

COVID-19: Innovations in Nutrition Programs to Address Food Insecurity

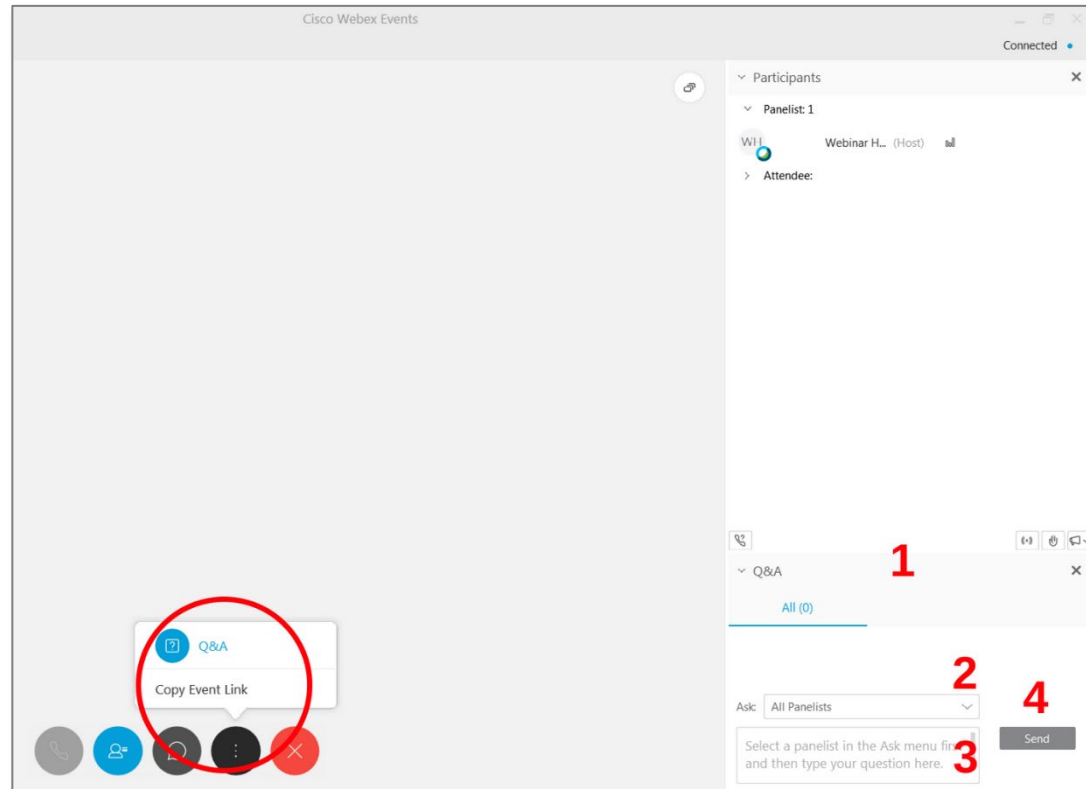
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COVID-19: Innovations in Nutrition Programs to Address Food Insecurity

Mathew Swinburne

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USDA 2019 report indicated that 37.2 Million Americans were food insecure.

National Average: 11.1%

White Americans: 8.1%

Hispanic Americans: 16.2%

Black Americans: 21.2%

Over 36 million Americans have filed for unemployment as a result of the pandemic (5/14/2020).

It is estimated that an additional 17.1 Million Americans will be forced into food insecurity because of the pandemic.



How has government responded to the pandemic's food security crisis?

1. Child Nutrition Programs-Schools Meal Programs
2. Pandemic EBT
3. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP)
4. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
5. USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program
6. Older Americans Act- Nutrition Services Program
7. FEMA's Public Assistance Grant Program



Child Nutrition Programs-Overview

- **National School Lunch Program: 30 Million Students**
 - 22 million receive free or reduced-price lunches
- **National School Breakfast Program: 14.7 Million Students**
 - 12.5 million receive free or reduced-price breakfast
- **When schools is closed for the summer**
 - Seamless Summer Option
 - School Food Authority and standard reimbursement rate
 - Summer Food Service Program
 - Can be sponsored by schools, public agencies, and nonprofits and higher reimbursement rate
 - 2.7 million children received summer meals through this program
- **These are the programs activated during COVID-19 Pandemic**



