



THE VOICE OF FOOD RETAIL

Feeding Families  Enriching Lives

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Agriculture**

**Hearing on
“Pros and Cons of Restricting SNAP Purchases”
Thursday, February 16, 2017**

**Testimony of
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President and CEO
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Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson and members of the committee,

My name is Leslie Sarasin, and I serve as President and Chief Executive Officer of Food Marketing Institute¹, a trade association that represents food retailers and wholesalers, as well as their suppliers of products and services. FMI members are located in every congressional district across the country. FMI's maxim when referring to its member companies is "Feeding Families and Enriching Lives," a responsibility we take very seriously.

Food Retail Role

In the context of "feeding families," our industry is pleased to maintain an important role in facilitating the efficient delivery in our stores of safe, affordable food products for both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC). I appreciate the work this committee is undertaking to better understand the operations of SNAP and the differences between a short-term hunger program as contemplated in SNAP and a longer-term nutrition program as contemplated in WIC.

As you know, the WIC program serves mothers and their children up to age five. FMI members redeem very specific food prescriptions designed to ensure moms and their babies have access to the early nutrition they need for optimum physical and mental development. This important nutrition program is overseen by the House Education and the Workforce Committee and is currently up for reauthorization.

SNAP, the program under the full purview of this committee, is one in which FMI members serve as the delivery mechanism for benefits. SNAP, a program created to address hunger among Americans, is designed to supplement the food budgets for seniors and/or families experiencing financial difficulty, or on a longer-term basis, individuals who are disabled.

As designed, SNAP allows customers to purchase approved food products from a SNAP-authorized retailer. Becoming an authorized SNAP/WIC retailer is not a simple process, and that process requires completion of specified paperwork and the providing of many credentials, including a business license, a photo ID for each owner of the business and proof of a social security number. This information may be requested at reauthorization or at any time throughout the process. Once approved, retaining SNAP/WIC authorization is not a foregone conclusion. The food retailer must agree to adhere strictly to the SNAP operating rules, violation of which results in having both the SNAP and WIC licenses revoked. Additionally, authorized retailers must agree to ongoing training programs for their associates to ensure they understand and adhere to all SNAP rules and regulations, as delineated in USDA's 25-page training guide.

SNAP has been enhanced in recent years by moving from a paper-based program that issued "food stamps" to an electronic benefits transfer program known as "EBT," through which

¹ Food Marketing Institute proudly advocates on behalf of the food retail industry. FMI's U.S. members operate nearly 40,000 retail food stores and 25,000 pharmacies, representing a combined annual sales volume of almost \$770 billion. Through programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations, FMI offers resources and provides valuable benefits to more than 1,225 food retail and wholesale member companies in the United States and around the world. FMI membership covers the spectrum of diverse venues where food is sold, including single owner grocery stores, large multi-store supermarket chains and mixed retail stores. For more information, visit www.fmi.org and for information regarding the FMI foundation, visit www.fmifoundation.org.

benefits are downloaded electronically to a government-issued debit card which then may be utilized at store level by SNAP benefit recipients. This movement to EBT has increased the efficiency of the program and enhanced its accountability by reducing the opportunity for fraud and human error. The program also benefitted from the work of this committee and then Nutrition Subcommittee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, whose efforts focused on ensuring interoperability and consistency of the program across state lines. The EBT Interoperability and Portability Act (PL 106-171), signed into law in 2000, ensures that EBT transactions operate consistently from state to state. This law has significantly reduced the incidence of error and has allowed shoppers living in border state areas to seek the best prices through which to stretch their SNAP benefits. It also has enabled those who must cross state lines for emergency reasons, such as to care for a sick relative or to escape the disastrous results of a natural event like Hurricane Sandy, to continue receiving benefits in a seamless manner.

As the front line purveyors of SNAP, authorized retailers maintain a unique and special vantage point from which to see SNAP transactions. At the time of food purchase, SNAP recipients input their unique, secret PIN after swiping their card. As is the case with commercial debit cards, the PIN is an important added authentication to prevent a stolen card from being used by an unauthorized person.

All products in SNAP-authorized stores are coded within the electronic checkout system as being either eligible or ineligible for purchase with SNAP benefits. This designation often can be seen on a paper receipt with the initials "FS." When a SNAP customer places products on the checkout conveyor belt, the checkout system scans each item as either eligible or ineligible for SNAP. If an item is eligible, the system deducts the product's price from the customer's SNAP EBT card. If ineligible, it prompts the cashier to ask the customer for another form of payment. Examples of ineligible items include laundry detergent and diapers, since they are not food items, and a hot rotisserie chicken, since hot, ready-to-eat food items are not eligible for purchase with SNAP benefits.

