-tested federal, State, or local programs, or adjust income criteria to ensure that households most in need receive assistance. Households and individuals that receive prepared meals in soup kitchens and homeless shelters are not subject to an income-eligibility test.

II. TEFAP RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF U.S. LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS

A. Food Insecurity and Barriers to Food Access Among U.S. Households and Individuals

In 2011, nearly 15 percent of all U.S. households and 38 percent of low-income³ U.S. households were food insecure, meaning their access to adequate food was limited by a lack of money or other resources (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a, 2012b). Very low food security—meaning that household members skipped meals or otherwise reduced their food intake—was experienced by 5.7 percent of all U.S. households, an increase from 2010 and a return to 2008 and 2009 levels. Nearly 16 percent of low-income U.S. households had very low food security in 2011. Nationally, 5 percent of low-income households used a food pantry and less than 1 percent used an emergency kitchen in 2011 (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a).

Low-income individuals experience barriers to food access, meaning the accessibility to food retailers that offer healthful and affordable foods is limited. Barriers for low-income individuals include high food prices, travel costs and time needed to go shopping, and lack of available healthful food options. Further disparities exist among low-income individuals, in that low-income people in rural areas have less access to food than those in urban areas (Ver Ploeg et al. 2009).

In 2009, individuals and families seeking emergency food assistance through the Feeding America network tended to endure more severe material hardships than the general low-income U.S. population. They were more likely to experience very low food security, homelessness, unemployment, and other material hardships that result in acute need—both episodic and chronic—for emergency food assistance (Mabli et al. 2010).

Addressing the needs of U.S. households and individuals has become more challenging in the face of declining local food donations and rising food prices. Recent national trends indicate that local food donations to EFOs have declined and that this trend will continue (Feeding America 2011; Bello 2012). For example, advances in technology have allowed grocery stores to control inefficiencies, which have led to a reduction in food rescue donations. Similarly, rising food costs—particularly in 2011, because of a drought that reduced agricultural supplies—have had implications for private food and cash donations. Private food donations have decreased because of higher food prices, and private cash donations to EFOs have less purchasing power in pounds of food made available. Food prices continue to rise, so this trend may endure for some time. In addition, rural America suffers from a longstanding lack of an emergency food assistance infrastructure, such as transportation, storage, and refrigeration systems and facilities.

B. TEFAP Serves U.S. Households and Individuals in Need and Farmers

In FY 2012, an estimated \$547 million in TEFAP food resources were made available to States. For some perspective, TEFAP foods account for approximately 20 percent of all foods distributed through Feeding America’s network of food banks and feeding agencies⁴—a network that comprises

³ Low-income is defined here as less than 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

⁴ In 2012, Feeding America estimates it distributed more than 3 billion pounds of food to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other emergency feeding facilities (Feeding America n.d.).

almost 80 percent of all food banks in the country, and served roughly 5.7 million different people (or one in 50 Americans) in any given week in 2009 (Mabli et al. 2010). In 2009, TEFAP provided food to 54, 33, and 31 percent of Feeding America food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters, respectively.

Each year, States and EFOs plan around the food quantities and types they expect to receive through TEFAP. For example, EFOs select TEFAP foods according to where private donations fall short and choose foods based on their storage facilities. A survey of pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters indicated that the most desired foods for distribution to households and use in meals included protein foods (i.e., meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts) and grain products (i.e., bread, cereal, rice, and pasta) (Mabli et al. 2010). EFOs value TEFAP foods because they fill a gap in the array of donated foods, offsetting the variable quantity and quality of private food donations (Feeding America n.d.).⁵

TEFAP also contributes to the food safety net in times of disaster. TEFAP foods may be redesignated for disaster relief efforts when necessary. Moreover, TEFAP has the flexibility to deploy USDA Foods quickly to areas of need since it is a program with an existing emergency feeding network. For example, TEFAP foods were made available to New Jersey and New York during Superstorm Sandy in 2012 (Baertlein 2012). To support disaster relief efforts, FNS reimburses States for transport costs to move TEFAP foods to other in-State areas. Additionally, TEFAP participants who have evacuated their homes and are temporarily living in areas not normally served by TEFAP may continue to pick up TEFAP foods from the EFO in the area they evacuated.

All USDA Foods offered through TEFAP are domestically grown, which supports farmers and rural communities and stimulates the economy. A 1994 study conducted by USDA's Economic Research Service found that TEFAP increased farm receipts both through entitlement and bonus food purchases (Levedahl et al. 1994). Bonus foods, because they are purchased through market support programs, were found to have a particularly high return per dollar to farmers. Additionally, this study estimated that TEFAP had a higher return to farmers than a coupon-based food assistance program such as SNAP. More recent data to assess TEFAP's effect on farm receipts are not available.

III. TEFAP FOOD AND DOLLAR CONTRIBUTIONS

A. TEFAP Funding Structure (Total Funding)

Legislation currently governing TEFAP specifically differentiates between the amount of funding available for TEFAP food purchases and administrative costs to assist States and local organizations with operations. In FY 2012, Congress appropriated more than \$308 million for TEFAP—over \$260 million to purchase food, and \$48 million for administrative support for States and local agencies. In addition to USDA Foods purchased with appropriated funds, more than \$304 million in bonus foods were distributed through TEFAP in FY 2012. The Food, Conservation, and

⁵ State food bank associations refer to nutritious TEFAP foods as “the backbone of the charitable food system” and cite nutritious TEFAP foods as a key reason why they have the ability “to feed more hungry people during the recession” (Oregon Food Bank 2013; The Greater Boston Food Bank 2013).

Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) includes the formula for allocation of resources to States. This formula incorporates the size of each State's weighted poverty and unemployment indices.

