



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Andrea Palm, Secretary

September 19, 2019

Mr. Jeff Renk
Chief Clerk and Director of Operations
Wisconsin State Senate
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53702

Mr. Patrick Fuller, Chief Clerk
The Wisconsin State Assembly
17 West Main, Suite 401
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Mr. Renk and Mr. Fuller:

As required under Wis. Stat. § 49.76, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) provides this report on the participation of low-income households in DHS food programs during 2018.

The Elderly Nutrition Program

The Elderly Nutrition Program provides community-based dining for seniors aged 60 or older to reduce food insecurity, promote socialization, health and well-being, and assist with access to disease prevention and health promotion services. Funded by federal, state, and local funds, private dollars, and participant contributions, the program is operated primarily by volunteers. It is administered by county and tribal aging units with oversight from area agencies on aging, DHS, and the Administration on Aging. There are two nutrition programs: the congregate program (also known as senior dining) provides meals in a community environment to promote socialization and healthy aging; and home-delivered meals (also known as Meals on Wheels) for daily meals and social contact to homebound seniors unable to prepare food or attend a dining center. In FFY 2018, the congregate program provided 1.5 million meals to 47,510 seniors at approximately 485 dining centers. Home-delivered meals, with significant volunteer support, provided 2.3 million meals to 21,135 homebound seniors in 2018.

Senior Farmer Market Nutrition Program

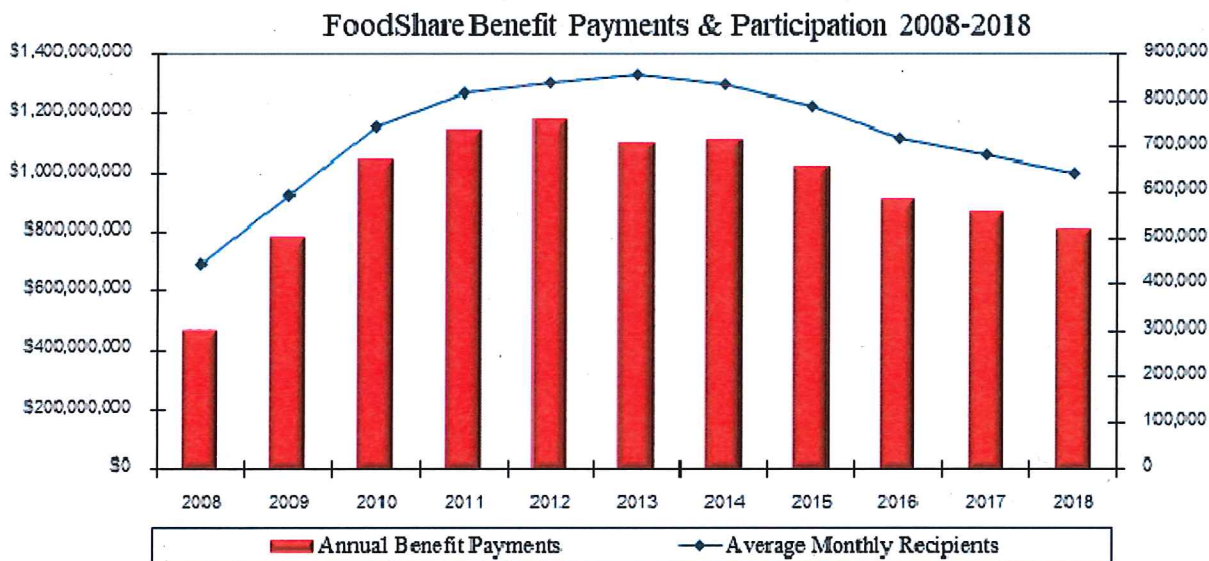
The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides a \$25 benefit, enabling qualified seniors to purchase locally grown produce from farmers' markets and roadside stands. Seniors (age 60 and older with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible; Native Americans may participate at age 55. The program operates in 50 Wisconsin counties. In 2018, there were 13,492 households that redeemed a total value of \$264,266 in fresh farm products. Last year, local farmers received \$878,546 in additional income through their participation in Senior and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Programs.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

In 27 counties, DHS provides monthly food packages to seniors with incomes at 130% or below of the FPL. Last year, through 168 sites participating in the USDA Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), 11,858 seniors received a monthly food distribution. A total food value of \$2,877,027 was distributed; this equated to about a \$20 food value per person per distribution.