Data indicate that approximately 50% of supermarket customers using SNAP benefits when purchasing groceries also use other forms of payment, either to pay for non-food items, ineligible products or for eligible food items that exceed the remaining balance on the SNAP EBT card. It also is my understanding that if a customer attempts to purchase a tobacco product or alcoholic beverage, the electronic system will freeze and will not allow the transaction to continue until the tobacco or alcohol product is removed.

Those not fully involved in the SNAP transactional process can find it baffling and can often be confused about products that are eligible and those that are ineligible and therefore paid for through other means, and even in some cases by products that are eligible but not paid for with SNAP benefits in a particular transaction. Under the electronic systems in place today, the items eligible for WIC are charged against that benefit first, followed by those eligible for SNAP benefits, and finally, the cashier must collect another form of payment – cash, check, debit or credit -- for all remaining items not eligible under either of the programs and/or for items that exceed the dollar or prescription value of the benefits. As a result, while the items the electronic system charges to the SNAP benefit are eligible to be purchased with SNAP, they may not necessarily be designated by the customer to be the specific items purchased with SNAP

benefits. This occurs, for example, when a SNAP customer places \$100 worth of eligible items, such as bananas, eggs and bread, and has only \$80 in benefits on the EBT card; the electronic system deducts \$80 from the grand total of SNAP-eligible items, but does not necessarily attribute the \$80 to a specific array of products on the checkout conveyor belt.

It is worth noting that grocery transactions for SNAP customers vary significantly throughout the month. Data indicate the first transaction of the month is likely the largest and may contain larger quantities of protein, perishables, or even a splurge item. The purchases of second and third weeks of the month are often more balanced, and the purchases made in the last week of the month typically find customers purchasing maximum calories at minimum cost.

This variation among purchases is particularly noteworthy in the seven states that continue to issue benefits to all recipients on only one day of the month, rather than spreading issuance dates throughout the month. There are four states that distribute benefits on only two or three days each month. Expanding the dates for issuing SNAP benefits allows supermarkets to better address supply chain issues on fresh and perishable items and allows labor needs to be spread throughout the month into full-time positions rather than having them concentrated in a segment of the month with multiple part-time positions to accommodate the volume of SNAP shoppers trying to redeem benefits on one day. A chart of state issuance time frames is attached to this testimony.

Need for Sound Public Policy:

FMI member companies appreciate the Committee's recognition that food retailers are engaged and informed partners in the SNAP and WIC programs, as evidenced by the invitation for this testimony. As your partners in this endeavor, we hope you will consider several issues of concern to food retailers.

Against the backdrop of food retailers' commitment to enrich the lives of individuals in the communities they serve, we suggest that as the Committee examines SNAP, it keep in mind the larger goals and purpose of this hunger program. A strategic policy-oriented discussion could help make an already good program even better. If, however, the consideration becomes bogged down in energy zapping tactical questions of specific product(s) to be considered for elimination from SNAP, this program enhancement will be made much more difficult, if not impossible. FMI respectfully submits that changes to the program should be part of a broad policy discussion with clearly articulated desired results and delineation of the most effective and efficient means to achieve those results.

We at FMI would be pleased to participate in that "results" discussion. To assist in that process, we have announced the development of an industry SNAP Task Force to identify areas of the program we find to be exceptional, to make sure those are not eliminated, and to consider those we believe may require improvement in order to achieve your policy goals.

As I understand them, among the Committee goals are the following:

- To ensure no unfair penalty on individuals who find themselves on the edge of the benefits cliff and who are trying to move to a higher paying job;

- To ensure SNAP is the most efficient program possible, eliminating fraud and opportunities for fraud on both the delivery and recipient side;
- To make SNAP the least burdensome possible for individuals whose participation in the program may actually reduce government health care, social services, and education costs, such as seniors with a fixed income, disabled individuals and families supporting children under the age of 18; and
- To identify and prepare individuals who receive SNAP benefits for enhanced employment opportunities.

It has been suggested that achievement of these goals might be facilitated by development of a prescription of limitations for SNAP purchases, perhaps similar to those that exist in the WIC program. While this may seem an attractive option, I respectfully suggest that prior to doing so we first identify the result being sought in undertaking such a change in the program.

To demonstrate how a tactical reaction may actually prove to be inconsistent with a policy goal, it is worthwhile to consider an anecdote from the most recent reauthorization of the WIC nutrition program. At that time, similar debates occurred regarding products that should or should not be authorized under the WIC program. There were a number of factions, including farmers touting the unique benefits of the crops they were growing. Ultimately, WIC was updated to allow for the first time a fresh fruits and vegetables benefit and all fruits and vegetables were allowed under this program, with one exception. The exception made was for white potatoes, deemed at the time not to be nutritionally significant. Yet, just one year later, the Institute of Medicine issued a report indicating that Americans suffer from relatively high incidences of a deficiency in potassium, for which white potatoes serve as a good source under definitions established by the Food and Drug Administration. Moreover, we are now in the process in this country of redesigning the Nutrition Facts Panel that appears on food products to add potassium as a required element so that consumers can begin to address this deficiency. In the last Congress, in 2015 a change was made to allow white potatoes as a vegetable in the WIC program.