B. Administrative Funding

Administrative funding assists State agencies with costs associated with the processing, repackaging, storage, and distribution of TEFAP foods. Unless otherwise prohibited by appropriations legislation, States may also choose to convert their "fair share"⁶ of TEFAP administrative funds to funds for the purchase of additional USDA Foods. Additionally, States are further permitted to use administrative funds to support food rescue activities, such as gleaning and other food recovery efforts.

Administrative funds are designed to allow State agencies to increase the total flow of emergency food more effectively and efficiently and play a key role in supporting EFO's yearly budgets. A survey of EFOs conducted in 2000 found that TEFAP administrative funding represented 12 to 27 percent of the operating budget of those food banks, food pantries, and emergency kitchens surveyed (Ohls et al. 2002). Program regulations require that a minimum of 40 percent of the administrative funds allocated to each State be "passed through" to EFOs or directly expended by the State on their behalf. Furthermore, States are required to match in full, either as cash or in-kind, all administrative funds passed through to ERAs that are not EFOs. In practice, these requirements have resulted in TEFAP funds going almost exclusively to EFOs, with other types of organizations rarely participating in the program (Geldard and Bress n.d.).

Administrative funds can be used only for approved administrative expenses or "allowable costs" incurred in the management of the program, such as costs associated with the transportation, storage, processing, and distribution of TEFAP foods and food obtained from non-federal sources. States may restrict costs further as they see fit. Funds made available to States or participating agencies but not used are turned back to the federal government and subsequently reallocated to all States based on the mandated formula used for the initial fund allocation.

Between FY 2009 and FY 2012, administrative funding has remained relatively constant (at \$50 million in FY 2009 and \$48 million in FY 2012; USDA Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations, FY 2009 and FY 2014). Several administrative funding sources have been used during this time period. TEFAP legislation allows States to use up to 10 percent of their food funding for approved TEFAP administrative costs instead. In FY 2012, States chose to convert 6.7 percent (\$17.5 million) of total TEFAP food funding into administrative funds. TEFAP also received \$50 million in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) administrative funding, to be spread out equally over FY 2009 and FY 2010. In FY 2010, an additional \$28 million from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) ARRA contingency fund was reprogrammed as TEFAP administrative funds. Also in FY 2010, TEFAP received \$6 million in Infrastructure Grants. These grants provided funding for local EFOs to expand and improve their infrastructure, including their storage and distribution facilities. More than \$3 million of the funding was allocated specifically to EFOs primarily serving rural areas. Infrastructure funding has not been awarded since FY 2010.

⁶ State TEFAP food and administrative funds are allocated to each State based on a formula that incorporates weighted poverty and unemployment indices. The formula calculates a proportion of total funds for each State, referred to as the State's "fair share."

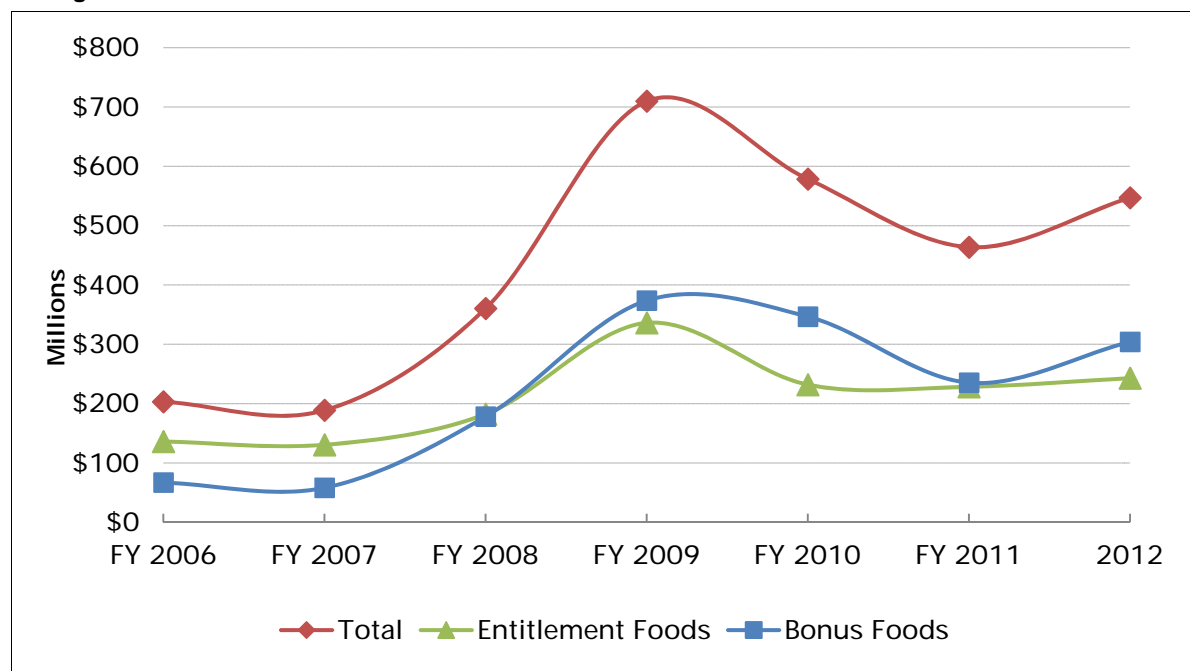
C. TEFAP Entitlement and Bonus Foods

Each State’s allocated TEFAP foods funds are applied toward the costs of “entitlement” food commodities. Additionally, each year AMS purchases “bonus” foods as part of its market support program. Thus, the type and amount of bonus foods that may be available for TEFAP distribution varies from year to year. Both entitlement and bonus foods are offered to States on a “fair share” basis, but only entitlement food orders are counted against States’ TEFAP food funding.

