

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: IMPROVE THE NATION'S NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Exhibit 33: Resources Dedicated to Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health

USDA Resources Dedicated to Strategic Goal 4	FY 2003		FY 2004	
	Estimate	Percent of Total USDA	Estimate	Percent of Total USDA
Program Level (\$ Mil)	41,575	36%	42,810	40%
Staff Years	3,240	3%	3,210	3%

Goal 4 ensures that America's agricultural abundance and the latest science and technology work together to support the nutrition and health of people in the U.S. The Department manages domestic nutrition assistance programs that touch the lives of one in five Americans in the course of a year and promotes better health for all Americans through food and nutrition education, guidance and promotion.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Improve Access to Nutritious Food

Exhibit 34: Resources Dedicated to Improve Access to Nutritious Food

USDA Resources Dedicated to Objective 4.1	FY 2003		FY 2004	
	Estimate	Percent of Goal 4	Estimate	Percent of Goal 4
Program Level (\$ Mil)	40,729	97%	41,941	97%
Staff Years	1,417	44%	1,460	45%

USDA will continue to contribute significantly to America’s health and well-being by ensuring access to nutrition assistance programs for eligible Americans and providing nutrition guidance and promotion to the general public and targeted groups.

Reduce Hunger and Improve Nutrition

USDA programs provide nutrition for millions of America’s children, elderly, working poor and other targeted groups. For a variety of reasons, many individuals and families who are eligible to participate in these programs do not. USDA is committed to improving nutritional intake through increased access to and use of, these vital assistance and education programs by those who are eligible to participate.

USDA will improve access to nutritious food, reducing low-income households that report hunger from 10.9 percent in FY 2001 to 7.4 percent in FY 2007 based on an annual population survey; enrolling 68 percent of those eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program; and providing Program lunches to 55 percent of enrolled children in both public and private schools.

Exhibit 35: Improve Nutrition

Annual Performance Goals and Indicators	Fiscal Year					
	1999 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Target	2004 Target
4.1.1 Improve Access to Nutritious Food (Mil):						
• Food Stamp Program participation (people)	18.2	17.2	17.3	19.1	20.7	21.6
• Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children participation (average monthly participation)	7.31	7.20	7.30	7.50	7.7	7.8
• National School Lunch Program participation (average daily participation)	26.9	27.2	27.4	27.9	28.7	29.1
• School Breakfast Program participation (average daily participation)	7.4	7.8	7.8	8.1	8.8	9.1
• Child and Adult Care Food Program meals served	1,638	1,670	1,678	1,740	1,831	1,872
• Summer Food Service Program participation (average daily participation)	2.17	2.09	2.1	1.9	2.0	2.1

Means and Strategies

Planned actions for achieving this performance goal and related objective include the following:

- Effectively deliver nutrition assistance benefits to eligible participants by working with states to implement new FSRIA provisions that restore food stamp benefits to legal immigrants and giving States substantial new flexibility to streamline some of the FSP complex rules.

- Continue actions to ensure that the Food Stamp Program is accessible to all those eligible.
- Continue to increase access to the Summer Food Service Program by conducting outreach, providing technical assistance and evaluating the use of program waivers to determine potential for expansion.
- Maximize the availability of WIC benefits by reallocating funds to areas with high demand, using infant formula rebates to stretch program dollars.

Key External Factors

Our ability to achieve this performance goal depends partly on sound legislative authority to promote effective access to nutrition assistance and on adequate funding to support program participation. The quality of program delivery by third parties—State and local governments and other cooperators—impacts our efforts to reduce hunger and improve nutrition.

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Promote Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles

Exhibit 36: Resources Dedicated to Promote Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles

USDA Resources Dedicated to Objective 4.2	FY 2003		FY 2004	
	Estimate	Percent of Goal 4	Estimate	Percent of Goal 4
Program Level (\$ Mil)	716	2%	735	2%
Staff Years	598	18%	533	17%

The Nation faces significant public health issues related to the quality of America’s eating habits, including an increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity. USDA will use its nutrition assistance programs and its broader nutrition education efforts as key opportunities to promote more healthful eating and physical activity across the Nation.

Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles

A nutritious diet that includes the consumption of fruits and vegetables, combined with regular physical activity, is a key ingredient to a healthy life. For babies, breastfeeding has been shown to make a significant difference in their health, not only in their infancy, but beyond.

USDA will promote healthier eating habits and lifestyles in several segments of American society. By 2007, we will increase the Healthy Eating Index scores for low-income people by at least 5 points and for the broader U.S. population by at least 2 points; support 60 percent of postpartum women who participate in WIC to initiate breastfeeding; increase the proportion of elementary and secondary schools offering meal options that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines to 100 percent and partner with the HHS to promote a reduction in overweight and obesity in adults and children.

In FY 2003 and 2004, USDA will purchase and distribute nutritious foods, deliver targeted nutrition education and provide technical assistance and oversight to ensure meals and other benefits support healthful diets. USDA will also provide nutrition guidance to the general public.

Exhibit 37: Improve America’s Diet

Annual Performance Goals and Indicators	Fiscal Year					
	1999 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Target	2004 Target
4.2.1 Promote Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles:						
• Support for fruits and vegetables provided through nutrition assistance programs (\$ Mil)	6,692	6,747	7,102	7,628	8,246	8,479
• School Meals Initiative monitoring reviews conducted by State agencies	2,937	3,939	4,073	3,517	2,900	4,100
• Percentage of WIC mothers initiating breastfeeding (Percentage, data collected biennially)	N/A	44.5%	N/A	48% ¹	N/A	50%
• USDA nutrition education materials and education interventions disseminated (Mil. of pieces)	.38	2.2	3.4	14.8	6.1	6.6

¹ Preliminary data. Final data expected December 2003.