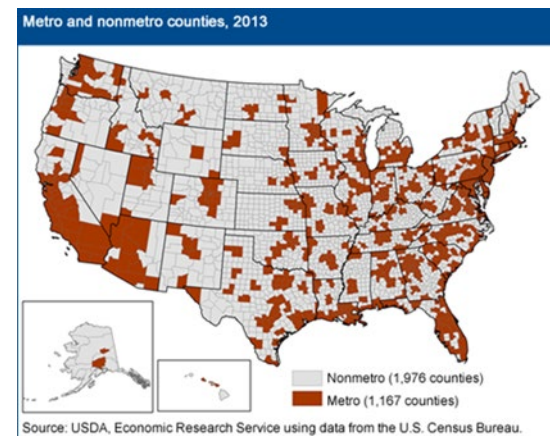
Child Nutrition Programs-Pandemic Response



- **Nationwide Congregate Feeding Requirement Waiver**
 - Grab and Go and Delivery Models
- **Nationwide Meal Pattern Waiver**
 - granted to allow for food shortages
- **Nationwide Mealtime Waiver**
- **Nationwide Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup Waiver**
 - Normally meals must be served directly to eligible children
- Transportation still a major issue or meal access
- Schools are losing money on meal programs. Costs exceed federal reimbursement.

Meals to You Program

- USDA, Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, McLane Global, and PepsiCo collaborating to feed low-income kids in rural areas.
- Mails 10 breakfasts and 10 lunches every two weeks directly to the student's home while schools are closed due to COVID-19.
- Initial goal was 1 million meals a week in a limited number of rural schools.
- Programs has expanded and now operating in the majority of states and has a goal of serving 5 million meals a week to food insecure rural children.
- School Districts must apply to be part of the Program
 - 50% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals or Community Eligibility Provision
 - Rural
 - Closed for at least 4 weeks by COVID-19
 - Currently runs to June 30th, 2020.



Pandemic-EBT

- Authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (USDA)
- Provides families with children that receive free or reduced-priced school meals with money for food during pandemic school closures.
- States must apply to USDA to run this program.
- Federal government pays for benefit and splits admin. costs with states.
- Award benefit for each day school is closed.
- Benefits can be awarded retroactively.
- Contiguous states- \$28.50/5-day school week.
- Benefits issued on SNAP EBT cards or state must issue EBT cards to those who do not have them.
- Student can receive Pandemic EBT and participate in the Summer food Service Program/Seamless Summer Option.



Pandemic EBT-Challenges

- By mid-May only 15% of eligible students were receiving this benefit.
- Only 37 States and D.C. approved for the Pandemic-EBT program (5/28/2020).
- Trouble identify eligible families; schools can share records with state agency administering Pandemic EBT (the state agency that runs SNAP). However, there are issues with the accuracy of these school records.
 - Creating online platforms to apply
- States have different end dates for the school year. This results in different benefit levels for families depending on where they live.
- States concerned with administrative capacity to run program. Utah did not apply for this reason.
- Program not set to continue through summer.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Largest Nutrition Program which served approximately 38 million Americans prior to COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Available to low-income Americans with
 - Gross incomes \leq 130% of FPL and
 - Net incomes \leq 100% FPL
- Benefits issued on Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards
- Total allotment determined by number of individuals in household and net income of household.
- Subject to work requirements.
- Effective economic stimulus
 - Studies indicate that every additional \$1 of SNAP generates \$1.54-\$1.80 in economic activity.



SNAP: Pandemic Adaptations

Emergency Allotments:

- **States can request from the Secretary of Agriculture emergency allotments for households participating in the SNAP program. The increase in a household's allotment cannot exceed the maximum monthly allotment for a household of its size.**
- **Example: maximum allotment for family of 3=\$551**

Waiver of the Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents Work Requirement:

- **Standard--Individuals between the ages of 18 and 49, who are able to work and do not have dependents are subject to special work requirements to receive more than 3 months of SNAP benefits in a 3-year period.**
- **Pandemic--States may not enforce the ABAWD time limit from April 1, 2020, through one month after the termination of the public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services based on the outbreak of COVID-19.**

Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows states to waive certain in-person interview requirements for SNAP applications and recertification.

