



Towards Food Security in Idaho

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Research Report

Vol. 1, No. 1

June 2014

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The authors would like to thank the following individuals for giving us their critical feedback: Helen Brown, Janie Burns, Sarah Cox, Kathy Gardner, Robert Graft, Kristin Matthews, Paul McCawley, Joe Pollard, LeAnn Simmons, and Karen Vauk. We also sincerely appreciate Debbie Gray for creating our maps and Darin Saul for his support. Breland Draper conducted parts of our original analysis.

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This report was written in collaboration with the University of Idaho's Office of Community Partnerships. The Office of Community Partnerships supports communities while providing hands-on learning opportunities for students and connecting university research with local priorities.

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TOWARDS FOOD SECURITY IN IDAHO

Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. A household is considered to be food insecure if they had trouble providing enough nutritious food for everyone sometime during the previous year. (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food insecurity causes serious long-term problems for individuals and society as a whole. People with poor diets are far more likely to experience poor overall health status, activity-limiting health impairments, depression and other mental health issues.¹ Children with poor diets experience compromised health and development and are less likely to succeed in school, while adults who experienced childhood hunger are more likely to miss work and have a harder time holding down a job.² People with poor diets are also more vulnerable to being overweight and obese. They have lower incomes, less access to affordable, healthy foods, and fewer options for physical activity.³

We have two goals in writing this report. First, we aim to create a base of common information about Idaho's food security challenge and how it is currently being addressed. Second, we seek to encourage organizations and agencies to collaborate around a common agenda to improve food security in Idaho. In achieving these goals, we also aim to identify the best ways in which the University of Idaho can work with partners to address Idaho's food security challenge.

In 2012, Idaho received over \$451 million in federal funding for programs to improve food security among low-income Idahoans. Despite these considerable resources, 22% of Idaho's children were food insecure in 2012,⁴ 14% of Idaho households were food insecure during the period 2010—2012,⁵ and almost 230,000 Idahoans received food stamps in 2013.⁶

Idaho's food security challenge is most severe for children and in rural parts of the state where poverty and unemployment rates are highest. That said, the largest absolute numbers of food insecure Idahoans live in Ada and Canyon counties. The recession caused food insecurity to rise

¹ Center for American Progress, Hunger in America: Suffering We Are All Paying For, retrieved June 6, 2013 from http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/10/pdf/hunger_paper.pdf

² Cook, John and Karen Jeng, "Child Food Insecurity: The Economic Impact on our Nation," Feeding America, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/sitefiles/child-economy-study.pdf>

³ Food Research and Action Center, Why Low-Income and Food Insecure People are Vulnerable to Overweight and Obesity, retrieved October 28, 2013 from <http://frac.org/initiatives/hunger-and-obesity/are-hunger-and-obesity-related/>

⁴ Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2014, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

⁵ Coleman-Jensen, A., M. Nord and A. Singh, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2012." Retrieved September 4, 2013 from <http://ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx>

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Data, SNAP Annual Persons Participating, retrieved February 26, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/15SNAPpartPP.htm>

in Idaho and rates have yet to return to pre-recession levels.

In Idaho, as well as in other states, there are five approaches to improving food security:

1. **Federal food and nutrition programs** provide financial assistance, supplemental food, and other services to families. Federal programs have income-based and other eligibility requirements and are administered by various Idaho public agencies (primarily the Department of Health and Welfare). In terms of total expenditures, the largest program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP benefits are covered in full by the federal government, as are roughly half of the state's administrative costs. The next largest programs are school-based nutrition programs and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). In Idaho, 49% of K-12 public school students were eligible for free or reduced price school lunch in 2011-12. And, the mothers of 44% of babies born in 2011 accessed WIC while pregnant. These programs impact significant numbers of Idahoans.
2. **Charitable organizations** use donations from individuals and companies to provide emergency food assistance and many other services directly to individuals as well as through a large network of food pantries, community kitchens, schools, and other partners. The Idaho Foodbank is our state's largest food security-focused charitable organization. In FY2013, the Idaho Foodbank distributed 10.6 million meals, up 12% from the year before.
3. **Nutrition education programs** are funded from federal and other sources to encourage more nutritious eating, primarily among low-income families. The largest program in Idaho is Eat Smart Idaho delivered by University of Idaho Extension. The Idaho Foodbank also offers Cooking Matters™ with support from the national nonprofit organization, Share Our Strength.
4. **Advocacy and policy approaches** promote changes in the principles and priorities that guide laws and programs. Organizations that advocate for policy change sometimes provide direct food assistance and organize community programs as their primary or secondary missions. In Idaho, examples include the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force, Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger, Catholic Charities, Community Action Partnership of Idaho, and The Idaho Foodbank.
5. **Market-based approaches** work to connect local food producers with low-income consumers, sometimes through or with subsidies from nonprofit or public agencies. The most straightforward strategy is allowing shoppers to use SNAP benefits at farmers markets. And, although not targeted specifically at low-income children, Idaho's Farm to School provides fresh, nutritious food in schools, thus benefiting the age group most likely to realize long-term benefits from improved diets.