An estimated \$547 million worth of food resources were made available in FY 2012—representing an increase of more than \$83 million from the value of food resources made available in FY 2011. In FY 2012, TEFAP food entitlement funding far exceeded pre-recession (FY 2007 and FY 2008) funding levels because the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 increased funding for TEFAP entitlement foods.

The total value of entitlement and bonus foods distributed to States through TEFAP from FY 2006 through FY 2012 is shown in Figure 2. Between FY 2008 and FY 2009, the value of TEFAP foods distributed to States increased by nearly 97 percent, in large part because of \$100 million in additional funding provided by ARRA. The value of foods provided through TEFAP declined in each of the following two years—by 19 percent between FY 2009 and FY 2010 and 20 percent between FY 2010 and FY 2011. The decrease in additional entitlement funding from ARRA accounted for the bulk of the decrease between FY 2009 and FY 2010. However, the majority of the decrease between FY 2010 and FY 2011 was associated with a decrease in the availability of bonus commodities. Between FY 2011 and FY 2012, the value of distributed bonus commodities increased by nearly \$70 million.

Figure 2. Total Value of TEFAP Entitlement and Bonus Foods (in Millions of Dollars) Distributed from FY 2006 through FY 2012



Source: USDA Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations, FY 2013 and FY 2014.

Note: No more than 2 percent of the annual entitlement values in Figure 2 were used for non-food costs. The value of TEFAP foods *distributed* in FY 2013 is not yet available.

Every quarter, USDA releases a list of available food items that State agencies can order using their entitlement food funds. USDA further specifies product availability, the value of each product, and when orders are to be placed. Bonus foods are offered to States based either on their fair share allocation or an open order basis. States may choose to accept all, part, or no part of the bonus offerings. However, recipient agencies must still conform to ordering standards to prevent overstocking. Figure 3 displays the TEFAP entitlement and bonus foods distributed to EFOs in FY 2012. In FY 2012, TEFAP offered the following entitlement and bonus foods:

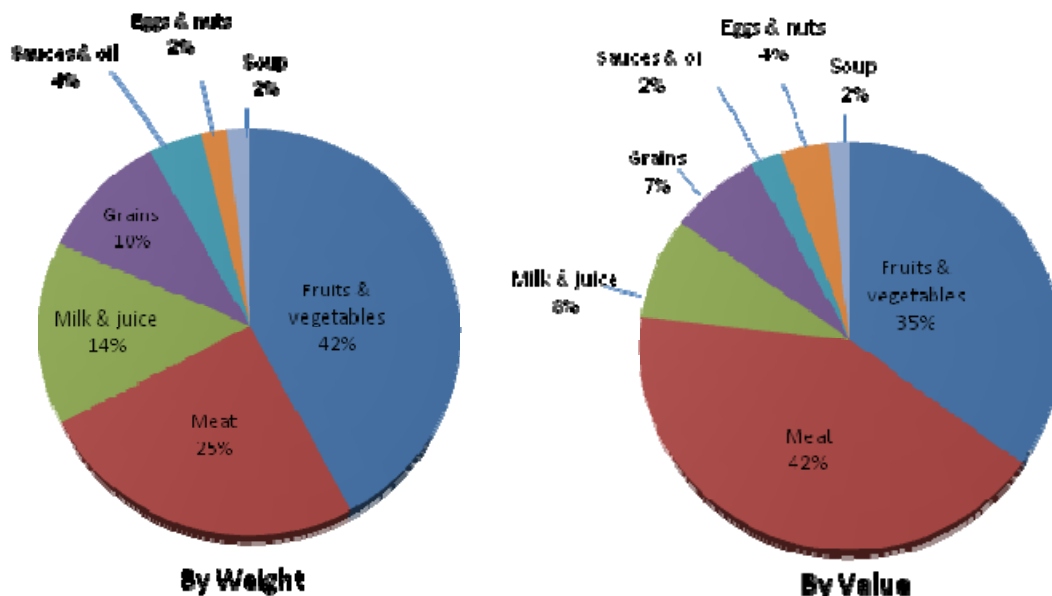
- **Fruits and vegetables.** Nearly 306 million pounds (valued at \$191 million) of canned, fresh, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables—accounting for 42 percent by weight (and 35 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.
- **Meat.** Nearly 180 million pounds (valued at \$226 million) of chicken, pork, beef, lamb, turkey, and fish—accounting for 25 percent by weight (and 42 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.
- **Milk and juice.** Nearly 105 million pounds (valued at \$44 million) of 1% milk and seven different varieties of bottled and unsweetened juice—accounting for 14 percent by weight (and 8 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.
- **Grains.** More than 75 million pounds (valued at \$39 million) of cereal, pasta, enriched white rice, and other grains and whole grains—accounting for 10 percent by weight (and 7 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.
- **Sauces and vegetable oil.** Nearly 31 million pounds (valued at \$13 million) of tomato-based sauce and vegetable oil—accounting for 4 percent by weight (and 2 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.
- **Eggs and nut products.** More than 15 million pounds (valued at \$21 million) of eggs, peanut butter, and peanuts—accounting for 2 percent by weight (and 4 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.
- **Soup.** More than 12 million pounds (valued at \$10 million) of soup—accounting for 2 percent by weight (and 2 percent by cost) of all TEFAP foods.

In all, over 723⁷ million pounds of TEFAP foods (valued at \$544⁸ million) were distributed as TEFAP entitlement and bonus foods in FY 2012.