WIC-Overview

- **WIC is for low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk.**
 - **Medically based risks** - anemia, underweight, history of pregnancy complications, or poor pregnancy outcomes.
 - **Dietary risks**- inappropriate nutrition/feeding practices or failure to meet the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- **WIC Clinic visits required at least twice a year.**
- **WIC provides certain healthy foods to supplement the dietary needs of participants (milk, fruit, vegetables, infant formula,.....)**
- **Grants are provided to each state, and administered at the local level by county and city health centers, or private nonprofits**
- **Benefit provided in a variety of ways paper vouchers, home delivery, and WIC EBT.**
 - All states mandated to have WIC EBT by October 2020.
- **Serving Approximately 6 million people prior to the Pandemic (Feb. 2020)**



WIC-Pandemic Adaptations

Additional Funding for WIC:

- FFCRA provides WIC with \$500 million to remain available through September 30, 2021, for increases in program participation.

• Physical Presence Waivers

- States can waive the requirement that participants and applicants physically come into the clinic to enroll or re-enroll. It also allows for the deferral of in-person nutritional risk assessments.

• Remote Benefit Issuance Waivers

- The USDA may grant waivers to states for the requirement that participants physically come into the clinic to pick up WIC Electronic Benefit Transfer cards and/or paper coupons.

• Food Package Substitution Waivers

- In response to the potential shortage of WIC prescribed foods, the USDA may grant waivers to permit appropriate substitutions for these foods.

Matching Supply and Demand

Food Banks

- 98 % of food banks are reporting an increase in demand for food assistance and 59 % have reported having less inventory.
- Many food banks receive donations of surplus food from grocery stores. However, the increased pressure placed on grocery stores by the pandemic has left them with little food to donate.
- With the closures of schools and universities, food banks have lost another traditional source of food donations.

Farmers

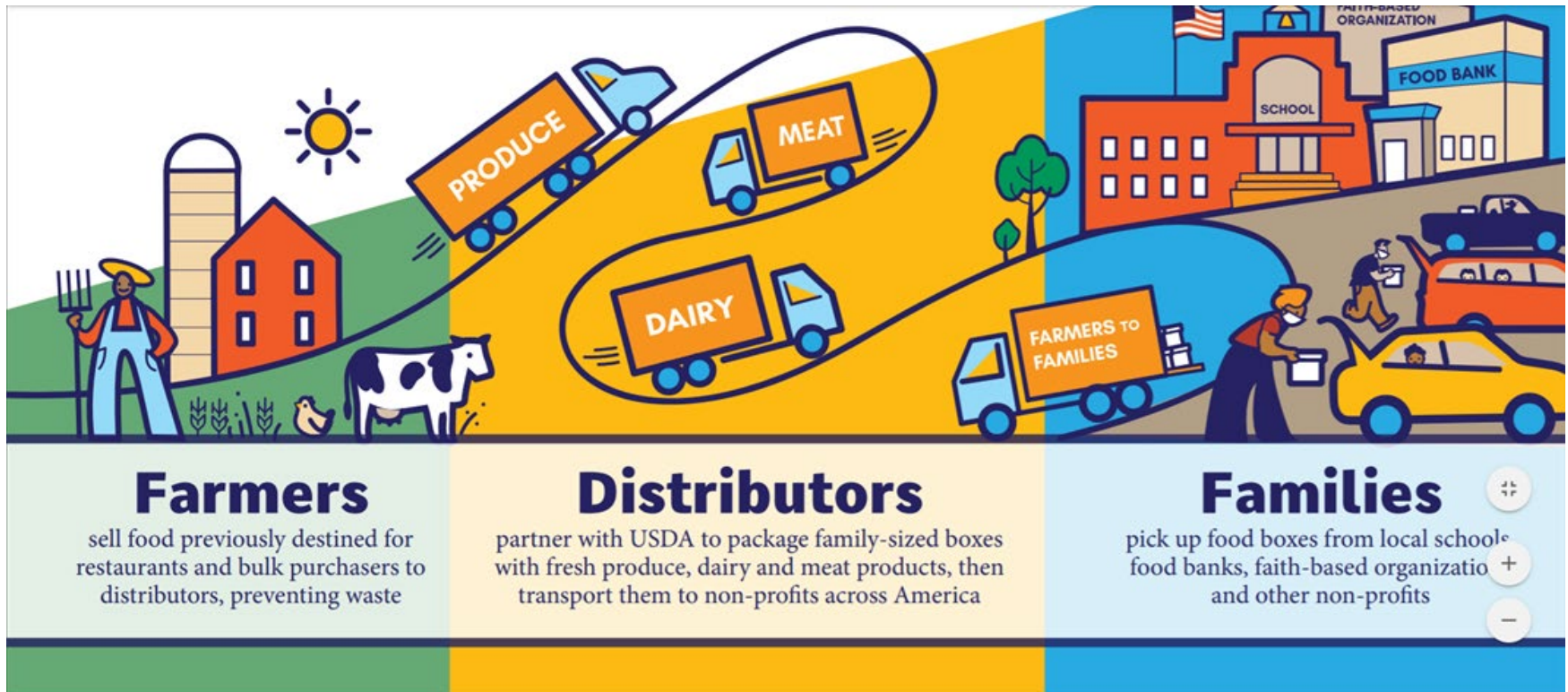
- With the closing of restaurants, hotels, and schools, many farmers are left without buyers for their crops and products.
- The retail food supply chain cannot absorb all the excess food from the commercial food supply chain.
- Farms are forced to dispose of millions of pounds of food while Americans struggle with food security.



