

THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(TEFAP)

The purpose of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is to help supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly, by providing them with emergency food and nutritional assistance at no cost.

Under TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) makes commodity foods available to State Distributing Agencies. The amount of food that each State receives out of the total amount of food provided is based on the number of unemployed persons and the number of people with incomes below the poverty level in the State. States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks and CAP agencies, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as food pantries, mass distribution sites and soup kitchens.

These local organizations distribute the donated commodities to eligible recipients for household consumption, or use the commodities to prepare and serve meals in a congregate setting. Recipients of food for home use must meet income eligibility criteria set by each participating State.

TEFAP is administered at the Federal level by the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. State agencies receive the food and supervise overall distribution and administration of the Program.

APPLICATION PROCESS

A completed application and determination of eligibility is required at Food Pantries and Public Distributions of USDA foods. Persons may apply at participating Food Pantries, Public Distributions or prior to a Site Distribution at the agencies office. There is not an application process for determining eligibility for individuals receiving a meal in a Soup Kitchen. Income Eligibility Guidelines are located under the TEFAP Program tab of this website.

FOOD AVAILABILITY

The types of commodity foods USDA purchases for TEFAP distribution vary depending on the preferences of States and agriculture market conditions. Typical commodities include:

Canned Fruits	Canned Vegetables	Fruit Juice
Dried egg mix	Meat/Poultry/Fish	Dried Beans
Pasta Products	Peanut Butter	Rice/Cereal
Soups		

WHEN AND WHY DID TEFAP START

TEFAP was first authorized as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program in 1981 to distribute surplus commodities to households. The name was changed to The Emergency Food Assistance Program under the 1990 Farm Bill.

The program was designed to help reduce Federal food inventories and storage costs while assisting the needy. Stocks of some foods held in surplus had been depleted by 1988. Therefore, the Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 authorized funds to be appropriated for the purchase of commodities specifically for TEFAP. Foods acquired with appropriated funds are in addition to any surplus commodities donated to TEFAP by USDA.