From experience previously in my career while serving as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Frozen Food Institute, I can relay anecdotes regarding the treatment of frozen foods, specifically frozen fruits and vegetables, that are nutritionally equivalent and in some cases nutritionally superior, to their unfrozen counterparts in not being declared WIC eligible by some states to the utter detriment of both the programs and the frozen fruit and vegetable industries.

Of course, the discussions today will hardly illuminate specific issues such as these, but it is critical as we consider changes to federal hunger programs such as SNAP that we identify the policy goals to be achieved, rather than just focus on a potentially desirable sound bite. I would respectfully suggest that if our goal with SNAP is to provide needy Americans a short-term lifeline to allow them to get and keep a job so they earn enough to support their families without government benefits, the unilateral limitation of any specific product is unlikely to help accomplish that goal. It is worth noting that doing so will also increase the need for additional USDA staff to make and encode these determinations for an estimated 20,000 new products

introduced into the marketplace annually and then download these electronically on a real-time basis to every electronic payments system in the country.

SNAP was designed and currently serves as a hunger program. It is a supplementary program for the customers whose circumstances require them to rely upon it for a season of their life, and for these individuals it is a life-saver. Eighty-two percent of all SNAP benefits in FY2015 went to households that included a child, an elderly person or a person with disabilities.

There have been a number of limitations suggested for this program whether it be no meats, no desserts, no snacks, no soft drinks and even no white bread. Not only do such limitations appear incongruous to the policy positioning of a program designed to provide temporary assistance addressing hunger considerations, but they also would prove an administrative nightmare, increasing the cost of acceptance and slowing down checkout lines in an industry that historically has experienced only just more than a 1% profit margin and in which every second of delay affects profitability and ultimately the number of associates that can be hired and the prices in a store.

Language was included in the WIC reauthorization legislation in 2004 directing the Secretary to develop an electronically downloadable list of WIC-eligible products on a state by state basis. This has still not been completed because of its complexity. A similar type of electronic list for SNAP would easily involve 100 times more products making it a 100 times more complex. Could it be done? Probably so. But if it hasn't been done in the WIC program in spite of a 15-year-old congressional directive, it likely would not be easy or inexpensive. And at the end of the day, we must ask ourselves what the policy goal is that this level of expenditure of time and money would achieve.

We are truly blessed in this country with the safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply in the world. We believe that with that blessing comes the responsibility to lift up those individuals in our communities who may need an extra hand, with the goal that they might provide an extra hand for someone else at another time in the future.

FMI member companies are the largest contributors to our nation's food banks. In 2016, food retailers donated more than 1.3 billion of the 4 billion meals Feeding America provided to families in need². We are also constantly developing new ways to enhance this donation level by decreasing food waste. In fact, we have spent much of the past year working with our supplier partners at the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) on efforts to reduce customer confusion regarding product date labels, frequently misunderstood to be expiration dates. FMI and GMA have just announced an industry-driven voluntary program to reduce dozens of terms currently in use on date labels and move (to the extent possible) to two primary labels: "BEST if used by" to indicate quality and "USE by" for perishable products that may have potential degradation implications.

² Source: Feeding America, *2016 Annual Report*, Available at <http://www.feedingamerica.org/about-us/about-feeding-america/annual-report/2016-feeding-america-annual-report.pdf> , pp.13.

I am pleased to answer any questions you may have and to serve as a resource to this committee as you work to make SNAP even more efficient. I also have to call out the exceptional FNS retailer management division at USDA headed by Andrea Gold. Through hurricanes, tornados and floods as well as new store openings or changes in ownership, we could not have had a better resource than Andrea and her team to help our members through their challenges.



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State-by-State Monthly SNAP Benefit Issuance Schedule