USDA: Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

- USDA will work with local and regional food distributors to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat.
- This food will be packaged into 5 types of food boxes: produce, dairy products, meat, fluid milk, and mixed.
- These food boxes will be distributed to food banks and other non-profits working to fight food insecurity.
- Distribution runs from May 15 through June 30, 2020. USDA may elect to extend the period of performance of the contracts dependent upon program success and available remaining funds.

How does the Farmers to Families Food Box Program Work?



Older Americans Act: Nutrition Services



- Provides grants to states to provide congregate and home-delivered nutrition programs for seniors (60 and older).
- Intended to promote the health of seniors by promoting socialization and reducing food insecurity.
- These programs normally provide 900,000 meals a day in communities across the country.
- The majority of program participants receive at least 50% of their daily food intake from these services.
- Linked to better health outcomes

Older Americans Act: **Nutrition Services Program**

FY 2020 Budget

Home delivered meals (\$266 million)

Congregate Nutrition Programs (\$510 million)

15% state match for the home delivery and congregate nutrition funds.

Funding allotment formula based on percent of total US population over 60 in the state.

Flexibility in funding utilization

Can transfer up to 40% of allotment between congregate and home delivery programs. Can seek a waiver to transfer an additional 10%.



Older Americans Act: COVID Response

Infusion of Funds into Nutrition Services Programs

- (3/18) Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)-\$240 Million
 - \$80 million for Congregate
 - \$160 Million for home-delivered
- (3/27) CARES Act--\$480 million
 - Home-delivered meals and allow for drive through option.
- COVID-19 funding for states totals \$720 million for the home delivery and congregate meal settings.
 - Nearly doubles the FY2020 budget for these programs (\$776 million FY2020).

Additional Flexibility

- Allows a 100% transfer of funds between congregate and home deliver nutrition programs.
- Allows individuals who are home bound for social distancing purposes to receive delivery of meals regardless of state policy.
- Waives nutrition requirements to address COVID-19 induced food shortages.
- Waiver of state match (15%) to receive the additional OAA nutrition program funding.

FEMA Public Assistance Grant Program

- FEMA's largest grant program. Since 2017, issued over five billion dollars through PA grants.
- Clear debris and rebuild roads, schools, libraries, and other public facilities.
- Awarded to state, tribal, territorial, and local governments, and certain types of private non-profits
- Once president issues an emergency declaration, states must request a major disaster declaration to access these funds.
- Cost sharing: applicants must provide between 10-25% of cost.



