

USDA Announces Plan to Protect SNAP Participants' Access to SNAP in February

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Press Release

(Washington, D.C., January 8, 2019) – At the direction of President Donald J. Trump, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced a plan to ensure that low-income Americans have access to the nutrition they need, despite the inability of Congress to pass an appropriations bill that safely secures our borders. The plan provides full benefits for participants in USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for the month of February.

When USDA’s funding expired on December 21, 2018, SNAP benefits for January were fully funded. States have already received that money and have been distributing it to participants. Since the lapse in appropriations, USDA has been reviewing options available to the department for funding February benefits without an additional appropriation from Congress.

“At President Trump’s direction, we have been working with the Administration on this solution. It works and is legally sound. And we want to assure states, and SNAP recipients, that the benefits for February will be provided,” Perdue said. “Our motto here at USDA has been to ‘Do Right and Feed Everyone.’ With this solution, we’ve got the ‘Feed Everyone’ part handled. And I believe that the plan we’ve constructed takes care of the ‘Do Right’ part as well.”

To protect SNAP participants’ access for February, USDA is working with states to issue February benefits earlier than usual. USDA will rely on a provision of the just-expired Continuing Resolution (CR), which provides an appropriation for programs like SNAP and child Nutrition to incur obligations for program operations within 30 days of the CR’s expiration. USDA will be reaching out to states to instruct them to request early issuance of SNAP benefits for February. States will have until January 20th to request and implement the early issuance. Once the early issuances are made, the February benefits will be made available to SNAP participants at that time.

USDA has also ensured the other major nutrition assistance programs have sufficient funding to continue operations into February. The child nutrition programs, including school meals and after-school programs have funding available to continue operations through March. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has prior year funding which USDA will begin to provide states this week to facilitate February benefits. Other FNS programs, which provide critical assistance to our nation's food banks, the elderly, and Tribal nations, may continue to utilize grant funding provided prior to the lapse in appropriations. Commodity deliveries to those programs will continue.

Nutrition Assistance Programs under a Lapse in Appropriations

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- **USDA will use the authority under the last Continuing Resolution to issue February benefits.** The Continuing Resolution that expired December 21, 2018 provided an appropriation for programs like SNAP and Child Nutrition to incur obligations for program operations during the 30 day-period following the expiration of the Act.
- **States will need to take action to issue February benefits on or before January 20, 2019.** We will be reaching out to States to instruct them to request early issuance of SNAP benefits for February. States will have until January 20 to implement this early issuance.
- **Once these early issuances are made, the February benefits will be made available to SNAP participants at that time.** SNAP monthly issuance for February is estimated to be approximately \$4.8 billion and State administrative expense (SAE) is estimated at about \$350 million for a total need of approximately \$5.1 billion.
- **This approach requires careful coordination.** FNS has noticed States to hold their issuance files. States would, instead, implement an early issuance strategy, providing February benefits to SNAP participants on or before January 20, 2019. We will be working with States individually on how this approach is executed, in order to issue benefits to eligible households in the most efficient and equitable manner possible.

Child Nutrition Programs

- For these programs, including school meals and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, States already have funding to cover CN program operations for the month of January (approximately \$2.1 billion) on the basis of the last continuing resolution.
- This week, we will provide an additional two months' worth of funding, consistent with the standard practice of funding these programs on a quarterly basis.

Supplemental Nutrition and Safety Programs

- For **WIC**, FNS has identified resources to cover projected State expenditures for February. The agency will allocate at least \$248 million to State agencies this week, and we have identified an additional \$350 million in unspent prior year funds to allocate at a later date. A total of approximately \$600 million in funding will be provided to WIC

State agencies. We will continue to work with States to make resources available to the extent possible.

- For the **WIC Farmers' Market (FMNP) and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (SFMNP)**, FNS does not anticipate significant operational impacts as they are seasonal benefit programs with annual grant funds.
- For the **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**, food deliveries planned for February will continue. Due to the lapse, States have not received their 2019 caseload assignments, so CSFP-participating States must operate at 2018's caseload levels. Similarly, states have received no additional administrative funds since the lapse, and none can be made available until the lapse ends.
- For **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**, food deliveries planned for February (including entitlement, bonus and trade mitigation) will continue. States have received no additional administrative funds since the lapse, and none can be made available until the lapse ends.
- For the **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**, food deliveries planned for February will continue. FDPIR programs have administrative funding through January 31 and are expected to operate the program.