| State | Day(s) of SNAP Benefit Distribution |
|----------------------|---|
| Alabama | In August 2013, the state expanded their distribution dates, moving from the 4th to the 18th of the month to the 4th through the 23rd of the month. To assist in the transition, recipients received half of their benefit on their original date and half on their new date in the month. |
| Alaska** | The main SNAP issuance is all on the first day of the month. Smaller supplemental issuances for new applicants and late recertifications occur daily throughout the month. |
| Arizona | SNAP benefits are distributed over the first 13 days of the month by the first letter of the recipients' last name. For example: last names that begin with A or B are distributed on the first day of the month; 2 nd day of the month: C and D; etc. |
| Arkansas | Arkansans receive their benefits on these eight days: 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th or 13th of each month, based on the last number of their social security number. |
| California | California is different in that each county distributes SNAP to those who qualify. The payments go out to all those who qualify between the 1-10 of the month. Others (i.e. new applicants) get paid throughout the month depending on when they were accepted. |
| Colorado | Food Stamp benefits are distributed on the first ten days of the month by the recipient's last digit of their social security number. |
| Connecticut | SNAP benefits and cash are distributed on the first three days of the month, by the first letter of the recipient's last name. (A-F are available on the first; G-N on the second and O-Z are distributed on the third day of the month.) |
| Delaware | Benefits are made available over 23 days, beginning with the 2nd day of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name. |
| District of Columbia | Benefits are made available from the 1st to the 10th of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name. |
| Florida | All SNAP recipients moved from a 15 day distribution to a 28 day distribution in April 2016. In March 2016, to assist in the new transition, benefits were "split." Recipients received the first half of their benefits on their "old" date and received the second half of their monthly benefits on what was their "new" date going forward. The ACCESS Florida system assigns benefit availability dates based on the case number recipients received when they became eligible for the SNAP program. |

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| Georgia | In September 2012, SNAP benefits in Georgia expanded from the 5th to the 14th, and then finally to the current 5th to 23rd of each month, distributed every other day. |
| Hawaii | Benefits are made available on the 3rd and the 5th of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name. |
| Idaho | Benefits were previously made available on the first day of every month. (Prior to August 2009, benefits were distributed on five consecutive days at the beginning of each month, but this was later moved to one day.) In 2014, H.B. 565 was enacted. The bill requires the state Department of Health and Welfare to issue SNAP benefits over the course of ten consecutive days within a month. Bonus money received from USDA paid for the cost of the change. Currently, and since July 1, 2016, benefits are distributed over the first 10 days of each month based on the last number of the birth year of the recipient; for example, a birthday of 8/25/64 would receive benefits on the 4th day of each month. |
| Illinois | SNAP benefits are made available on these 12 days of the month: 1st, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 19th, 21st, and 23rd of every month, based on a combination of the type of case and the case name. |
| Indiana | On January 1, 2014, the state implemented an expanded schedule for the distribution of benefits during the fifth through the twenty-third day of each month, to be issued every-other-day, based on the first letter of the recipient's last name. For example: A or B = benefits available on the 5 th ; first Letter of the Last Name is: C or D = benefits available on the 7 th . Previously, benefits were made available on the first ten calendar days each month. (TANF is issued on the first of the month.) |
| Iowa | Benefits are made available over the first 10 calendar days of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name. |
| Kansas | Benefits are made available over the first 10 calendar days of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name. |
| Kentucky | Benefits are made available over the first 19 calendar days of every month, based on the last digit of the client's case number. This was recently expanded from the previous 10 day distribution. |
| Louisiana | Benefits are made available between the 1st and the 14th of every month, based on the last digit of the client's SSN. (Elderly and disabled benefits are made available between the 1st and the 4th of every month.) |
| Maine | Benefits are available the 10th to the 14th of every month based on the last digit of the recipient's birthday. |
| Maryland | In January 2016, the distribution schedule was changed. Benefits are now distributed from the 4 th to the 23rd of every month, based on the first three letters of the client's last name. Previously, benefits were distributed from the 6th through the 15 th of the month. This was accomplished through a five month phase-in. |

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| Massachusetts | Distribution is based on the last digit of each recipient's social security number and distributed over the first 14 days of the month. |
| Michigan | In January 2011, SNAP moved from a seven day distribution to the current distribution, which is from the 3rd to the 21 st , distributed every-other-day, based on the last digit of the head of household's recipient identification number. For example, clients' numbers ending with 0 will receive food benefits on the 3rd of the month; numbers ending with 1, food benefits will be available on the 5th of the month. |
| Minnesota | Benefits are staggered over 10 calendar days, beginning on the 4th through the 13th of every month, without regard to weekends or holidays, based on the last digit of the client's case number. |
| Mississippi | Effective February 2017, benefits are made available from the 4th to the 21st of every month, based on the last two digits of the client's case number. Benefits were previously distributed from the 5th to the 19th (15 days) of every month. |
| Missouri | Benefits are made available over the first 22 days of every month, based on the client's birth month and last name. |
| Montana | Benefits are distributed over five days by the last number of the recipient's case number, from the 2 nd to the 6 th of every month. |
| Nebraska | Nebraska distributes benefits during the first five calendar days of the month. The day of distribution is based on the last digit of the social security number. |
| Nevada** | In Nevada, food stamp benefits are issued on the first day of each month. |
| New Hampshire** | New Hampshire benefits are available on the 5th of every month. |
| New Jersey | The monthly SNAP allotment is available over the first five days of the month. The day is based on the number in the 7th position of their case number. Some of the cases still receive their benefits based on the assignment at the time the county was converted to EBT. In Warren County, all benefits are made available on the 1st of the month. |
| New Mexico | Benefits are made available over 20 days every month, based on the last two digits of the SSN. |
| New York | The process is twofold as follows: in New York City, recipients receive their SNAP benefits within the first 13 business days of the month, according to the last digit of their case number, not including Sundays or holidays. The actual dates change from one month to the next, so NYC publishes a six-month schedule showing the exact availability dates. For the remainder of New York State, recipients receive their benefits within the first 9 days of the month, also according to the last digit of their case number, including Sundays and holidays. |
| North Carolina | Effective July 2011, the state expanded its 10-day distribution schedule. Benefits are now distributed from the 3rd to the 21st of every month, based on the last digit of the primary cardholder's Social Security Number. |