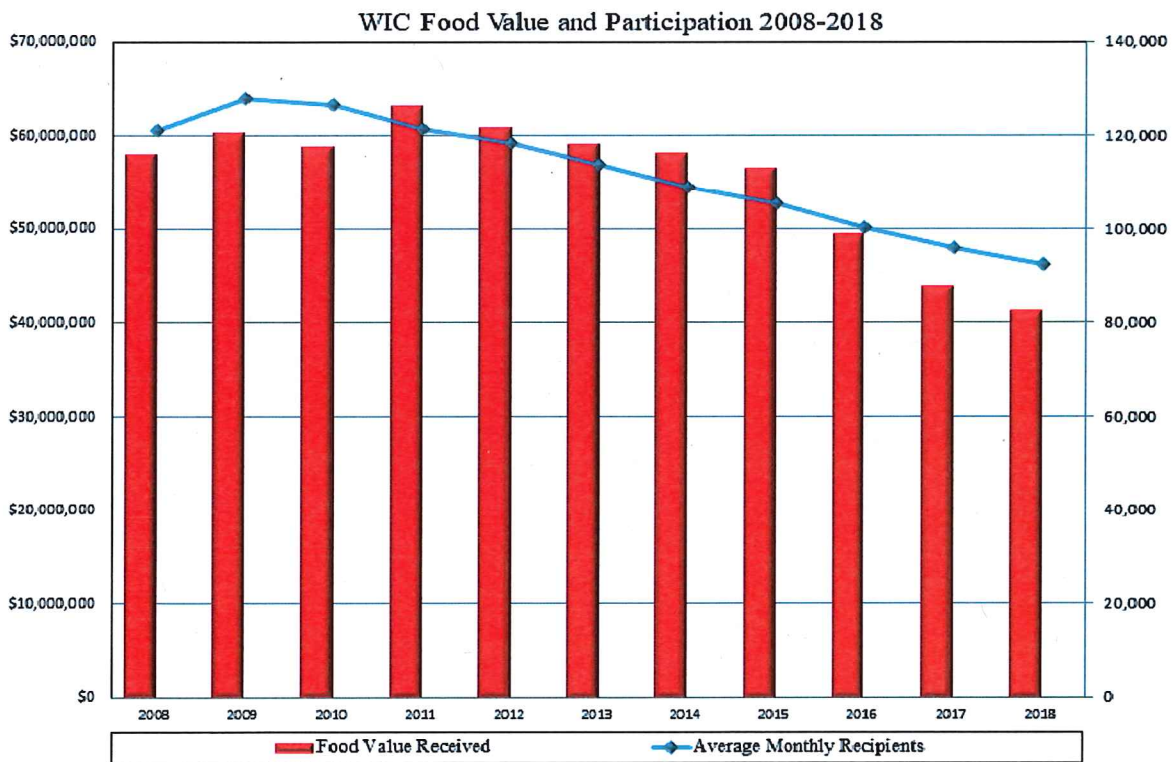
The FoodShare Program

FoodShare is a federal program providing monthly food allowances to qualified, low-income residents based on household size. In 2018, FoodShare provided benefits to a monthly average of 643,726 Wisconsin residents to purchase an annual total of \$810,604,458 in approved foods. In Wisconsin, work requirements for FoodShare originally began in 1996, but were waived in 2002. Beginning April 1, 2015, work requirements were reinstated. April 2018 began the fourth year of the mandatory FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET) Program for “able-bodied” adults ages 18 to 49 with no minor children in the home. These participants were required to obtain 80 hours per month of employment, job training, or a combination of both unless participants were determined to be exempt. FSET members who did not comply or were unable to comply with requirements were limited to three months of FoodShare benefits in a 36-month period. In 2018, there were 60,181 FoodShare participants referred to FSET; 18,754 enrolled. In 2018, 7,454 FSET participants gained new employment and 19,256 FSET participants lost FoodShare eligibility for three years. Since April 2015 when mandatory FSET was first implemented, there were 32,522 FSET participants who gained employment while 105,298 lost FoodShare eligibility through the end of December 2018.



