

collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Michael E. Fishman, Acting Director, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Food and Consumer Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or copies of the proposed information collection forms should be directed to Michael E. Fishman, (703) 305-2117.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Tracking Nutrition Security Changes: State Choices and the National Food Stamp Program.

OMB Number: Not yet assigned.

Expiration Date: Not applicable.

Type of Request: New collection of information.

Abstract: The new welfare reform law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, grants States a number of options in how they administer the Food Stamp Program. The Tracking Nutrition Security Changes Study will provide the USDA Food and Consumer Service with information on the nature and extent of States' decisions since the passage of the new law. The study will collect and synthesize information on State choices, primarily in three programmatic areas: eligibility determination, benefit calculation, and work requirements. The study will also assess the variance of food stamp policy choices across States and the implementation of these choices at the local food stamp office level.

Information will be collected from States in two stages. First, descriptive information will be collected from all 50 State food stamp agencies by telephone interviews to identify the nature and scope of selected State food stamp choices. Next, on-site interviews with key informants will be conducted in 10 to 15 States. These data will be collected for a qualitative analysis of implementation issues and descriptions of specific agency practices.

Affected Public: State and local governments, State nonprofit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: One or two State food stamp officials will respond from each of the 50 States

for the telephone survey. An average of 20 State and local government and nonprofit officials in each of up to 15 States will respond to on-site interviews, for a maximum total of 300 on-site interview respondents.

Estimated Time per Response: Phone interviews will average 60 minutes per State. On-site interviews will average 90 minutes per respondent.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 500 hours.

Dated: April 7, 1997.

William E. Ludwig,

Administrator, Food and Consumer Service.

[FR Doc. 97-9741 Filed 4-15-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Consumer Service

RIN 0584-AC54

Food Stamp Program: Maximum Allotments for Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the Virgin Islands

AGENCY: Food and Consumer Service, USDA.

ACTION: General notice.

SUMMARY: By this notice, the Department of Agriculture is updating the maximum food stamp allotments for participating households in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. These annual adjustments, required by law, take into account changes in the cost of food and statutory adjustments since the amounts were last calculated.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Margaret Werts Batko, Assistant Branch Chief, Certification Policy Branch, Program Development Division, Food and Consumer Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302, or telephone at (703) 305-2516.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Implementation

As required by Section 3(o) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (the Act), 7 U.S.C. 2012(o), State agencies should have implemented this action on October 1, 1996 based on advance notice of the new amounts. As required by regulations published at 47 FR 46485 (October 19, 1982), annual statutory adjustments to the maximum allotment levels, income eligibility standards, and deductions are issued by General Notices published in the **Federal Register** and not through rulemaking proceedings.

Executive Order 12866

This notice has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866 and therefore has not been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Executive Order 12372

The Food Stamp Program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.551. For the reasons set forth in the Final rule and related notice to 7 CFR Part 3015, Subpart V (48 FR 29916, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of Executive Order No. 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services has certified that this action will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The action will increase the amount of money spent on food through increases in food stamp benefits. However, this money will be distributed among all eligible food stamp vendors, so the effect on any one vendor will not be significant.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This action does not contain reporting or record keeping requirements subject to review by OMB pursuant to the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 3507.

Background

Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) and Allotments

As provided for in Section 3(o) of the Act, the TFP is a plan for the consumption of foods of different types (food groups) that families might use to provide nutritious meals and snacks for family members. The plan provides for a diet required to feed a family of four persons consisting of a man and woman aged 20 to 50, a child 6 to 8 and a child 9 to 11. The cost of the TFP is adjusted monthly to reflect changes in the costs of the food groups.

The TFPs for Alaska and Hawaii are based on an adjusted average for the six-month period that ends with June 1996. Since the Bureau of Labor Statistics (the source of food price data) no longer publishes monthly information to compute Alaska and Hawaii TFPs, the adjusted average provides a proxy for actual June 1996 TFP costs. The adjusted average is equal to January-June 1996 TFP costs for Alaska and Hawaii increased by the average percentage difference between the cost of the TFP in Alaska and Hawaii in June

and the January-June average from 1976 through 1986 (a 1.53 percent increase over January-June costs in Alaska and 1.82 percent increase in Hawaii).

For the period January through June 1996, the average cost of the TFP was \$491.50 in Alaska, and \$625.20 in Hawaii. The proxy in Alaska for actual June 1996 TFP costs was \$499.02. This proxy is multiplied by three separate adjustment factors to create three TFPs for Urban Alaska, Rural I Alaska, and Rural II Alaska. The proxy in Hawaii was \$636.57. The June 1996 cost of the TFP was \$590.40 in Guam and \$515.00 in the Virgin Islands.

