2023 Farm Bill Priorities

The Arizona Food Bank Network (AzFBN) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to a hunger-free Arizona. Our mission is to develop solutions to end hunger through food banking, public policy, and innovation. We support our member food banks and the statewide emergency food network with transportation and distribution, advocacy, and outreach.

The emergency food network, alongside farmers and direct service providers, and with support from Congress and state and local governments, worked tirelessly over the past few years to feed Arizonans in need. Collectively, AzFBN member food banks—Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, HonorHealth Desert Mission Food Bank, St. Mary’s Food Bank, United Food Bank, and Yuma Community Food Bank—distributed 172 million pounds of food in 2022.

But 1 in 10 individuals and 1 in 7 children across Arizona remain food insecure.

As the country’s most effective anti-hunger program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped an average of 872,000 Arizonans each month in 2022, more than two-thirds children, older adults, and people living with disabilities. SNAP also brought $2.74 million per month into Arizona’s local economy in 2022.

Despite the USDA’s much-needed update to the Thrifty Food Plan in 2021, per Congress’s direction in the 2018 Farm Bill, the average SNAP benefit in Arizona was $2.05 per person per meal in 2022. In addition to prioritizing benefit adequacy, AzFBN asks Congress to focus on benefit accessibility and equity in the 2023 Farm Bill. Our key priorities are summarized below.

**Strengthen SNAP**

- **Improve SNAP benefit adequacy** to help households meet dietary, cultural, and other food needs through Closing the Meal Gap Act (H.R. 4077, Rep. Adams/ S. 2192, Sen. Gillibrand)

- **Increase equitable access to SNAP for critical populations:**
  - Repeal the SNAP Drug Felony Ban through the RESTORE Act (RE-Entry Support Through Opportunities for Resources and Essentials Act) (Sens. Booker & Warnock, and Rep. Cohen) to support newly released individuals to avoid food insecurity and reduce recidivism.
  - Repeal the three-month time limit on SNAP for certain working age adults who face discrimination and other barriers to consistent employment through the Improve Access to Nutrition Act (H.R. 1753, Rep. Lee)


Make permanent proven efficiencies provided during the pandemic to streamline SNAP access and administration: Elimination of mid-certification period reports, standardization of same-day card issuance, and streamlined verification.

Expand the accessibility of using SNAP to purchase hot and prepared food and meal through the SNAP PLUS Act (H.R. 6338, Rep. Rush) to increase accessibility to nutritious meals for people who have limited food preparation space or physical ability.

**Fully Resource the Emergency Food System and Build on Recent Innovations**

- Improve TEFAP so that food bank shoppers can access more nutritious, culturally responsive food with dignity by investing an additional $900M for TEFAP food purchasing and $100M annually for TEFAP storage and distribution.
  - Streamline the income eligibility threshold across emergency food assistance programs in order to maximize participation by low-income populations with regards to local needs and costs of living.
  - **Make TEFAP flexibilities permanent:** waive the requirement to collect personal information and allow other food distribution models like “drive-throughs” and home-delivery by proxies.
- Continue funding programs to support the distribution of food purchased from local and Black, Indigenous, and other socially disadvantaged farmers to secure food that meet local needs and invest in local food economies.
- **Enhance the Commodity Supplemental Food Program,** including:
  - Increase the income guidelines beyond the current 130% of the federal poverty level.
  - Expand commodities product selection and pilot strategies to include additional food options such as fresh or frozen alternatives.

**End Exclusionary Policies that Harm Native Americans:**

- **End the prohibition on dual enrollment** in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and SNAP,
- **Give Tribal governments the full authority to function as government agencies** in administering federal nutrition programs, including TEFAP, CSFP, and SNAP.

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