

## APPENDIX F7:

## SNAP Key Facts

- In fiscal year 2011, on average, SNAP provided \$134 per person to 44.7 million individuals in 21.1 million households each month. In this same year, the average monthly per person SNAP benefit in California was \$147 provided to 3.7 million individuals in 1.6 million households.<sup>1</sup>
- SNAP benefits, provided monthly via an electronic debit card, are available to most households with gross income less than 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.
- SNAP automatically responds to changes in the economy and plays a key role in supporting families during tough economic times.
- SNAP participation closely follows the pattern of poverty in America. As the number of persons in poverty rises, SNAP participation grows. As poverty falls, so does reliance on SNAP.
- With the severe economic downturn, food insecurity rose to record high levels in 2008 and remained essentially unchanged in 2009 and 2010. Based on three-year averages, the prevalence of household-level food insecurity in California increased significantly from 10.2 percent (2005-2007) to 15.9 percent (2008-2010).<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 55 percent of SNAP participants are children or elderly. About 41 percent live in households with earnings. In California, 63.2 percent of SNAP participants are children or elderly.<sup>3</sup>
- Earnings from employment are the most common single source of income for SNAP households.
- If SNAP benefits were counted as income, 13 percent of households would move above the poverty guidelines.
- The shelter deduction taken by 71 percent of households and worth an average of \$364 is a key deduction in determining a household's net income.
- Half of all new SNAP participants leave the program within 10 months. More than half of those who leave return within two years.
- About 42 percent of the people who receive benefits from the four largest FNS nutrition assistance programs participate in only one program.
- The SNAP participation rate among all eligible individuals was 72 percent in fiscal year 2009. California's SNAP participation rate for this same year was 53 percent.<sup>4</sup>
- Historically, children have the highest SNAP participation rate and elderly have the lowest.
- SNAP participation lowers the likelihood of being food insecure.
- Forty percent of SNAP households receive the maximum benefit for their household size.
- With an additional dollar of SNAP benefits, households would spend approximately 14 to 47 cents more on food.
- The diets of SNAP participants, as measured by the Healthy Eating Index, are similar to those of higher-income Americans.

- There is little evidence of a connection between SNAP participation and obesity.
- Since welfare reform in 1996, fewer SNAP households receive TANF benefits each year.
- As the program and its participants change over time, state SNAP agencies have “modernized” by making responsive adjustments to provide better access to people in need.
- In recent years, rising caseloads and declining resources are challenging states’ abilities to process all applications in a timely manner.
- SNAP payment error rates have declined over time, reaching a record low of 3.81 percent in fiscal year 2010.
- About one cent of every SNAP benefit dollar is trafficked.
- EBT is the sole method for participants to buy food using SNAP benefits.
- The number of SNAP-authorized retailers increased almost 42 percent between fiscal years 2006 and 2011.
- In fiscal year 2010, 83 percent of SNAP benefits were redeemed in supermarkets or super stores.
- Eighty percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed within two weeks of issuance.
- Between FY 2006 and FY 2010 there was a 263 percent increase in the number of authorized farmers’ markets and a 49 percent increase in SNAP redemptions at farmers’ markets.
- The amount of Disaster SNAP (D-SNAP) benefits issued depends on the number and magnitude of disasters during the year. For example, the spike in 2006 is the result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the Gulf Coast.

### Sources:

All but the California-specific facts (a-d) come from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, Building a Healthy America: A Profile of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Alexandria, VA: 2012. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

- <sup>1</sup> Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Data, Annual State Level Data, 2007-2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. Statistical Supplement to Household Food Security in the United States in 2010, AP-057. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. September 2011. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/120995/ap057.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2010, by Esa Eslami, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Alexandria, VA: 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/2010Characteristics.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Cunnynham, KE, *Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2009*, Mathematica Policy Research, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Reaching2009.pdf>