Now that the intense pressure of the recent recession is over and the state's economy is beginning to improve, Idaho has an opportunity to consider new partnerships and innovations that could lead to longer-term food security. The analysis presented in this report suggests that focusing on four priorities offers the greatest potential for scale and collective impact: collaboration; focusing on children first; stimulating new markets wherever possible; and using evidence-based education strategies.

The University of Idaho can contribute to addressing Idaho's food security challenge through basic and applied research; consumer and producer education; convening stakeholders; and partnering with other organizations on developing strategies, grant proposals, and high-impact initiatives.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

High rates of food insecurity cause multiple, long-term problems for individuals and society as a whole. People who don't have nutritious diets are much more likely to experience poor overall health status, activity-limiting health impairments, depression and other mental health issues.⁷ Children with poor diets experience compromised health and development and are less likely to succeed in school, while adults who experienced childhood hunger are more likely to miss work and have a harder time holding down a job.⁸ People with poor diets are more vulnerable to being overweight and obese. They are also more likely than others to alternate between food deprivation and overeating. In addition, they have fewer resources, less access to affordable, healthy foods and fewer options for physical activity.⁹

This comes at a high cost to the nation. The Center for American Progress estimates that it costs more to deal with the effects of hunger than the nation spends on federal programs that help people avoid hunger in the first place. Based on scientific, peer-reviewed literature, the Center reports that hunger costs the nation \$167.5 billion annually. The total estimate includes costs of treating illness, poor educational outcomes, reduced lifetime earnings, and contributions to charity, but not the cost of federal nutrition programs. In 2010, Idaho's hunger bill reached an estimated \$750 million – or \$478 per person – up from \$620 million in 2007.¹⁰

People from all backgrounds experience food insecurity, but rates are especially high among particular groups. Nationwide in 2012, 15% of all households were food insecure. Among Hispanic households, the rate was 23%, and among single-female headed households with children the rate was 35%.¹¹ Children experience food insecurity at much higher rates than adults. About 22% of the nation's children lived in food insecure households in 2012, compared to 14% of adults.¹²

Food insecurity is an important public issue in Idaho, especially for the children who are Idaho's future. A sizable share of the state's population is food insecure, with serious long-term consequences for health, educational outcomes, workforce participation, earnings, and

⁷ Center for American Progress, *Hunger in America: Suffering We Are All Paying For*, retrieved June 6, 2013 from http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/10/pdf/hunger_paper.pdf

⁸ Cook, John and Karen Jeng, "Child Food Insecurity: The Economic Impact on our Nation," Feeding America, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/sitefiles/child-economy-study.pdf>

⁹ Food Research and Action Center, *Why Low-Income and Food Insecure People are Vulnerable to Overweight and Obesity*, retrieved October 28, 2013 from <http://frac.org/initiatives/hunger-and-obesity/are-hunger-and-obesity-related/>

¹⁰ Center for American Progress, *Hunger in America: Suffering We Are All Paying For*, retrieved June 6, 2013 from http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/10/pdf/hunger_paper.pdf

¹¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Food Security in the U.S., Key Statistics & Graphics*, retrieved September 30, 2013 from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>

¹² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2012*, retrieved September 4, 2013 from <http://ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx>

resources devoted to alleviating hunger.

We have two goals in writing this report. First, we aim to create a base of common information about Idaho's food security challenge and how it is currently being addressed. Second, we seek to encourage organizations and agencies to collaborate around a common agenda to improve food security in Idaho. In achieving these goals, we also aim to identify the best ways in which the University of Idaho can work with partners to address Idaho's food security challenge.

In the next section, we explain how food security is measured and describe trends and characteristics of food insecurity in Idaho. In Section 3, we explain eligibility requirements for federal programs and describe federal and other resources dedicated to reducing food insecurity in Idaho. Last, in Section 4, we propose a set of priorities to guide efforts to improve food security in Idaho.

SECTION 2: IDAHO'S FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGE

Like the rest of the nation, Idaho entered a severe economic downturn in late 2007. The state's unemployment rate rose from 3.0% in 2007 to a high of 8.7% in 2010. By 2013, the rate was 6.2%, still more than double its pre-recession level.¹³ Hard economic times have impacted Idaho's low-income residents in many ways, but especially in terms of food security (see Figure 4, Food Security: Definitions and Data, on page 5):

- ◆ 22% of Idaho's children were food insecure in 2012;¹⁴
- ◆ 14% of Idaho households were food insecure during the period 2010-2012;¹⁵ and
- ◆ almost 230,000 Idahoans received food stamps in 2013.¹⁶