Means and Strategies

Planned actions for achieving this performance goal and related objective include the following:

- Purchase and distribute fruits and vegetables to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.
- Provide fresh fruit and vegetables to Indian Tribal organizations.
- Promote Farmers' Markets as means of improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Support USDA's School Meals Initiative to ensure nutrition education and school meals that support healthy food choices and monitor schools' progress in carrying out this important initiative.
- Promote breastfeeding through WIC as the preferred infant feeding practice.
- Develop and disseminate nutrition education materials and education interventions targeting children and their caregivers.
- Foster behavior change to reduce obesity and increase the effective use of USDA nutrition education materials through training programs and public awareness.
- Integrate nutrition education with food assistance by working with States to build a more effective means for delivering nutrition education.
- Develop and disseminate print and Internet-based tools to help more people assess and improve their diets.
- Implement a Memorandum of Understanding with the National 5 A Day Partnership, CDC and the National Cancer Institute to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- Foster behavior change to reduce obesity and increase the effective use of USDA nutrition education materials through training programs and public awareness efforts.
- Conduct research on food consumption and nutrient content to help shape national food assistance programs and nutrition education efforts.

Key External Factors

Efforts to improve the diets of program participants depend in part on the emphasis that the Nation more broadly places on healthy eating, including products and practices in the food marketplace. Moreover, physical activity and other lifestyle issues have a significant affect on bodyweight and other health issues. Since many of these factors are beyond the scope of nutrition education, USDA must look to the efforts of partners. To that end, our efforts to promote nutrition also rely on coordination among USDA and its Federal, State and local partners, including universities engaged in nutrition research and education.

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Improve Food Program Management and Customer Service

Exhibit 38: Resources Dedicated to Improve Food Program Management and Customer Service

USDA Resources Dedicated to Objective 4.3	FY 2003		FY 2004	
	Estimate	Percent of Goal 4	Estimate	Percent of Goal 4
Program Level (\$ Mil)	130	1%	134	1%
Staff Years	1,225	38%	1,216	38%

Consistent with the President’s Management Agenda (PMA), USDA is strongly committed to maintaining a high level of stewardship and customer service in the nutrition assistance programs and preventing errors and other problems before they occur.

USDA will continue its strong performance by requiring that States pay cash sanctions when their error rates in the Food Stamp Program (FSP) greatly exceeds the national average, by assuring that the FSP Quality Control system remains strong and by monitoring and working with all States to improve performance.

Efforts are underway to improve the accuracy of eligibility determinations for school meal programs. USDA is pilot testing alternatives to the current eligibility determination process and intends to use the results of these pilots to improve this process for the future. As school meal eligibility data are widely used to distribute education aid, errors in school meal certifications can result in the misdirection of targeted education funds. USDA is working with the OMB and the Department of Education to develop options for eligibility determinations for all benefits targeted to low-income students.

New communication and eGovernment technologies represent a prime opportunity to serve our customers and work with partners more effectively. We plan to make targeted, cost-effective investments to enable USDA to bring its programs and businesses into the digital age.

Improve Food Management Efficiency

Effective stewardship helps ensure that those families and individuals most in need of nutrition assistance receive it and that the funds intended for this purpose are not diminished by waste or program abuse. Improved customer service helps ensure that eligible families and individuals are aware of the lifetime benefits of good nutrition and know about the assistance that is available to them to improve their nutritional intake.

USDA will improve food program management and customer service by: increasing the Food Stamp payment accuracy rate to 92.2 percent by FY 2004; and providing services electronically to increase efficiency and ease-of-use and benefit delivery within the Food Stamp and WIC programs.

Exhibit 39: Increase Efficiency in Food Management

Annual Performance Goals and Indicators	Fiscal Year					
	1999 Actual	2000 Actual	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Target	2004 Target
4.3.1 Improve Food Program Management and Customer Service:						
• Increase the Food Stamp payment accuracy rate (Percentage; Cumulative)	90.1%	91.1%	91.3%	Available 5/03	91.5%	92.2%
• Decrease the number of children certified for free school meals in excess of those estimated eligible (Percentage)	27%	Not Available ¹	Not Available ¹	Available 11/03	25%	24%

¹ Result of special data analysis that uses a combination of FNS administrative data and information from the Current Population Survey; data will be available by Fall 2003. Questions have been raised about the methodology and the agency is currently conducting a reassessment.

Means and Strategies

Planned actions for achieving this performance goal and related objective include the following:

- Work with States to reduce errors in FSP benefit payments.
- Work with State agencies and local school food authorities to improve certification accuracy in school meals programs.
- Increase training and technical assistance to improve State and local management for vulnerable programs.

Key External Factors

Some erroneous payment problems are inherent to the legislatively mandated program structure, which is intended to serve people in special circumstances and settings. Often, State and local governments bear direct responsibility for delivering the programs. Therefore, we must address erroneous payment problems through monitoring and technical assistance. This approach requires adequate numbers of trained staff, supported by a modernized information technology infrastructure, to ensure full compliance with national program standards and to prevent or minimize error, waste and abuse.