⁷ The discrepancy between the sum of the itemized food weights (724 million pounds) and total weight (723 million pounds) is due to rounding of itemized weight values.

⁸ The difference between the value of distributed entitlement and bonus foods (\$544 million) and the total value of distributed foods cited earlier (\$547 million) is due to \$3 million used for non-food costs.

Figure 3. Percentage of TEFAP Entitlement and Bonus Foods by Weight and Value, FY 2012



Source: Processed Commodities Inventory Management System (PCIMS) delivery order and contract information, as listed in Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations, FY 2014.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF TEFAP PARTICIPANTS

TEFAP participants are defined here as those obtaining emergency food from EFOs that receive foods through TEFAP. These participants are a diverse group, with variable needs for food assistance. They include low-income households and individuals (e.g., families with children, seniors, and the newly unemployed) that obtain food for home consumption from food pantries, as well as low-income and homeless families and individuals that obtain meals from soup kitchens and shelters. Few studies have examined the characteristics of TEFAP participants (Fox et al. 2004). Appendix C includes a description of the three national data sources with information on the characteristics of households and individuals that obtain emergency food assistance from organizations that provide TEFAP foods.⁹ Available information on the characteristics of these households and individuals is described in the next two sections.

A. Demographics and Food Security

In 2009, one in five TEFAP participant households reported having a senior age 65 or older, and the same proportion of households had a child age 5 or younger (Mabli et al. 2010). Nearly 90 percent of TEFAP participants were U.S. citizens. Whites, blacks, and Hispanics constituted 40, 34, and 20 percent of all TEFAP participants, respectively. The majority of participants were unemployed. Most participant households had incomes of less than \$1,000 per month.¹⁰ Thirteen

⁹ The three sources of participant data include December 2011 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a, 2012b), a 2009 nationwide survey of Feeding America clients (Mabli et al. 2010), and a 2001 national survey of food pantry and soup kitchen clients (Briefel et al. 2003).

¹⁰ Government program assistance was included as a source of income.

percent of participant households had no income. One-third of adult TEFAP participants had not completed high school and 6 percent had completed college. Most participants (90 percent) had a place to live but, among these, one-fourth were late on rent or mortgage payments.

Food pantries represent the vast majority of EFOs, and differences between food pantry and other participants are worth noting (Ohls et al. 2002; Mabli et al. 2010). Relative to U.S. households overall, food pantry participant households in 2011 were more likely to be female headed, seniors, black or Hispanic, and from nonmetropolitan areas (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012b). Women and children used food pantries to a greater extent than men, and Hispanics were more likely to use food pantries than soup kitchens or shelters (Mabli et al. 2010). Food pantry participants were more likely to have income than emergency soup kitchen and shelter participants (Mabli et al. 2010). Food pantries served roughly equal portions of urban and suburban/rural populations (Mabli et al. 2010). In contrast, men represented the vast majority of soup kitchen and shelter participants. Most shelter participants (83 percent) were homeless, and 42 percent of shelter participants had had no income in the previous month (Mabli et al. 2010). Soup kitchens and shelters served predominantly urban participants (Mabli et al. 2010).

Roughly three-fourths of emergency food assistance participants are food insecure (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012b; Mabli et al. 2010; Briefel et al. 2003).¹¹ The proportions of very low food security among soup kitchen and food pantry participant households in 2011 exceeded the proportions in prior years. Half of soup kitchen participant households had very low food security in 2011 versus roughly 40 percent in 2009 and 2001. More than one-third of food pantry participants had very low food security in 2011 versus 35 percent and 25 percent in 2009 and 2001.

B. TEFAP Serves Households and Individuals That Do Not Participate in Other USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs

For some U.S. households and individuals, TEFAP may be the only source of USDA nutrition assistance. TEFAP participants eligible for other nutrition assistance programs may not participate because of stigma, perception of ineligibility, or the perceived barriers associated with applying (Mabli et al. 2010; Briefel et al. 2003). Other TEFAP participants may not be eligible for other USDA nutrition assistance program benefits (Briefel et al. 2003). For TEFAP participants that do participate in other nutrition assistance programs, TEFAP supplements the benefits they receive and may expand their ability to meet their household's nutritional needs (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012b; Briefel et al. 2003). Among low-income U.S. households that obtained food from a food pantry or soup kitchen in 2011, one-third or more (33 and 40 percent, respectively) did not participate in other nutrition assistance programs, including SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch Program (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012b). In 2009, about one-fifth of TEFAP participants using food pantries and more than one-third using soup kitchens obtained emergency food assistance from several sources but did not report participating in other nutrition assistance programs (Mabli et al. 2010). These proportions were lower in 2001, when one-fifth of food pantry participant households and one-fourth of soup kitchen participant households did not participate in other USDA nutrition assistance programs (Briefel et al. 2003). However, lower percentages of nonparticipation in

¹¹ In 2009, Feeding America households were administered a shortened six-item food security survey instrument, compared to households that were administered the full instrument in 2001 (Briefel et al. 2003) and 2011 (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a).

nutrition assistance programs may have been reported in part because pantry and soup kitchen participants were asked to include participation in additional nutrition assistance programs, such as child care feeding programs and senior meal programs.