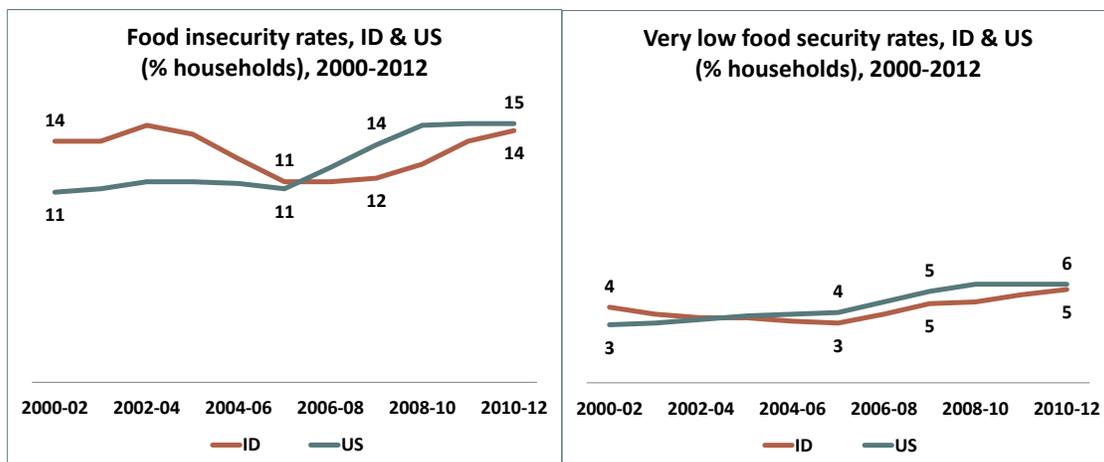


Figure 1. Food insecurity rates in Idaho and the U.S., 2000-2012.
SOURCE: USDA, Economic Research Service

Not surprisingly, Idaho's overall rates of food insecurity went up during the recession, from 11% of all Idaho households in 2005-2007 to 14% in 2010-2012. Rates of very low food security increased as well, from 3% to 5% of all Idaho households (see Figure 1).¹⁷

¹³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, retrieved May 30, 2014 from <http://stats.bls.gov/lau/home.htm>

¹⁴ Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2014, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

¹⁵ Coleman-Jensen, A., M. Nord and A. Singh, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2012." Retrieved September 4, 2013 from <http://ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx>

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Data, SNAP Annual Persons Participating, retrieved February 26, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/15SNAPpartPP.htm>

¹⁷ USDA, Economic Research Service, ERR-66, November 2007. Nord, M., M. Andrews and S. Carlson, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2007." Retrieved September 10, 2013 from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err66.aspx>; USDA, Economic Research Service, ERR 155, September 2013. Coleman-Jensen, A., M. Nord and A. Singh, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2012." Retrieved September 4, 2013 from <http://ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx>

Based on estimates from Feeding America, the nation's largest network of food banks, the greatest numbers of Idahoans who are food insecure live in the state's most populous counties. Ada County had 57,040 food insecure individuals in 2012, and Canyon had 29,570.¹⁸

However, the state's highest rates of food insecurity occur in more rural counties, including Adams (18%), Latah (18%), Shoshone (19%) and Madison (21%) counties.¹⁹ As shown in Figure 2 below, regional differences are stark: rates are highest in northern and central Idaho and lowest in the southeast.

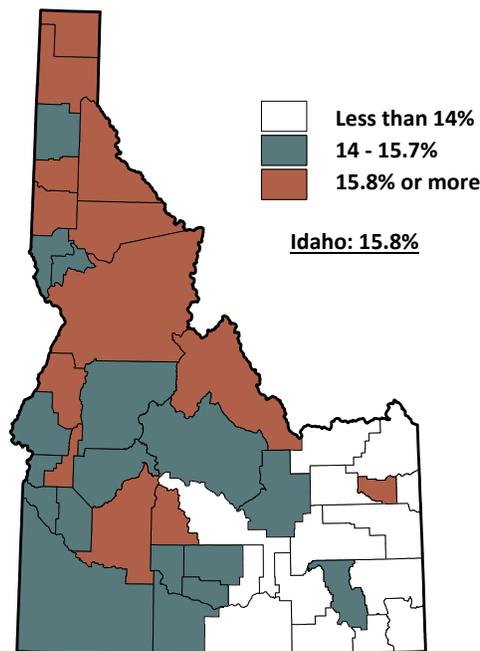


Figure 2. Food insecurity rates among Idahoans, 2012
SOURCE: Feeding America, "Map the Meal Gap"

Nationwide, children experience food insecurity at much higher rates than the adult population. Feeding America's estimates indicate that 22% of Idaho's children (91,730 children) were food insecure in 2012, compared to 14% of Idaho's adults. The highest rates of child food insecurity were in Owyhee (25%), Shoshone (25%) and Lemhi (27%) counties, all of which are rural.²⁰

¹⁸ Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2014, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

¹⁹ Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2014, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

²⁰ Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2014, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>; and U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, retrieved June 18, 2013 from <http://www.census.gov/popest/>

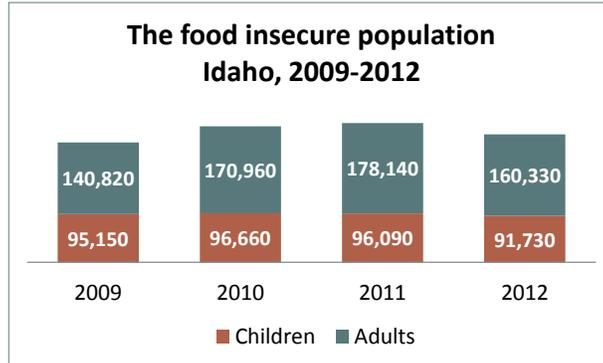


Figure 3. The food insecure population: Idaho, 2009-2012
 SOURCE: Feeding America, “Map the Meal Gap”