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|----------------|---|
| North Dakota** | Benefits are made available on the first day of every month. |
| Ohio | In April 2014, Ohio expanded its SNAP distribution from the first ten days of the month to the first 20 days of the month, staggered every two days. This only affected SNAP recipients who moved from one county to another; recipients who experienced a one-day or more break in eligibility; and, all new recipients. Recipients who were on SNAP before April 2014 did not see a change. |
| Oklahoma | Benefits are made available from the 1st to the 10th of every month, based on the last digit of the client's SNAP case number. |
| Oregon | SNAP is distributed on the first nine days of the month as such: social security numbers ending with "0" or "1" distribute on the 1st day of the month, numbers ending with a "2" are distributed on the 2nd day of the month and so on. |
| Pennsylvania | Benefits are made available over the first 10 business days of every month (excluding weekends and holidays) based on the last digit of the client's case number. |
| Rhode Island** | Benefits are made available on the first day of every month. |
| South Carolina | In 2012, South Carolina expanded from a nine day to a 19 day issuance. Current recipients stayed within the nine day distribution, but all new recipients were given a date that expanded into the 19 days. |
| South Dakota** | Benefits are made available on the 10th day of every month. |
| Tennessee | In October 2012, Tennessee expanded distribution from 10 to 20 days. |
| Texas | Benefits are made available over the first 15 days of the month, based on the last digit of the client's SNAP case number. |
| Utah | Benefits are made available on the 5th, 11th, or 15th of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name: A - G available on the 5th; H - O available on the 11th; P - Z available on the 15th. |
| Vermont** | Vermont benefits are available on the first of every month. |
| Virginia | On September 1, 2012, benefit distribution was moved from one day a month to five days, and then eventually to the current 1st to the 9 th day of every month, based on the last digits of the client's case number. |
| Washington | Benefits are staggered over the first 10 days of the month based on the last digit of the households' assistance unit number. Weekends and holidays do not affect the schedule. However, beginning February 1, 2017 , an expansion of distribution was fully implemented. Going forward, it will be the first 20 days of the month. |
| West Virginia | Benefits are made available over the first nine days of every month, based on the first letter of the client's last name. |
| Wisconsin | Benefits are made available over the first 15 days of every month, based on the eighth digit of the client's SSN. |
| Wyoming | SNAP is distributed on the first four days of the month. |

Current as of February 13, 2017; Food Marketing Institute Research

Notes:

▶ **States with asterisks are those that only distribute benefits on one day a month. There are seven that still do so. Warren County, New Jersey distributes only one day a month, although the rest of the state distributes over five days. Also, there are four states that distribute SNAP just two or three days a month.

Additional Distribution Information:

▶ There is no limit on the number of days for stagger. The only condition in regulation is that no single household's issuance should exceed 40 days *between* issuances.

▶ Currently, benefit recipients may only be issued their benefits one time a month, or within 40 days.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: One-Month Change in Total Participation