The most recent study that compared the characteristics of food pantry and soup kitchen participant households that did not report participating in other nutrition assistance programs to those that did was in 2001 (Briefel et al. 2003). Overall, emergency food assistance participant households not participating in other nutrition assistance programs tended to have had higher levels of income, lower poverty levels, and were less likely to have very low food security compared to households participating in USDA nutrition assistance programs. However, food pantry and soup kitchen participant households utilizing more than one source of emergency food assistance (but no other nutrition assistance programs) were distinctly less advantaged. These participants experienced higher rates of very low food security and homelessness than their counterparts that were obtaining food from one emergency food assistance source. It is likely that the needs of these participants extend beyond food. In fact, a significant proportion of emergency food organizations provide clothing, information and referrals, and other assistance beyond food (Mabli et al. 2010).¹²

V. NUTRITIONAL QUALITY OF TEFAP FOODS

In FY 2013, about 80 USDA Foods were available for distribution through TEFAP. USDA has made a concerted effort over the past 20 years to improve the nutritional profile of USDA Foods and ensure that they are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). In particular, USDA has decreased levels of fat, sodium, and sugar in USDA Foods over time. For example, USDA offers low-sodium or no-salt-added canned beans and vegetables, and all juice and applesauce is unsweetened. Additionally, all canned fruits are packed in extra-light sucrose syrup or slightly sweetened fruit juice. The types of foods available through TEFAP depend on State preferences and agricultural market conditions (Zimmerman et al. 2012).

There is limited research available on the diet quality of TEFAP participants and the role of TEFAP USDA Foods in their diets (Fox et al. 2004). TEFAP participants are not systematically sampled and assessed for their total food consumption or usual dietary intake. Only one study to date has examined the nutrient contribution of USDA Foods provided through TEFAP to participants' overall diet (Ponza et al. 1990). A 2012 study by Zimmerman and colleagues examined the nutritional quality of USDA Foods offered and delivered to several USDA programs, including TEFAP. Researchers used two measures to assess the nutritional quality of USDA Foods distributed through TEFAP: (1) the Healthy Eating Index-2005 (HEI-2005) and (2) the contribution of USDA Foods to recommended USDA Food Patterns. Findings from this study provide the most up-to-date information on the nutritional quality of foods¹³ provided by TEFAP and are summarized below.

¹² EFOs provide a variety of non-food services. For example, four in 10 food pantries, one-third of kitchens, and two-thirds of shelters provide information and referral services. Three-fourths of shelters provide clothing (Mabli et al. 2010).

¹³ The nutritional quality of TEFAP foods is not representative of TEFAP participant diet quality, as TEFAP participants may consume foods from other sources that contribute to their overall dietary quality.

A. Healthy Eating Index-2005 Scores for TEFAP USDA Foods

The HEI-2005 is a measure of diet quality that assesses adherence to the 2005 DGAs. It is a numerical score that represents the extent to which a diet (or any mix of foods) is consistent with recommendations in the 2005 DGAs. The index includes an overall score—a perfect score is 100—as well as 12 component scores that measure different food groups and nutrients emphasized in the 2005 DGAs (for example, whole grains, saturated fat, and sodium). The HEI-2005 has been adopted by the USDA as the tool used to monitor the diet quality of the U.S. population overall, as well as progress toward healthier eating habits among nutrition assistance program participants (Guenther et al. 2007). Although the tool has been used primarily to assess the quality of diets consumed by individuals, density-based standards make it possible to use the HEI-2005 to assess the quality of any mix of foods, including USDA Foods provided by TEFAP.¹⁴

Zimmerman and colleagues (2012) examined HEI-2005 scores for TEFAP USDA Foods among entitlement foods and entitlement plus bonus foods. Scores were estimated for foods ‘as delivered’ (that is, USDA Foods selected by States in consideration of EFO need and participant demand).¹⁵ Total HEI-2005 scores for TEFAP foods as delivered were high for both entitlement foods and entitlement plus bonus foods. Scores were 83 (entitlement foods only) and 89 points (entitlement and bonus foods) out of a possible 100 points. In comparison, the 2005 U.S. food supply received a total HEI-2005 score of 55 out of 100 (Reedy et al. 2010), and the average American and SNAP participants’ diet received scores of 58 and 52, respectively (Zimmerman et al. 2012).

HEI-2005 scores for TEFAP foods were generally higher when bonus foods were included. Bonus foods delivered through TEFAP provided increased amounts (by weight) of meats, fruits, and juices, which contributed to higher HEI-2005 scores for several components (Zimmerman et al. 2012). Thus, the availability of bonus foods—particularly meats, fruits, and juices—positively contributed to the quality of TEFAP foods.

To more effectively combat food insecurity and control costs associated with valuable food resources, food pantries are more commonly exercising a “client choice” model of distribution, in which individuals select preferred foods and/or receive education about selecting healthful foods. The high nutritional quality of TEFAP foods as delivered suggests that TEFAP participants receive healthier foods according to their preferences. This is particularly salient for food pantry efforts to ensure nutritious foods as delivered are consumed rather than wasted (Carson 2008).

B. Contribution of TEFAP Foods to Recommended USDA Food Patterns

Zimmerman and colleagues (2012) also assessed the potential contribution of TEFAP foods to recommended USDA Food Pattern amounts. The USDA Food Patterns are based on the 2010 DGAs and identify daily amounts of foods to eat from five food groups and their subgroups, as well

¹⁴ Additional details about the HEI-2005 components and standards for scoring are provided in Appendix D.

¹⁵ HEI-2005 scores were also estimated for foods “as offered” to assess the foods USDA made available to participating agencies or participants. However, as noted by Zimmerman and colleagues (2012), the “as offered” estimates may not reflect the actual variety and quantity of USDA Foods available to all participants in TEFAP. Thus, estimates focus on TEFAP foods as delivered.