Even though rates are higher among children, the largest increases in food insecurity since the latest recession officially ended in 2009 occurred among adults.²¹ The number of food insecure adults in Idaho increased 27% from 2009 to 2011, compared to a 1% increase among children. As seen in Figure 3, the numbers of food insecure children and adults both decreased between 2011 and 2012.²²

The National Foundation to End Senior Hunger, a nonprofit organization, makes estimates of food insecurity among people age 60 and older. Based on their analysis, Idaho’s seniors have lower rates of food insecurity than the rest of the state’s population. In 2011, only 4% of Idaho seniors were food insecure, about half of the national rate of 8% and far lower than the share of Idaho’s children who are food insecure. Surprisingly, the likelihood of food insecurity among seniors declines with age.²³

Though seniors as a whole are relatively unlikely to be food insecure, children who live in homes where the householder is a grandparent are more vulnerable than other children.

To summarize, Idaho’s food security challenge is most severe for children and in rural parts of the state where poverty and unemployment rates are highest. That said, the largest absolute numbers of food insecure Idahoans live in Ada and Canyon counties. The recession caused food insecurity to rise in Idaho and rates have yet to return to pre-recession levels.

²¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS Spotlight on Statistics: The Recession of 2007-2009, retrieved April 21, 2014 from http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession_bls_spotlight.pdf

²² Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2014, retrieved April 17, 2014 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

²³ Ziliak, J.P., and C. Gunderson, “Spotlight on Food Insecurity among Senior Americans: 2011,” Prepared for the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger, retrieved June 25, 2013 from <http://www.nfesh.org/wp-content/>

Figure 4. Food security: Definitions and data

How is food security defined?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers a household to be **food secure** if, at all times over the course of the previous year, all members of the household had access to “enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle.” A household is **food insecure** if, at any time during the previous year, it was difficult to provide enough food for all members due to a lack of resources.

Food insecure households are divided into those with low food security and those with very low food security. **Low food security** means a household had a hard time accessing food, but food intake was not reduced. **Very low food security** means one or more members of a household had reduced food intake or disrupted eating patterns due to insufficient funds or resources for accessing food.

How are food security data collected?

USDA is the nation’s primary source of data on food insecurity. In collaboration with USDA, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a food security supplemental survey as part of its annual Current Population Survey. The supplemental survey includes 18 questions to assess the food security of the nation’s households. A few questions assess the household as a whole and the rest are divided between adults and children in the household. A household is considered to be **food secure** if 0-2 food insecure conditions are present. A household with 3 or more food insecure conditions is considered to be **food insecure. USDA data are reported for households.**

A second and relatively new source of data is “Map the Meal Gap.” This annual report comes from Feeding America, the nation’s largest network of food banks. Since 2009, “Map the Meal Gap” has provided state- and county-level estimates of food insecurity for the total population as well as for children. To develop the estimates, Feeding America starts with the USDA’s state-level rates of food insecurity for households and then analyzes the relationship between food insecurity and variables such as income, unemployment and poverty. The resulting relationships are modeled and used to generate estimates of food insecurity at the state- and county-level for individuals and children. **Unlike the household estimates from USDA, those from Feeding America are reported for individuals.**

SOURCE: USDA, Economic Research Service, ERR 155, September 2013. Coleman-Jensen, A., M. Nord and A. Singh, “Household Food Security in the United States in 2012,” retrieved September 4, 2013 from <http://ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx>; Feeding America, “Map the Meal Gap 2013: Technical Brief,” retrieved October 16, 2013 from http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap/~media/Files/a-map-2011/2011_technicalbrief_final.ashx

SECTION 3: PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY IN IDAHO

There are five approaches to improving food security in Idaho and around the nation:

- ◆ federal food and nutrition programs;
- ◆ charitable programs;
- ◆ nutrition education programs;
- ◆ advocacy and policy organizations; and
- ◆ market-based approaches.

These approaches vary in terms of reliance on public subsidies, voluntary donations, policy change, and market orientation. They also vary in terms of eligibility requirements and scope. Here we provide an overview with additional information in the Appendix.