Data as of January 6, 2017

| State | September 2016 | October 2016 | Percent Change September 2016 vs. October 2016 |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| Kentucky | 657,389 | 671,628 | 2.2 |
| Arkansas | 399,538 | 403,376 | 1.0 |
| South Carolina | 746,646 | 752,030 | 0.7 |
| Texas | 3,864,686 | 3,891,234 | 0.7 |
| Wyoming | 33,806 | 33,977 | 0.5 |
| Kansas | 246,179 | 247,281 | 0.4 |
| Nevada | 441,986 | 443,138 | 0.3 |
| Montana | 119,863 | 120,065 | 0.2 |
| Vermont | 78,034 | 78,092 | 0.1 |
| Massachusetts | 771,436 | 771,512 | 0.0 |
| Washington | 952,711 | 951,845 | -0.1 |
| Colorado | 467,426 | 466,789 | -0.1 |
| Idaho | 176,217 | 175,976 | -0.1 |
| Pennsylvania | 1,858,232 | 1,855,129 | -0.2 |
| Arizona | 964,979 | 963,303 | -0.2 |
| Mississippi | 555,278 | 554,225 | -0.2 |
| Hawaii | 173,669 | 173,289 | -0.2 |
| Florida | 3,287,446 | 3,279,009 | -0.3 |
| West Virginia | 351,391 | 350,474 | -0.3 |
| Georgia | 1,688,832 | 1,683,945 | -0.3 |
| Indiana | 710,738 | 708,476 | -0.3 |
| Oregon | 712,084 | 709,684 | -0.3 |
| Iowa | 378,478 | 377,126 | -0.4 |
| Minnesota | 465,211 | 463,461 | -0.4 |
| New York | 2,950,208 | 2,938,258 | -0.4 |
| New Jersey | 857,779 | 854,146 | -0.4 |
| Missouri | 770,944 | 767,403 | -0.5 |
| Alabama | 830,742 | 826,790 | -0.5 |
| Wisconsin | 712,582 | 709,134 | -0.5 |
| Oklahoma | 621,462 | 618,434 | -0.5 |
| California | 4,252,654 | 4,230,399 | -0.5 |
| South Dakota | 95,655 | 95,153 | -0.5 |
| Connecticut | 424,431 | 422,181 | -0.5 |
| Maryland | 720,566 | 716,620 | -0.5 |
| Delaware | 149,158 | 148,340 | -0.5 |
| New Hampshire | 95,393 | 94,823 | -0.6 |
| Maine | 183,299 | 182,095 | -0.7 |
| Ohio | 1,564,498 | 1,553,901 | -0.7 |
| Virginia | 811,949 | 806,332 | -0.7 |
| Utah | 214,505 | 212,903 | -0.7 |
| Michigan | 1,434,550 | 1,423,008 | -0.8 |
| North Dakota | 54,622 | 54,124 | -0.9 |
| Tennessee | 1,083,880 | 1,071,344 | -1.2 |
| Illinois | 1,931,575 | 1,907,969 | -1.2 |
| North Carolina | 1,470,079 | 1,450,485 | -1.3 |
| New Mexico | 480,493 | 473,398 | -1.5 |
| Rhode Island | 168,973 | 166,365 | -1.5 |
| District of Columbia | 132,308 | 126,322 | -4.5 |
| Louisiana | 1,042,876 | 943,685 | -9.5 |
| Nebraska | 177,912 | 153,419 | -13.8 |
| Alaska | 84,825 | 71,768 | -15.4 |
| TOTAL | 43,493,149 | 43,215,557 | -0.6 |

The following areas receive Nutrition Assistance Grants which provide benefits analogous to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas. In addition, 2015 and 2016 data are preliminary and are subject to significant revision.

* State where October 2016 SNAP data include disaster assistance (D-SNAP).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: One-Year Change in Total Participation

Data as of January 6, 2017

| State | October 2015 | October 2016 | Percent Change October 2015 vs. October 2016 |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| Louisiana | 879,541 | 943,685 | 7.3 |
| Montana | 113,462 | 120,065 | 5.8 |
| Wyoming | 32,729 | 33,977 | 3.8 |
| Texas | 3,777,317 | 3,891,234 | 3.0 |
| New Mexico | 460,048 | 473,398 | 2.9 |
| Alaska | 69,996 | 71,768 | 2.5 |
| North Dakota | 53,271 | 54,124 | 1.6 |
| Nevada | 439,498 | 443,138 | 0.8 |
| Delaware | 147,127 | 148,340 | 0.8 |
| Oklahoma | 613,397 | 618,434 | 0.8 |
| Pennsylvania | 1,873,447 | 1,855,129 | -1.0 |
| South Dakota | 96,692 | 95,153 | -1.6 |
| Massachusetts | 786,492 | 771,512 | -1.9 |
| New York | 2,996,649 | 2,938,258 | -1.9 |
| Iowa | 384,685 | 377,126 | -2.0 |
| West Virginia | 359,001 | 350,474 | -2.4 |
| Arizona | 991,567 | 963,303 | -2.9 |
| Colorado | 481,892 | 466,789 | -3.1 |
| Connecticut | 439,210 | 422,181 | -3.9 |
| Rhode Island | 173,148 | 166,365 | -3.9 |
| Virginia | 844,204 | 806,332 | -4.5 |
| Minnesota | 485,317 | 463,461 | -4.5 |
| Utah | 222,981 | 212,903 | -4.5 |
| Ohio | 1,629,349 | 1,553,901 | -4.6 |
| California | 4,436,189 | 4,230,399 | -4.6 |
| Hawaii | 182,226 | 173,289 | -4.9 |
| Illinois | 2,007,492 | 1,907,969 | -5.0 |
| New Jersey | 899,481 | 854,146 | -5.0 |
| Georgia | 1,774,540 | 1,683,945 | -5.1 |
| Vermont | 82,364 | 78,092 | -5.2 |
| South Carolina | 793,218 | 752,030 | -5.2 |
| Maine | 192,404 | 182,095 | -5.4 |
| Kentucky | 713,911 | 671,628 | -5.9 |
| Michigan | 1,513,129 | 1,423,008 | -6.0 |
| Alabama | 881,402 | 826,790 | -6.2 |
| Wisconsin | 756,434 | 709,134 | -6.3 |
| Oregon | 759,386 | 709,684 | -6.5 |
| Kansas | 265,478 | 247,281 | -6.9 |
| New Hampshire | 101,894 | 94,823 | -6.9 |
| Idaho | 189,385 | 175,976 | -7.1 |
| Maryland | 779,303 | 716,620 | -8.0 |
| Tennessee | 1,168,238 | 1,071,344 | -8.3 |
| Washington | 1,043,008 | 951,845 | -8.7 |
| Missouri | 843,876 | 767,403 | -9.1 |
| District of Columbia | 140,654 | 126,322 | -10.2 |
| Indiana | 799,663 | 708,476 | -11.4 |
| Florida | 3,708,499 | 3,279,009 | -11.6 |
| Mississippi | 628,354 | 554,225 | -11.8 |
| Arkansas | 457,380 | 403,376 | -11.8 |
| North Carolina | 1,647,808 | 1,450,485 | -12.0 |
| Nebraska | 176,363 | 153,419 | -13.0 |
| TOTAL | 45,368,265 | 43,215,557 | -4.7 |