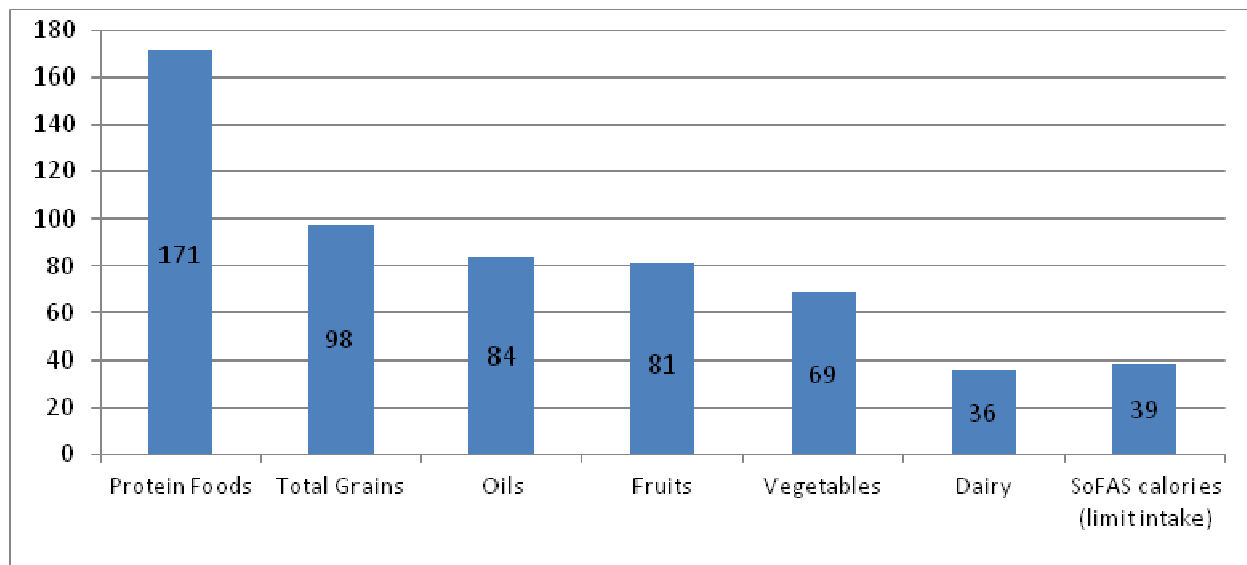
as healthful amounts of oils and limits on calories from solid fats and added sugars (SoFAS).¹⁶ Amounts of food groups provided by TEFAP entitlement and bonus foods were standardized to a per-2,000 calorie basis and compared with Food Pattern recommendations for an individual with a 2,000 calorie diet.

Findings from the study revealed that TEFAP entitlement and bonus foods as delivered provided roughly 70 percent or more of the daily recommended amounts of fruits, vegetables, total grains, protein foods, and oils for an individual at the 2,000 calorie level (Figure 4). In comparison, TEFAP foods as delivered contributed only 39 percent of the recommended maximum limit on SoFAS calories. For several food groups not displayed, TEFAP foods as delivered provided more than 100 percent of the daily recommendations on a 2,000 calorie basis. This pattern of findings was observed for red and orange vegetables (101%); legumes (581%); refined grains (168%); meat, poultry, eggs (156%); and nuts, seeds, soy products (489%). TEFAP entitlement and bonus foods as delivered were low in whole grains, dairy foods, and dark green vegetables relative to recommendations; however, TEFAP offers a healthful mix of USDA Foods that follow the DGAs including brown rice, whole grain pasta and cereals, and low-fat milk.¹⁷

¹⁶ Comparisons between TEFAP foods and recommended USDA Food Pattern amounts from Zimmerman and colleagues (2012) exclude calories from alcohol (that are included in SoFAAS) because the USDA Food Pattern specifies limits on calories from SoFAS.

¹⁷ TEFAP offers fewer dark green leafy vegetables because these foods tend to be perishable and most TEFAP foods are shelf stable.

Figure 4. Percentage Contribution of TEFAP Foods to USDA Food Pattern Recommendations, Based on a 2,000 Calorie Diet



Source: Source: “The Nutrient and MyPyramid Analysis of USDA Foods in Five of Its Food and Nutrition Programs.” Table 3-42: Food group and subgroup content of TEFAP Entitlement + Bonus USDA Foods on a per 2,000 calorie basis compared to 2010 USDA Food Pattern recommendations per 2,000 calories. Zimmerman, T.P, S. Dixit-Joshi, B. Sun, J. Hu, F. Glantz, and E. Eaker. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, January 2012.

Note: Figure does not display food subgroups including red and orange vegetables; dark green or starchy vegetables; legumes; refined grains; meat, poultry, eggs; seafood; nuts, seeds, soy products; or whole grains.

VI. CONCLUSION

TEFAP’s State-administered infrastructure for managing and distributing food is well-integrated in the local emergency food assistance system and allows for scaling up distribution to those who need TEFAP foods most—particularly in times of economic recession and disaster occurrences. Roughly three-fourths of American households accessing emergency food assistance are food insecure. TEFAP helps millions of low-income Americans who are experiencing short-term or longer-term food insecurity, or food shortages due to a disaster. In FY 2012, more than \$308 million of TEFAP entitlement foods (excluding bonus) and administrative funding was distributed to States according to need, and the President’s FY 2014 Budget requests \$318 million in entitlement and administrative funds. In FY 2011, TEFAP foods accounted for approximately 20 percent of all foods distributed through Feeding America’s national network of food banks—a network that comprises almost 80 percent of all food banks in the country (Mabli et al. 2010). TEFAP provides participants with USDA Foods of high nutritional quality, using funding that supports both the system’s infrastructure and American farmers.

To date, little research has been conducted to examine the diet quality of TEFAP participants and the role of TEFAP foods in their diets (Fox et al. 2004). However, a 2012 study investigating the nutritional quality of TEFAP foods suggests that these foods can make positive contributions to participants’ diets (Zimmerman et al. 2012). In particular, TEFAP bonus foods improved the nutritional quality of TEFAP foods delivered to organizations, as measured by the HEI-2005.