The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

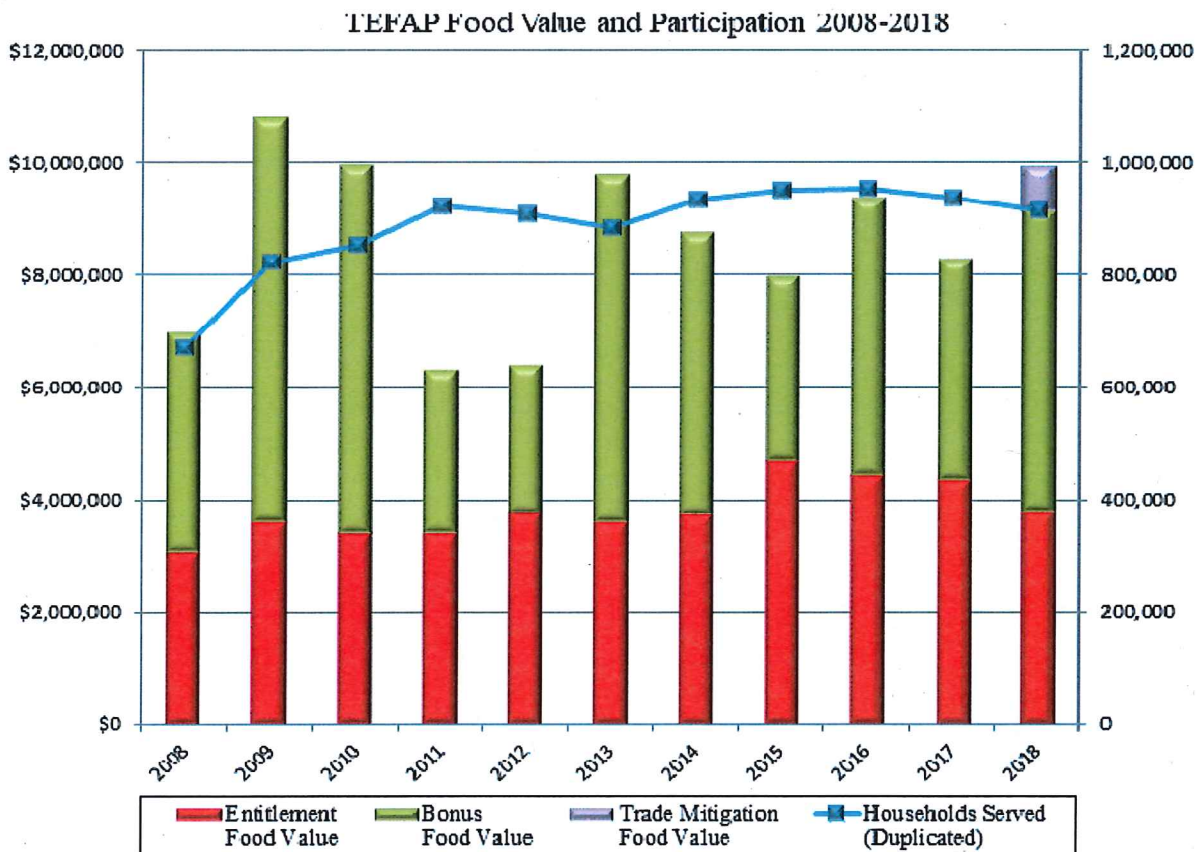
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a discretionary program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), with funding allocated by Congress. WIC serves low-income women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, as well as new mothers, infants, and children up to 5 years of age who have a nutritional need. WIC provides breastfeeding support, nutrition education, referrals to health and nutrition services, and supplemental, nutritious foods. During FY 2018, there was an average monthly caseload of 92,487 women, infants, and children who received WIC-approved foods. Participants received a total of \$41,376,024 in retail food value. There was sufficient funding to serve all WIC applicants determined to be eligible in 2018; there were no waiting lists.