A. FEDERAL FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Idaho participates in several large, federally-funded food and nutrition programs intended to increase food security among low-income populations. These programs have income-based and other eligibility requirements, and are administered by the state. Those with the highest funding levels are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), school-based nutrition programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“Food Stamps”)

Benefits paid in Idaho: \$347 million (FY 2013)²⁴

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as the Food Stamp program or EBT in Idaho, is the first and most generously funded line of defense against food insecurity. SNAP provides monthly monetary assistance for food purchases in the form of prepaid cards that can be used at eligible retailers. Benefits are covered in full by the federal government, as are about half the state’s administrative costs.²⁵

In 2012, more than three-fourths of U.S. households receiving SNAP benefits had at least

²⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Data, retrieved June 20, 2013 and February 26, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>

²⁵ AARP Foundation, Hunger and Older Americans: Idaho, retrieved June 25, 2013 from http://www.idahohunger.org/Hunger_and_Older_AmericansID.pdf

one person with a job.²⁶ The number of SNAP households with earnings has increased over the last decade, especially since the recession. This suggests that many SNAP households are underemployed. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities this might occur when one wage-earner in a two parent family loses a job or when a worker turns to a lower paying job after being laid off, for example.²⁷

In addition to citizenship, income, resource and residence requirements, Idaho also requires that adults receiving food stamps must work 30 hours per week or actively participate in an employment and training program,²⁸ with some exceptions.²⁹

In FY2013, 227,006 Idaho residents in 97,927 households participated in the food stamp program and received \$347 million in benefits. The latest recession has had a large impact on food stamp participation in Idaho.

Idaho's average monthly household participation increased from 40,835 households in FY2008 to a high of 100,495 households in FY2012, an increase of 146%. At the national level, the increase was 75%. Over the same period, food stamp benefits in Idaho increased from \$117 million in FY2008 to a high of \$361 million in FY2012, an increase of 210%. At the national level, the increase was 116%.³⁰

An increase in participation rates may occur because more people need the program or because more eligible households are signing up. At present, Idaho has no formal food stamp outreach plan to increase participation among those who are eligible.³¹ Even so, participation rates are fairly high in Idaho: 81% of those eligible participate, compared to 75% nationally.³²

The food stamp program worked as intended during the recession. When the economy shrank and jobs were lost, more people applied for assistance. Now, as Idaho's unemployment rate is falling, job numbers are increasing, and median income is rising, the

²⁶ "SNAP Use Increased Slightly in 2012" Carsey Institute, National Issue Brief #66, Fall 2013

²⁷ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, The Relationship Between SNAP and Work Among Low-Income Households, retrieved June 6, 2013 from <http://www.cbpp.org/files/1-29-13fa.pdf>

²⁸ Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Food/Cash/Assistance, Who is Eligible? Retrieved October 28, 2013 from <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/FoodCashAssistance/ApplyforAssistance/Applyforservices/Whoiseligible/tabid/1556/Default.aspx>; and Boise Weekly, "The Food Stamp Myth: Yes, you need to work. No, you're not alone." Retrieved September 30, 2013 from <http://www.boiseweekly.com/boise/the-food-stamp-myth/Content?oid=2961151>

²⁹ An exception is granted if a person receives SSI for disability; has children under age 6; receives unemployment; attends school part time or more; is age 16 or older but still in high school; or is age 60 or older. http://esgw-nrm.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=NRMM_workingsolutions

³⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Data, retrieved June 20, 2013 and February 26, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>

³¹ AARP Foundation, Hunger and Older Americans: Idaho, retrieved June 25, 2013 from http://www.idahohunger.org/Hunger_and_Older_AmericansID.pdf

³² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Food Stamp Program, Idaho, retrieved June 10, 2013 from <http://www.cbpp.org/files/1-14-13fa/ID.pdf>

rate of increase in food stamp participation has peaked and started to decline (see Figure 5).

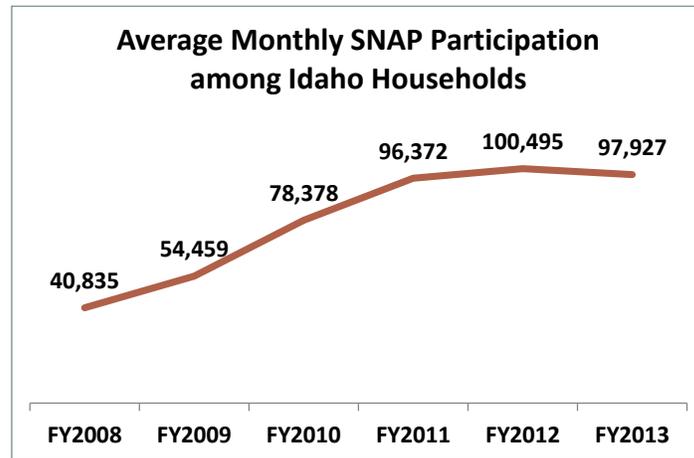


Figure 5. Average monthly SNAP participation among Idaho households, 2008-2013
SOURCE: USDA Food and Nutrition Service

Figure 6. Who is eligible for federal food and nutrition programs?

Eligibility for federal food and nutrition programs is based on household income relative to the poverty threshold, which in 2014 was \$23,850 for a four-person household.

- ◆ Households with **income below 130%** of the poverty level (below \$31,005) are eligible for SNAP, WIC and free school meals.
- ◆ Households with **income between 130% and 185%** of the poverty level (between \$31,005 and \$44,123) are eligible for WIC and reduced-price (but not free) school meals.

Households with **income above 185%** of the poverty level (above \$44,123) are **ineligible** for federal programs, even if they are food insecure.