TEFAP participants include low-income families with children, seniors, and the newly unemployed who obtain food for home consumption from food pantries, as well as low-income and homeless families and individuals who obtain meals from soup kitchens and shelters. For some participants, TEFAP may be the only source of USDA nutrition assistance. For others who do participate in other USDA nutrition assistance programs, emergency food assistance supplements the benefits they receive from these programs and may expand their ability to meet their nutritional needs (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012b; Briefel et al. 2003). Emergency food assistance participants who do not report participating in other USDA nutrition assistance programs may be the most heavily dependent on TEFAP-supported emergency food assistance. Furthermore, TEFAP participants that obtain food from multiple emergency food sources are more likely to face homelessness, have very low food security, and suffer greater material hardships (Briefel et al. 2003).

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ACRONYMS

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
DGAs	Dietary Guidelines for Americans
EFAS	Emergency Food Assistance System
EFO	Emergency Feeding Organization
ERA	Eligible Recipient Agency
FNS	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service
FY	Fiscal Year
HEI	Healthy Eating Index
PCIMS	Processed Commodities Inventory Management System
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SoFAAS	Calories from Solid Fats, Alcohol, and Added Sugars
SoFAS	Calories from Solid Fats and Added Sugars
TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

GLOSSARY

Bonus foods	USDA Foods purchased with funds authorized by Section 32 of Public Law 74-320 that are not part of the TEFAP food appropriation funding. They are made available to States at no extra cost. These may be surplus domestic agricultural products that are purchased to support farm income and relieve downward pressures on prices.
Community Action Agency	This is a not-for profit social service organization that assists low-income households and individuals.
Eligible Recipient Agency (ERA)	To receive TEFAP funding or foods, ERAs must be nonprofit or public food distribution agencies that serve foods either as prepared meals or for household consumption. Examples include food banks and community action agencies.
Emergency Feeding Organization (EFO)	EFOs are a subset of ERAs that specifically serve food to the neediest members of a community. Food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters are typical examples of EFOs that receive TEFAP funding or foods.
Emergency Food Assistance System	The collection of EFOs serving the nation’s most needy.
Entitlement foods	Each State’s allocated TEFAP foods funds are used toward the purchase of non-surplus USDA Foods, referred to as “entitlement” foods.
Food bank	This is a public or charitable institution that maintains an established operation involving the provision of food or edible commodities to food pantries, soup kitchens, hunger relief centers, or other food or feeding centers that provide meals or food to feed needy persons on a regular basis.
Food pantry	This is a public or private nonprofit organization that distributes food to low-income and unemployed households and individuals, including food from sources other than USDA, to relieve situations of emergency and distress.
Food insecurity	The USDA classifies food insecurity as “low food security” when a household reports a reduction in the quality, variety, or desirability of food diet combined with little or no indication of reduced food intake and as “very low food security” when a household reports multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Food security	The USDA classifies food security as “high” when a household has no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations, or “marginal” when a household has one or two reported indications of food-access problems or limitations combined with little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
Shelter	This is a facility that provides temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless, victims of domestic violence, or other populations with transitional housing needs. Shelters offer room and board as well as the ancillary services.
Soup kitchen	This is a public or charitable institution that maintains an established feeding operation (typically prepared meals) to provide food to needy homeless persons on a regular basis.
TEFAP participant	An individual or household served by a food pantry, emergency kitchen, homeless shelter, or other type of EFO that may receive TEFAP foods.

APPENDIX A

ENTITLEMENT FOODS AVAILABLE THROUGH TEFAP IN FY 2013

APPENDIX B

STATE FUNDING ALLOCATION PROCEDURES AND ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES

State TEFAP food and administrative funds are allocated to each State based on a statutory formula that incorporates weighted poverty and unemployment indices. A State's fair share proportion gives 60 percent weight to the average number of persons in households within the State living below the poverty level and 40 percent weight to the average number of unemployed persons during the prior year.

The FNS memorandum on FY 2013 Funding for TEFAP includes a detailed list of the anticipated food and administrative funding amounts for each State. In Alaska, for example, there was an average of 26,570 persons unemployed from October 2011 to July 2012, accounting for 0.20 percent of the national average of unemployed individuals during that time. Furthermore, there was an average of 73,905 persons living below the poverty level in Alaska in CY 2011, accounting for 0.15 percent of the national average of unemployed individuals during that time. Thus, Alaska's "fair share" of FY 2013 TEFAP food and administrative funds was calculated as 40 percent of 0.20 percent plus 60 percent of 0.15 percent, which results in 0.17 percent. Consequently, Alaska will be awarded 0.17 percent of all TEFAP food and administrative funds made available to States in FY 2013.

To be eligible for TEFAP administrative funds, ERAs first must enter into an agreement with the State or another participating ERA. States ultimately are accountable and must exercise diligence to ensure that TEFAP food inventories are managed effectively, efficiently, and without waste as required by federal regulations. FNS policies and guidelines support States in meeting program eligibility standards. States must monitor TEFAP inventory levels and participating ERAs on a regular basis to promote program integrity. States are required to ensure that State agency inventory levels of foods for use in TEFAP do not exceed a six-month supply without approval from FNS. To achieve this goal, TEFAP State agencies must submit semiannual inventory reports. Additionally, these agencies are required to review at least 25 percent of all ERAs participating in TEFAP and maintain a list of all ERAs that have an agreement with the State or another ERA to participate in TEFAP.