The TFP is also the basis for establishing food stamp allotments. "Allotment" is defined in Section 3(a) of the Act as "the total value of coupons a household is authorized to receive during each month." Food stamp allotments are adjusted periodically to reflect the changes in food cost levels indicated in the changing amounts of the TFP. Prior to the amendment of Section (3)(o) of the Act by Section 804 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. Law 104-193, on August 22, 1996, allotment amounts were established on

each October 1 at 103 percent of the cost of the TFP in the previous June. Amended Section 3(o)(4) of the Act now provides that the TFP will be adjusted each October 1 to reflect the exact cost, or 100 percent, of the TFP for the previous June. This provision was implemented by the Department as a requirement of the Food Stamp Program on October 1, 1996, without prior notice and comment due to the binding, non-discretionary nature of the statutory provision. In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(3)(B), the Department has determined that good cause existed to justify such implementation. In a subsequent rulemaking, the Department will issue a corresponding regulatory change to 7 CFR 273.10(e)(4)(ii).

The maximum food stamp allotment is paid to households that have no net income. For households with some type of income, their allotments are determined by reducing the maximum allotment for their household size by 30 percent of the household's net income in accordance with Section 8(a) of the Act, 7 U.S.C. 2017(a). To obtain the maximum food stamp allotment for each household size, the TFP costs are

divided by four, multiplied by the appropriate household size and economy of scale factor, and the final result rounded down to the nearest dollar.

Section 804 of Pub. L. 104-193 also amended Section 3(o) of the Act to prohibit reducing food stamp allotments for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997 below those in effect on September 30, 1996. In FY 1996, Alaska (Urban, Rural I and II) and Hawaii maximum food stamp allotments for a four person household were \$510, \$650, \$791, and \$663, respectively. Based on the formula discussed above, FY 1997 allotments would have fallen below FY 1996 levels to \$502, \$641, \$780, and \$636, respectively. Consequently, in accordance with the law, the food stamp allotments for Alaska and Hawaii published in this notice will remain the same as last year's.

Pursuant to Section 3(o)(3) of the Act, maximum food stamp benefits for Guam and the Virgin Islands cannot exceed those in the 50 States and the District of Columbia, so they are based upon the lower of their respective TFPs or the TFP for rural II Alaska.

MAXIMUM ALLOTMENT AMOUNTS ¹.—OCTOBER 1996, AS ADJUSTED

Household size	Urban Alaska ²	Rural I Alaska ²	Rural II Alaska ²	Hawaii ²	Guam ³	Virgin Islands ³
1	\$153	\$195	\$237	\$198	\$177	\$154
2	280	357	435	364	324	283
3	401	512	623	522	464	405
4	510	650	791	663	590	515
5	605	772	939	787	701	611
6	726	926	1127	945	841	733
7	803	1024	1246	1044	929	811
8	918	1170	1424	1193	1062	927
Each additional member	+115	+146	+178	+149	+133	+116

¹ Adjusted to reflect the cost of food in June, adjustments for each household size, economies of scale, and 1.00 percent of the TFP and rounding.

² Held at FY 1996 levels as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996.

³ Adjusted to reflect changes in the cost of food in the 48 States and the District of Columbia, which correlate with price changes in these areas. Maximum allotments in these areas cannot exceed those in Rural II Alaska.

Maximum allotments for the 48 States and the District of Columbia are published in a separate notice in the **Federal Register**. Adjustments covered by this notice are announced for Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and the Virgin Islands only, reflecting revisions required by changes in the cost of food and Pub. Law 104-193.

(7 U.S.C. 2011-2034)

Dated: April 4, 1997.

William E. Ludwig,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 97-9858 Filed 4-15-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Consumer Service

RIN 0584-AC53

Food Stamp Program: Maximum Allotments for the 48 States and the District of Columbia, and Income Eligibility Standards and Deductions for the 48 States and the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and the Virgin Islands

AGENCY: Food and Consumer Service, USDA.

ACTION: General notice.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this notice is to update for Fiscal Year 1997: the maximum allotment levels, which are the basis for determining the amount of food stamps which participating households receive, the gross and net income limits for food stamp eligibility, the standard deduction available to certain households, and the homeless household shelter allowance. These adjustments, required by law, take into account changes in the cost of living and statutory adjustments since the amounts were last calculated.

DATES: The effective date of this notice regarding the adjustment of the maximum allotments was October 1,