In 2012, an estimated 50% of Idaho's food insecure population qualified for **all** federal nutrition programs. Another 20% qualified for reduced-price school meals and WIC only. The remaining 30%, about 75,620 people, were ineligible for any federal food and nutrition programs. The percent eligible for federal nutrition programs increased between 2009 and 2012, while the percent ineligible – and thus relying on nonfederal sources only – decreased.

The picture is similar among food insecure children. In 2012, an estimated 68% of Idaho's food insecure children qualified for federal food and nutrition programs. The remaining 32%, about 29,350 children, were in households that had to rely solely on food banks and other charitable organizations for help.

SOURCE: Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap

Food stamp use varies across the state, as shown in Figure 7 below. In January 2014, counties with the highest participation rates were Canyon (21%), Shoshone (18%), Payette (18%) and Power (18%). Counties with the lowest participation rates were Blaine (5%), Teton (6%), Custer (7%), Franklin (7%), Latah (7%), and Valley (7%).³³ Other than Shoshone County, there is no overlap between counties with the highest rates of food insecurity and those with the highest food stamp participation rates.

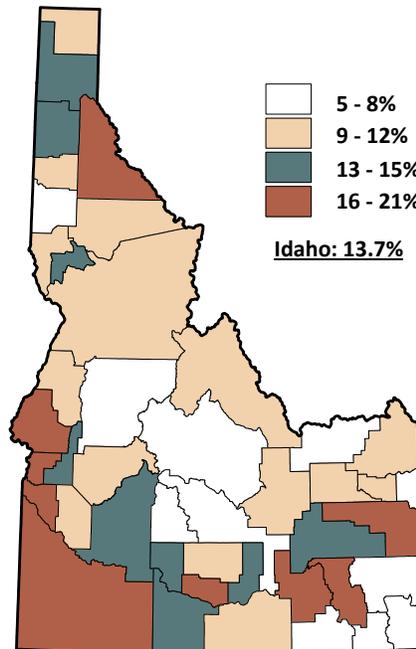


Figure 7. Food stamp use in Idaho, January 2014
SOURCE: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

In FY2013, average monthly SNAP benefits in Idaho were \$295 per household, down from a high of \$318 in FY2010.³⁴ Part of the decrease is due to an across-the-board reduction in SNAP benefits that took place late in 2013 with the expiration of SNAP benefit increases related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This reduction has increased the number of people at risk of food insecurity.³⁵

³³ Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Food Stamp Participants by County (January 2014), retrieved February 26, 2014 from <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/FoodCashAssistance/FoodStamps/tabid/90/Default.aspx>

³⁴ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Food Stamp Program, Idaho, retrieved June 10, 2013 from <http://www.cbpp.org/files/1-14-13fa/ID.pdf>

³⁵ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Food Assistance, House Agriculture Committee Farm Bill Would Cut Nearly 2 Million People Off SNAP, retrieved June 10, 2013 from <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3965>

School-Based Nutrition Programs

*Benefits paid in Idaho: \$74 million (FY2012)*³⁶

The federal government funds several school-based nutrition programs that provide free and reduced-price meals to low-income school children by reimbursing schools for meals served. The two biggest school-based nutrition programs are the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP).

NSLP provides lunches to students and free or reduced-price school lunches to low-income students. Eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches is based on family size and income level. Almost half of the nation's households receiving free or reduced-price school lunches in 2012 were food insecure.³⁷ The total cost of NSLP in Idaho in FY2012 was \$54.9 million, up from \$41.9 million in FY2008.³⁸

In Idaho, 49% of K-12 public school students were eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch during the 2011-12 school year.³⁹ While some analysts have expressed concern about the accuracy of data on eligibility rates, published information indicates that many counties and school districts have very high eligibility rates (see Figure 8 below).⁴⁰

Eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunch, highest rates in Idaho, 2011-2012	
Counties	School districts (county)
Clark - 78%	COSSA (Canyon) - 96%
Power - 77%	Dietrich SD (Lincoln) - 82%
Minidoka - 68%	Hansen SD (Twin Falls) - 78%
Jerome - 67%	Clark County SD (Clark) - 78%
Lincoln - 66%	Caldwell SD (Canyon) - 77%

Figure 8. Eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunch, highest rates in Idaho, 2011-2012

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

³⁶ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Western Regional Office, Western Wave: Spotlight on Idaho. Retrieved September 5, 2013 from: [http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20(1).pdf)

³⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Household Food Security in the United States in 2012, retrieved September 4, 2013 from <http://ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err155.aspx>

³⁸ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Western Regional Office, Western Wave: Spotlight on Idaho, retrieved August 1, 2013 from [http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20(1).pdf)

³⁹ Indicators Idaho: Idaho: Reduced Price School Lunch Program, retrieved May 30, 2014 from <http://www.indicatorsidaho.org/DrawRegion.aspx?RegionID=16000&IndicatorID=24>

⁴⁰ EducationNext, Fraud in the Lunchroom? Federal school-lunch program may not be a reliable measure of poverty, Winter 2010: 10(1), retrieved February 26, 2014 from <http://educationnext.org/fraud-in-the-lunchroom/>; New America Foundation, Federal Education Budget Project, Federal School Nutrition Programs: Background and Analysis, July 1, 2013, retrieved February 26, 2014 from <http://feb.newamerica.net/background-analysis/federal-school-nutrition-programs>