Emergency Work

Address an immediate threat:

- A** Debris removal
- B** Emergency protective measures

Permanent Work

Restoration of:

- C** Roads/bridges
- D** Water control facilities
- E** Buildings/equipment
- F** Utilities
- G** Parks, recreational, and other facilities

Types of Work

Pandemic Adaptation

- On April 12, 2020, FEMA issued policy update identifying that purchasing and distributing food to vulnerable populations was an emergency protective measure covered by the grant program
- The policy emphasized providing these services to individuals over the age of 65 and persons of any age with serious underlying health conditions.
- Meeting their immediate nutrition needs and preventing the spread of the virus



California's Innovative Use of the Public Assistance Program



- First of its kind program.
- Intended to help seniors and provide economic stimulus to hard hit restaurant industry.
- Utilizes restaurants to prepare meals and meals are delivered to seniors
 - 65 or older
 - 60-64 and high risk.
 - Income restrictions (below 600% of the FPL)
 - Cannot be receiving any other nutrition assistance (e.g. SNAP)
- Local governments administer and fund the program but are reimbursed for costs of the program through FEMA Public Assistance Funds (75%) and State funds (18.75%).
- Optional program.



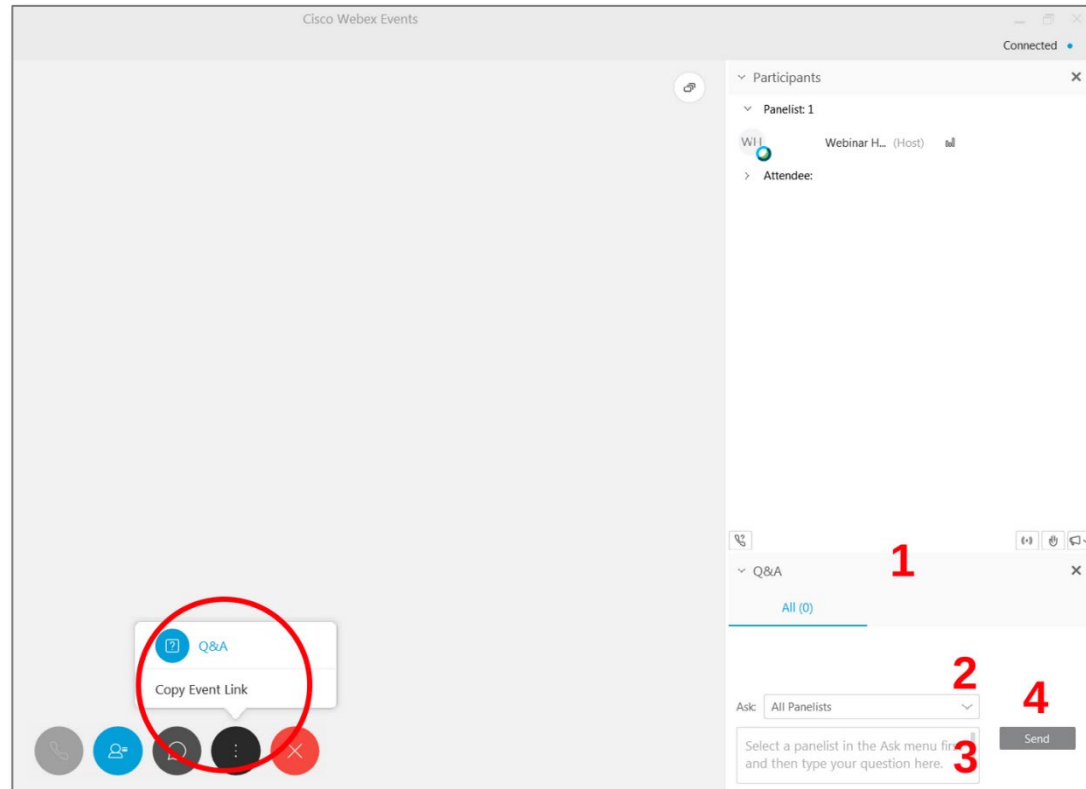
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