APPENDIX C

NATIONAL DATA SOURCES WITH CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS THAT USE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE

Three national data sources provide information on the characteristics of households and individuals that use emergency food assistance services from EFOs that provide TEFAP foods.

1. **The December 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS) Food Security Supplement** provides national data on the characteristics of households that obtain emergency food assistance from food pantries and soup kitchens, their food security, and their participation in nutrition assistance programs (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012a, 2012b). The CPS data may underestimate use of soup kitchens because homeless and tenuously housed individuals are excluded from the sample.
2. **A 2009 nationwide survey of Feeding America clients** provides data on client demographic characteristics and household food security (Mabli et al. 2010). Data are also provided on Feeding America client households that participate in USDA nutrition assistance programs; however, no data are provided on households that do not participate in *any* other USDA nutrition assistance program. The client sample was drawn from clients served by food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters that received food from 181 of 204 Feeding America member food banks. Shelters include homeless shelters, shelters with substance abuse programs, and transitional shelters such as those for battered women.
3. **A 2001 national survey of food pantry and soup kitchen clients** provides national data on their characteristics, food security, and USDA nutrition assistance program participation (Briefel et al. 2003). The survey sampled food pantry and soup kitchen clients at providers who participated in the 2000 Emergency Food Assistance System Provider Survey (Ohls et al. 2002). Twelve percent of food pantry clients and 45 percent of soup kitchen clients also obtained meals from shelters. Even though it is the most recent comprehensive study of the emergency food assistance system using nationally representative samples, one limitation is that the data are more than a decade old.

APPENDIX D

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE HEALTHY EATING INDEX-2005 SCORES AND CONTRIBUTION TO USDA FOOD PATTERN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Healthy Eating Index-2005 (HEI-2005)

The HEI-2005 provides a composite measure of diet quality in relation to the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the MyPyramid food guidance system (Table D.1) (USDA 2007). The HEI-2005 approach reflects that individuals should strive to meet food group and nutrient needs while maintaining energy balance, rather than meeting food group and nutrient recommendations simply by consuming large quantities of food (Guenther et al. 2007). The HEI-2005 consists of 12 components, each reflecting a key aspect of dietary quality. Nine components are food based and assess intakes of USDA Food Patterns food groups and subgroups; two components assess dietary components commonly consumed in excess (saturated fat and sodium); and one component assesses intake of calories from solid fats, alcohol, and added sugars (SoFAAS) (Guenther et al. 2007). Scoring criteria, shown in Table D.1, assign higher scores for greater concentrations (per 1,000 calories) of food-based components and lower scores for greater concentrations of sodium, saturated fat, and calories from SoFAAS because recommendations for the latter components emphasize reduced or moderate intakes. Maximum scores for each component range from 5 to 20, and the maximum total HEI-2005 score is 100.

B. Contribution to USDA Food Pattern Recommendations

The USDA Food Patterns identify average daily amounts of foods to eat, in nutrient-dense forms, from five food groups and their subgroups, as well as healthy amounts of oils and limits on calories from SoFAS. The Food Patterns are based on the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and are designed to meet nutrient needs without exceeding calorie requirements. The USDA Food Patterns provide food group recommendations for 12 different calorie levels, based on an individual's age, gender, and activity level.

Researchers estimated the amounts of USDA Food Pattern food groups in TEFAP USDA Foods and standardized the amounts to a per-2,000 calorie basis (Zimmerman et al. 2012). The standardization of food group amounts facilitated comparisons with USDA Food Pattern recommendations for a 2,000 calorie diet. For example, at the 2,000 calorie level, the daily recommended amount of fruit is 2 cup equivalents. TEFAP USDA Foods (entitlement and bonus foods) provided 0.9 cup equivalents per 2,000 calories, or 81 percent of the daily recommendation.

Table D.1. Healthy Eating Index-2005

Component	Healthy Eating Index-2005		
	Maximum Score	Standard for Maximum Score	Standard for Minimum Score of Zero
Total fruit	5	≥ 0.8 cup per 1,000 kcal	No fruit
Whole fruit (not juice)	5	≥ 0.4 cup per 1,000 kcal	No whole fruit
Total vegetables	5	≥ 1.1 cup per 1,000 kcal	No vegetables
Dark green and orange vegetables and legumes ^a	5	≥ 0.4 cup per 1,000 kcal	No dark green or deep orange vegetables or legumes
Total grains	5	≥ 3.0 oz per 1,000 kcal	No grains
Whole grains	5	≥ 1.5 oz per 1,000 kcal	No whole grains
Milk ^b	10	≥ 1.3 cup per 1,000 kcal	No milk/dairy
Meat and beans	10	≥ 2.5 oz per 1,000 kcal	No meat or beans
Oils ^c	10	≥ 12 gm per 1,000 kcal	No oil
Saturated fat	10 ^d	≤ 7% of total energy	≥ 15% of total energy
Sodium	10 ^d	≤ 0.7 gm per 1,000 kcal	≥ 2.0 gm per 1,000 kcal
Calories from SoFAAS	20	≤ 20% of total energy	≥ 50% of total energy
Maximum Score	100		

Source: Healthy Eating Index-2005, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, CNPP Fact Sheet No. 1, December 2006.

Note: With the exception of saturated fat and sodium, amounts between the minimum and maximum are scored proportionately.

^aLegumes are counted as vegetables only after the standard for meat and beans is met.

^bIncludes all milk products, including fluid milks, yogurt, and cheese.

^cIncludes nonhydrogenated vegetable oils and oils in fish, nuts, and seeds.

^dSaturated fat and sodium get a score of 8 for levels that reflect 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommendations: <10% of energy from saturated fat and 1.1 gm sodium per 1,000 kcal, respectively.