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is available to all students, regardless of income. Although Idaho public schools are not required to participate, 95% of schools participating in NSLP during the 2011-12 school year served breakfast as well. That same year, 77% of Idaho students participating in the SBP qualified for free or reduced-price meals. Participation in the SBP increased 175% between 2001-02 and 2011-12.⁴¹ Idaho's total cost was \$16.9 million in FY2012, up from \$13.0 million in FY2008.⁴²

Children who qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch are at increased risk for nutrition-related health problems in the summer when they are not in school. Where available, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides meals along with educational, enrichment and recreational programming. Some SFSP sites are run by schools, but many are run by charitable organizations. Idaho had 284 SFSP sites in 2012, a 6% increase from 2011. In July 2012, Idaho had the 8th highest SFSP participation rate in the nation, with 20% of qualifying low-income children taking part in the program. This compares to 14% nationwide.⁴³

Many SFSP programs experienced budget cuts during the recession, just as the need for this program increased. Many children missed out on meals that could have improved their health and alleviated their food insecurity during the summer months. In addition, Idaho missed out on the additional \$3.33 in federal SFSP funding per child per day for simply serving the food. Federal reimbursement is higher at meal sites in rural areas.⁴⁴

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Benefits paid in Idaho: \$19 million (FY2012)⁴⁵

WIC provides grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education. In addition to low-income infants and children under five, program beneficiaries include low-income women who are pregnant, just had a baby, or are breastfeeding a baby under one year of age. WIC provides checks to purchase specific foods from WIC-authorized grocery stores; nutrition education; help with finding healthcare and other services; and information and support for breastfeeding. Examples of foods that WIC participants may

⁴¹ Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), National and State Program Data, Profile of Hunger, Poverty, and Federal Nutrition Programs: Idaho, retrieved July 9, 2013 from <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/id.pdf>

⁴² USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Western Regional Office, Western Wave: Spotlight on Idaho, retrieved August 1, 2013 from [http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20(1).pdf)

⁴³ Food Research and Action Center, Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2013, retrieved June 12, 2013 from http://frac.org/pdf/2013_summer_nutrition_report.pdf

⁴⁴ Food Research and Action Center, Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2013, retrieved June 12, 2013 from http://frac.org/pdf/2013_summer_nutrition_report.pdf

⁴⁵ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Western Regional Office, Western Wave: Spotlight on Idaho. Retrieved September 5, 2013 from: [http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20(1).pdf)

receive include milk, cheese, cereal, dry beans, whole wheat bread, select fresh fruits and vegetables, formula, and baby food.⁴⁶

According to the National Anti-Hunger Organization, WIC is one of the nation's most effective anti-poverty programs. Research shows that this program not only improves birth outcomes and child nutrition, but also saves money in the long-term. They estimate that every dollar spent on WIC saves approximately \$3 in future healthcare or Medicaid costs.⁴⁷

In FY2013 Idaho's WIC program served 43,000 individuals per month and provided \$19 million in food benefits. WIC benefit levels are low in Idaho compared to other states. In FY2013, Idaho's average monthly benefit per person was \$36.82, compared to \$43.50 nationwide. Consistent with the national trend, the number of WIC participants in Idaho fell between FY2010 and FY2013 from 47,046 to 43,292, a decrease of 8%.⁴⁸ Some analysts have suggested the decline is due to a falling birth rate. Idaho's birth rate decreased from 16.7 births per 1,000 population in 2007 to 14.1 per 1,000 population in 2011.⁴⁹ Other reasons that have been suggested include the amount of time required to enroll, qualify, and participate in WIC relative to the food stamp program, and less emphasis on outreach.⁵⁰

Most people who benefit from WIC are young children and infants. Of Idaho's roughly 43,800 participants in 2012, 54% were young children, 23% were infants, and 24% were women.⁵¹

WIC plays a major role in improving nutrition among Idaho's pregnant mothers. The mothers of 44% of babies born in 2011 accessed WIC while pregnant.⁵² As shown in Figure 9 on the following page, eight southern Idaho counties had participation rates greater than 50%. There is wide variation across the state. The highest rates were in Minidoka (77%), Power (69%), Benewah (68%) and Cassia (68%) counties. Rates were lowest in Camas (13%), Latah (27%) and Blaine (29%) counties.

