



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

November 3, 2023

THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Boozman:

The enclosed report responds to requirements enacted into law by Section 4014 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill; P.L. 113-79). That section amended the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525) to require the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to annually report to the Committee on the effectiveness of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which States operate as an option under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In FY 2022, the RMP continued to operate statewide in Arizona, parts of California, and Rhode Island. In addition, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, and Virginia implemented an RMP within their respective States, and California expanded their RMP from 18 to 37 counties.

The purchase of prepared meals from authorized restaurants using SNAP benefits is permitted under paragraphs (3), (4), and (9) of Section 3(k) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, for eligible SNAP participants who are elderly, disabled, or experiencing homelessness.

If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. A similar letter is being sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

Enclosure



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

November 3, 2023

THE HONORABLE DAVID SCOTT
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
House of Representatives
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Scott:

The enclosed report responds to requirements enacted into law by Section 4014 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill; P.L. 113-79). That section amended the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525) to require the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to annually report to the Committee on the effectiveness of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which States operate as an option under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

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Washington, DC 20250

November 3, 2023

THE HONORABLE DEBBIE STABENOW
Chairwoman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow:

The enclosed report responds to requirements enacted into law by Section 4014 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill; P.L. 113-79). That section amended the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525) to require the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to annually report to the Committee on the effectiveness of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which States operate as an option under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

Enclosure



Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

November 3, 2023

THE HONORABLE GLENN “GT” THOMPSON
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

The enclosed report responds to requirements enacted into law by Section 4014 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill; P.L. 113-79). That section amended the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525) to require the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to annually report to the Committee on the effectiveness of the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP), which States operate as an option under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas J. Vilsack

THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary

Enclosure

Report on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Restaurant Meals Program
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
A Report to Congress

INTRODUCTION

Section 4014 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (herein referred to as the “2014 Farm Bill;” P.L. 113-79), amended the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525) to include certain oversight provisions for States that opt to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Restaurant Meals Program (RMP). The RMP provides access to prepared meals for eligible SNAP participants who are elderly, disabled, or experiencing homelessness. Specifically, the 2014 Farm Bill amendment to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 requires States that administer an RMP to submit plans and reports to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that show how the RMP meets the needs of its target populations. This annual report to Congress from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is provided per the annual reporting requirement established by the 2014 Farm Bill.

BACKGROUND

Since 1977, the RMP has been an optional component of SNAP. The RMP helps expand food access to the elderly and disabled, and their spouses, and to homeless SNAP households who may not be able to prepare food, or who do not have a place to store and cook food. In participating States, SNAP participants eligible for the RMP can buy prepared meals using their SNAP benefits at State-approved restaurants authorized by FNS.

When implementing an RMP, the State is responsible for selecting restaurants to participate in the RMP that meet a documented need in an underserved geographical area. States must also have a system in place that ensures that only RMP-eligible households can use SNAP benefits at the participating restaurant. Restaurants selected by the State for participation in the RMP must sign a contract with the State (or applicable county or local government agency), become authorized by FNS to accept SNAP benefits, and provide concessional pricing for SNAP customers.

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2022 RMP ACTIVITY

- Arizona operated a statewide RMP – 551 restaurants.
- California expanded their RMP from 18 to 37 counties – 2,905 restaurants.
- Illinois operated an RMP in one county – 5 restaurants.
- Maryland operated an RMP in two counties – 2 restaurants.
- Michigan operated an RMP in six counties – 13 restaurants.
- Rhode Island operated an RMP in two counties – 10 restaurants.
- Virginia operated an RMP pilot in one county – 3 restaurants.

Of note, four States—Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, and Virginia—started their respective restaurant meal programs in FY 2022.

As of September 30, 2022, there were a total of 3,489 restaurants across seven RMP-participating States authorized to redeem SNAP benefits from eligible households, a decrease of 102 restaurants from the previous year. Overall, there was a net decrease in RMP-participating restaurants in FY 2022; more restaurants were withdrawn from the program compared to the number of new restaurants that applied for authorization.

In FY 2022, 763 restaurants were withdrawn from the program. Specifically:

- 73 percent were involuntarily withdrawn due to non-redeeming of SNAP benefits.
- 25 percent voluntarily withdrew from the program.
- 2 percent were withdrawn for other reasons such as failure to cooperate or were non-responsive during the reauthorization process.

NEW RMP IMPLEMENTATION IN FY 2023 (AS OF OCTOBER 1, 2022)

- Massachusetts began statewide implementation of an RMP in May 2023.

UPCOMING STATE ACTIVITY

- New York has informed FNS it intends to implement a pilot program in Monroe County and Kings County before the end of calendar year 2023.

FNS ACTIONS

FNS intends to publish a proposed rule in Spring 2025 to establish the information that States must provide to meet the requirements of the 2014 Farm Bill provision. Once the rule is finalized and participating States start gathering the data required, FNS will be able to report on the program's effectiveness. In the meantime, FNS continues to assist with and monitor State participation in the RMP.

CONCLUSION

The 2014 Farm Bill provided FNS with the authority to implement oversight provisions for the RMP that were previously unspecified by regulation. These provisions will assist RMP-administering States and FNS in developing parameters that better assess the need for and the effectiveness of the RMP while ensuring the program complies with integrity goals to preserve the public trust in SNAP.