

# FACTS

## Farm Bill Reauthorization

### Protecting Benefits and Improving Diet Quality

#### OVERVIEW

The U.S. chronic disease burden is steadily increasing, and conditions like hypertension, cardiovascular disease (CVD), diabetes, and stroke disproportionately affect low-income individuals.<sup>1,2</sup> Studies comparing the prevalence of chronic diseases among developed countries have identified diet quality to be an important factor.<sup>1</sup> Public health advocates are promoting a consistent farm-to-fork policy that links the foods grown and produced in the U.S. with American consumers, emphasizing those foods recommended in the science-based Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) – including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy as a way to prevent chronic disease.<sup>3</sup>

The farm bill is a multi-year piece of legislation that comprehensively addresses agriculture, food, nutrition, hunger, and public health policies.<sup>4</sup> These programs were last reauthorized in 2014 and will expire in 2018. Improving access to healthy foods and making them more affordable for consumers is an important priority to improving health outcomes and ensuring a strong economy.

#### NUTRITION, HEALTH, AND THE ECONOMY

Unhealthy diets can lead to early death, weight gain, and increased likelihood of CVD,<sup>5,6,7</sup> while a diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes can reduce CVD mortality rates.

## Farm Bill Reauthorization: Protecting Benefits and Improving Dietary Quality

dietary quality and access to healthy foods to ensure that the \$74 billion<sup>24</sup> annual SNAP investment is optimized to produce the intended desirable health and economic outcomes.

### **IMPROVING DIET QUALITY AND ACCESS**

There are several other important programs authorized in the farm bill that improve both access to healthy foods and improve healthy eating behaviors.

The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) grants provide fruit and vegetable incentive purchases to SNAP beneficiaries.<sup>10</sup> Early data from this new program shows that over 25,000 SNAP households have purchased more than half a million dollars in produce, 62% of participants purchased more fruits and vegetables, 90% report the intent to increase produce consumption, and 63% are eating less chips, cookies, and candy.<sup>25</sup>

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides a fresh fruit or vegetable snack to the county's lowest-income elementary schools. Each student receives \$50 - \$75 worth of fresh produce during the school year and for some, this is the only exposure to fresh produce. This popular, easy to implement program increases consumption of all forms of fruits and vegetables by 15% in participating schools, and has shown to decrease obesity among participating students.<sup>26,27</sup>

SNAP-Ed addresses nutrition education, physical activity and obesity prevention to increase the likelihood of SNAP-Ed households making healthy diet and physical activity choices within a limited budget. 51 key indicators have been identified to consistently evaluate program effectiveness.<sup>10</sup>