The following areas receive Nutrition Assistance Grants which provide benefits analogous to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas. In addition, 2015 and 2016 data are preliminary and are subject to significant revision.

* State where October 2016 SNAP data include disaster assistance (D-SNAP).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Five-Year Change in Participation

Data as of January 6, 2017

| State | October 2011 | October 2016 | Percent Change October 2011 vs. October 2016 |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| Nevada | 351,686 | 443,138 | 26.0 |
| New Mexico | 432,289 | 473,398 | 9.5 |
| California | 3,867,094 | 4,230,399 | 9.4 |
| Connecticut | 396,517 | 422,181 | 6.5 |
| Illinois | 1,831,037 | 1,907,969 | 4.2 |
| Pennsylvania | 1,785,240 | 1,855,129 | 3.9 |
| Louisiana | 916,060 | 943,685 | 3.0 |
| Delaware | 144,612 | 148,340 | 2.6 |
| Hawaii | 169,405 | 173,289 | 2.3 |
| Wyoming | 33,252 | 33,977 | 2.2 |
| Florida | 3,225,957 | 3,279,009 | 1.6 |
| West Virginia | 347,064 | 350,474 | 1.0 |
| Maryland | 709,681 | 716,620 | 1.0 |
| Oklahoma | 624,112 | 618,434 | -0.9 |
| Rhode Island | 168,694 | 166,365 | -1.4 |
| Montana | 121,992 | 120,065 | -1.6 |
| Colorado | 480,566 | 466,789 | -2.9 |
| New York | 3,060,107 | 2,938,258 | -4.0 |
| Alaska | 74,792 | 71,768 | -4.0 |
| New Jersey | 890,859 | 854,146 | -4.1 |
| Iowa | 398,574 | 377,126 | -5.4 |
| Texas | 4,174,348 | 3,891,234 | -6.8 |
| South Dakota | 103,282 | 95,153 | -7.9 |
| Massachusetts | 838,603 | 771,512 | -8.0 |
| North Dakota | 59,383 | 54,124 | -8.9 |
| Alabama | 910,034 | 826,790 | -9.1 |
| District of Columbia | 140,003 | 126,322 | -9.8 |
| Georgia | 1,870,781 | 1,683,945 | -10.0 |
| Virginia | 896,420 | 806,332 | -10.0 |
| Oregon | 798,772 | 709,684 | -11.2 |
| Ohio | 1,766,584 | 1,553,901 | -12.0 |
| Nebraska | 174,941 | 153,419 | -12.3 |
| North Carolina | 1,655,694 | 1,450,485 | -12.4 |
| Minnesota | 531,728 | 463,461 | -12.8 |
| Washington | 1,095,139 | 951,845 | -13.1 |
| South Carolina | 867,258 | 752,030 | -13.3 |
| Mississippi | 645,220 | 554,225 | -14.1 |
| Wisconsin | 828,362 | 709,134 | -14.4 |
| Arizona | 1,138,220 | 963,303 | -15.4 |
| Tennessee | 1,280,908 | 1,071,344 | -16.4 |
| New Hampshire | 114,744 | 94,823 | -17.4 |
| Vermont | 94,604 | 78,092 | -17.5 |
| Arkansas | 490,487 | 403,376 | -17.8 |
| Kansas | 302,633 | 247,281 | -18.3 |
| Missouri | 950,725 | 767,403 | -19.3 |
| Kentucky | 842,885 | 671,628 | -20.3 |
| Indiana | 901,967 | 708,476 | -21.5 |
| Michigan | 1,884,542 | 1,423,008 | -24.5 |
| Idaho | 233,194 | 175,976 | -24.5 |
| Utah | 285,695 | 212,903 | -25.5 |
| Maine | 251,189 | 182,095 | -27.5 |
| TOTAL | 46,224,722 | 43,215,557 | -6.5 |