The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

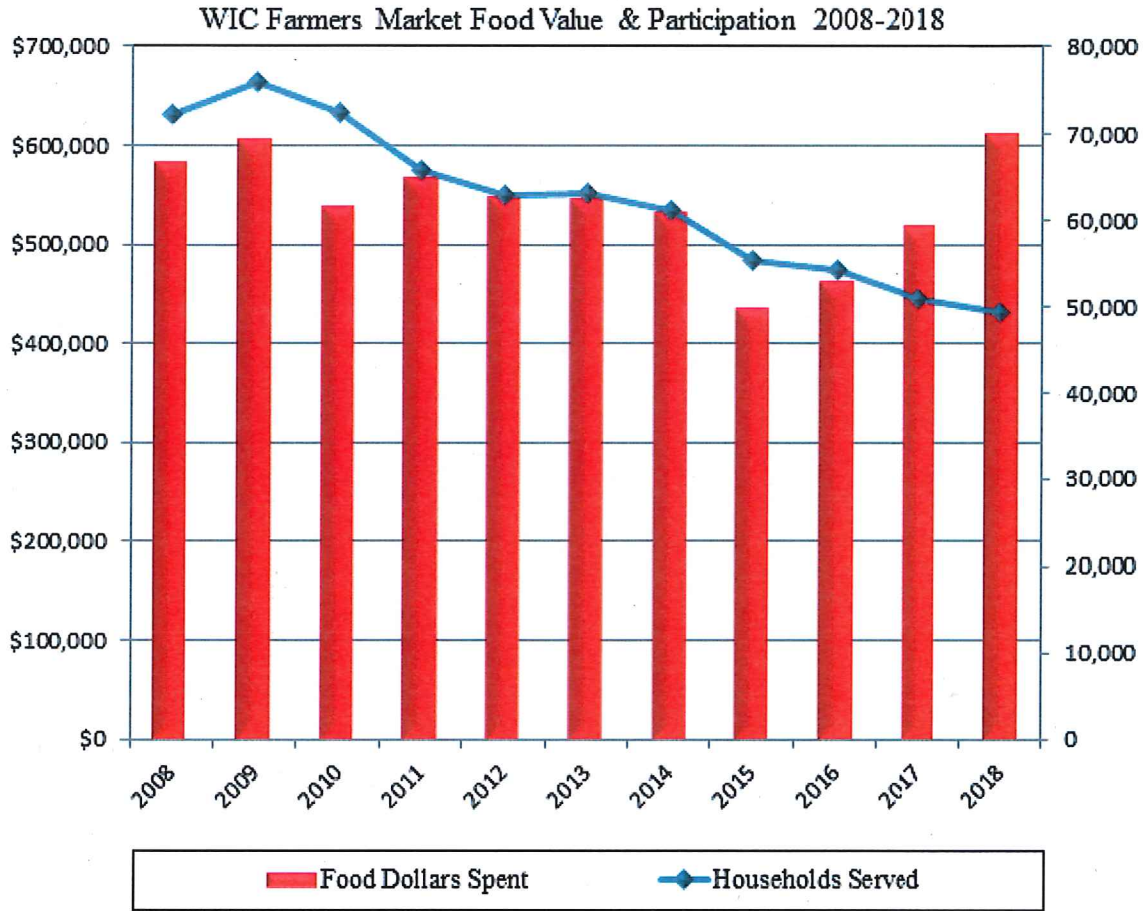
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides USDA commodity foods at no cost to charitable food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters. With funds provided by USDA, Wisconsin purchases “Entitlement Food” (bottom red bars) from a diverse menu. Food is provided to counties in proportion to the number of persons in each county who are living in poverty and/or who are unemployed. TEFAP is also a price-support program for American farmers; USDA buys surplus products from growers and provides them as additional “Bonus Food” at no cost to states (lighter green bars). TEFAP food pantries distribute these foods to qualifying low-income households (185% FPL or below) to supplement monthly household food budgets. In December 2018, the USDA began purchasing “Trade Mitigation Food” (purple bar at the top of 2018) to help U.S. growers offset reduced sales of U.S. farm products that have resulted from international trade disputes.