The following areas receive Nutrition Assistance Grants which provide benefits analogous to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas. In addition, 2015 and 2016 data are preliminary and are subject to significant revision.

* State where October 2016 SNAP data include disaster assistance (D-SNAP).

Share of Population Participating in SNAP

Data as of January 6, 2017

| State | Population Estimate (2015) | SNAP Participants, October 2016 | Share of Population |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| New Mexico | 2,085,109 | 473,398 | 22.7 |
| Louisiana | 4,670,724 | 943,685 | 20.2 |
| West Virginia | 1,844,128 | 350,474 | 19.0 |
| District of Columbia | 672,228 | 126,322 | 18.8 |
| Mississippi | 2,992,333 | 554,225 | 18.5 |
| Oregon | 4,028,977 | 709,684 | 17.6 |
| Alabama | 4,858,979 | 826,790 | 17.0 |
| Georgia | 10,214,860 | 1,683,945 | 16.5 |
| Tennessee | 6,600,299 | 1,071,344 | 16.2 |
| Florida | 20,271,272 | 3,279,009 | 16.2 |
| Oklahoma | 3,911,338 | 618,434 | 15.8 |
| Rhode Island | 1,056,298 | 166,365 | 15.7 |
| Delaware | 945,934 | 148,340 | 15.7 |
| South Carolina | 4,896,146 | 752,030 | 15.4 |
| Nevada | 2,890,845 | 443,138 | 15.3 |
| Kentucky | 4,425,092 | 671,628 | 15.2 |
| New York | 19,795,791 | 2,938,258 | 14.8 |
| Illinois | 12,859,995 | 1,907,969 | 14.8 |
| Pennsylvania | 12,802,503 | 1,855,129 | 14.5 |
| North Carolina | 10,042,802 | 1,450,485 | 14.4 |
| Michigan | 9,922,576 | 1,423,008 | 14.3 |
| Texas | 27,469,114 | 3,891,234 | 14.2 |
| Arizona | 6,828,065 | 963,303 | 14.1 |
| Maine | 1,329,328 | 182,095 | 13.7 |
| Arkansas | 2,978,204 | 403,376 | 13.5 |
| Ohio | 11,613,423 | 1,553,901 | 13.4 |
| Washington | 7,170,351 | 951,845 | 13.3 |
| Missouri | 6,083,672 | 767,403 | 12.6 |
| Vermont | 626,042 | 78,092 | 12.5 |
| Wisconsin | 5,771,337 | 709,134 | 12.3 |
| Hawaii | 1,431,603 | 173,289 | 12.1 |
| Iowa | 3,123,899 | 377,126 | 12.1 |
| Maryland | 6,006,401 | 716,620 | 11.9 |
| Connecticut | 3,590,886 | 422,181 | 11.8 |
| Montana | 1,032,949 | 120,065 | 11.6 |
| Massachusetts | 6,794,422 | 771,512 | 11.4 |
| South Dakota | 858,469 | 95,153 | 11.1 |
| California | 39,144,818 | 4,230,399 | 10.8 |
| Indiana | 6,619,680 | 708,476 | 10.7 |
| Idaho | 1,654,930 | 175,976 | 10.6 |
| Alaska | 738,432 | 71,768 | 9.7 |
| Virginia | 8,382,993 | 806,332 | 9.6 |
| New Jersey | 8,958,013 | 854,146 | 9.5 |
| Colorado | 5,456,574 | 466,789 | 8.6 |
| Kansas | 2,911,641 | 247,281 | 8.5 |
| Minnesota | 5,489,594 | 463,461 | 8.4 |
| Nebraska | 1,896,190 | 153,419 | 8.1 |
| North Dakota | 756,927 | 54,124 | 7.2 |
| New Hampshire | 1,330,608 | 94,823 | 7.1 |
| Utah | 2,995,919 | 212,903 | 7.1 |
| Wyoming | 586,107 | 33,977 | 5.8 |
| TOTAL | 321,418,820 | 43,215,557 | 13.4 |

The following areas receive Nutrition Assistance Grants which provide benefits analogous to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas. In addition, 2015 and 2016 data are preliminary and are subject to significant revision.

* State where October 2016 SNAP data include disaster assistance (D-SNAP).