In FY 2018, the 258 TEFAP food pantries in Wisconsin made 915,158 food distributions to households (duplicated), a 2% drop from the year before, but still 55% higher than before the recession. Seventy-one (71) meal sites and shelters provided 1,764,671 meals; this was 1% less than 2017. Wisconsin warehouses received 12,124,983 pounds of food worth \$9.92 million dollars for distribution to all outlets. In FY 2019, TEFAP food pantries reported distributing an additional 40.27 million pounds of privately donated or purchased foods.



WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program

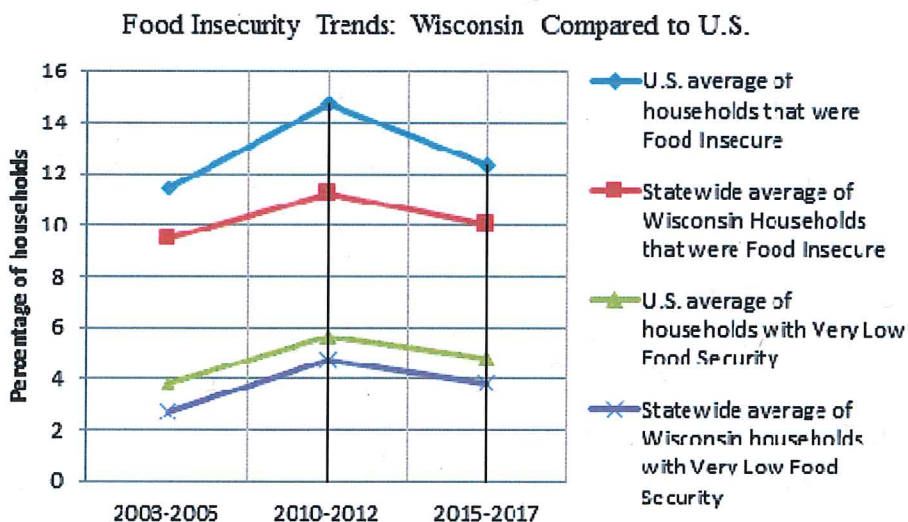
From June through October, the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides WIC participants the opportunity to purchase fresh produce directly from farmers. Surveys indicate these purchases increase interest in year-round consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables. In 2018, 1,193 local farmers redeemed \$614,280 in food checks from 49,210 WIC households who spent their benefits at Wisconsin farmers markets and farm/roadside stands. Farmers redeemed 18% more funds in food check transactions than in the previous year.



Food Insecurity Trends in Wisconsin Compared to the U.S.


The Economic Research Service (ERS) of USDA is an important source of food security data. It surveys households about difficulties meeting basic food needs and classifies households as “*food insecure*” if they reported three or more food-insecure conditions. A subset of “*food insecure*” households reported “*very low food security*,” meaning that at times, their members reduced food intake and/or disrupted normal eating patterns due to a lack of food resources.

The most current ERS data available indicates Wisconsin has the eighth lowest food insecurity prevalence rate in the nation. From 2015 through 2017, Wisconsin’s average rate of food insecurity was 10%, compared to the higher national average of 12.3%. Wisconsin’s food insecurity rate has declined 1.2% from 2010-12, half the rate of decline in the U.S. as a whole, which fell 2.4% over the same period. Wisconsin’s average rate of households with “*very low food security*” in 2015-2017 was 3.8%, compared to the higher national average of 4.8%.



Food insecurity is highest among households with incomes near or below the poverty level; single heads of households with children; single individuals; and households headed by individuals who are African American, Hispanic, or Native American. The effort and challenges represented by these data indicate the continuing need for DHS to fight hunger in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,


Andrea Palm
Secretary-designee