⁴⁶ Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, What is WIC?, retrieved July 9, 2013 from <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Default.aspx?TabId=92>

⁴⁷ National Anti-Hunger Organization, A Blueprint to End Hunger 2008, retrieved July 10, 2013 from <http://www.idahohunger.org/blueprint%20to%20end%20hunger%202008.pdf>

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Data, WIC Program, retrieved February 26, 2014 from [http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/25wifavgfd\\$.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/25wifavgfd$.htm)

⁴⁹ Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, Idaho Vital Statistics: Natality 2011, retrieved April 22, 2014 from <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Health/Statistics/Natality.pdf>

⁵⁰ "Big drop in birth rate may be leveling off," Pew Research Center, retrieved Jan. 4, 2014, <http://www.pewstates.org/projects/stateline/headlines/why-are-fewer-moms-applying-for-safety-net-program-85899383310>

⁵¹ Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), National and State Program Data, Profile of Hunger, Poverty, and Federal Nutrition Programs: Idaho, retrieved July 9, 2013 from <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/id.pdf>

⁵² Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, 2011 Idaho Vital Statistics, retrieved October 09, 2013 from http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Health/Statistics/final_compressed.pdf

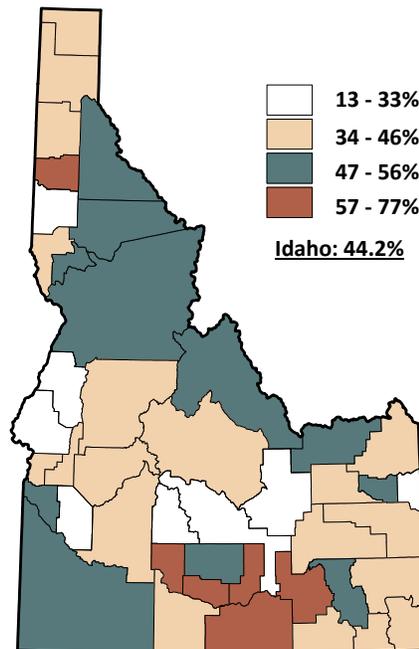


Figure 9. Mothers accessing WIC during pregnancy (%), 2011
 SOURCE: Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

Benefits paid in Idaho: \$2 million (FY2012)

The largest federal provider of emergency food is The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Most states run the TEFAP program through food banks. In Idaho, however, TEFAP is administered by Community Action Partnership of Idaho, a private nonprofit focused on poverty issues. In FY2012, TEFAP benefits in Idaho totaled \$2 million.⁵³ TEFAP is intended to supplement other donated foods distributed by emergency feeding organizations. These organizations include many food pantries served by The Idaho Foodbank, described on the following page. USDA buys the food and ships it to the states, which in turn provide it to eligible recipient agencies. Examples of foods distributed through the TEFAP program include: canned beans, canned vegetables, cereal, pasta, rice, and canned fruit.⁵⁴ To qualify for TEFAP in Idaho, households must have an income below 133% of the federal poverty level.⁵⁵

⁵³ Western Wave: Spotlight on Idaho, retrieved September 5, 2013 from [http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20(1).pdf)

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, TEFAP USDA Foods, retrieved May 1, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/tefap-usda-foods>

⁵⁵ Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho, TEFAP Income Guidelines., retrieved April 22, 2014 from <http://www.idahocommunityaction.org/programs/food-assistance/the-emergency-food-assistance-program-income-guidelines-html/>

B. CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Many food insecure households turn to charitable programs when they do not qualify for federal programs or when benefits are not enough to meet food needs. In 2012, 5% of all households in the U.S. accessed emergency food from a food pantry or soup kitchen at least once.⁵⁶

The largest emergency food provider in Idaho is The Idaho Foodbank, which distributes food directly and works with a network of 220 partner agencies in 39 counties to distribute free emergency food to those in need. In FY2013, The Idaho Foodbank distributed 10.6 million meals, a 12% increase from the year before.⁵⁷ Partner agencies include emergency food pantries, community kitchens, schools, shelters and others. The Idaho Foodbank operates a variety of programs:

- ◆ Backpack Program – provides food to school children over the weekend.
- ◆ Mobile Pantry – distributes emergency food in rural areas lacking emergency food services.
- ◆ Grocery Alliance Program – partners with grocery stores to provide nutritious food to partner agencies.
- ◆ Idaho Community Gardens Program – connects local community gardens to local emergency food pantries.
- ◆ Beef Counts – partners with the Idaho beef industry to provide beef to hungry families.
- ◆ Picnic in the Park – provides food to children during summer break.
- ◆ Cooking Matters™ – teaches families how to prepare healthy and affordable meals.
- ◆ School Pantry – provides school-based food pantries.

Second Harvest, also a food bank, is the next largest provider of emergency food in Idaho. It works with 250 local food banks and meal centers throughout the state's five northern counties and multiple counties in eastern Washington to distribute food to those in need. In FY2013, Second Harvest distributed almost 3.3 million pounds of food in northern Idaho (up from 2.7 million in FY2012). The organization estimates that 40% of their total food bank clients are

⁵⁶ Feeding America, Hunger and Poverty Statistics, retrieved June 6, 2013 from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/hunger-and-poverty-statistics.aspx>

⁵⁷ The Idaho Foodbank, 2013 Annual Report, retrieved April 25, 2014 from http://idahofoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/The_Idaho_Foodbank_Annual_Report-2013.pdf

children, and 10% are seniors.⁵⁸

Like The Idaho Foodbank, Second Harvest operates a number of programs:

- ◆ Mobile Food Bank – distributes fresh food to rural and urban food pantries without sufficient refrigeration to safely distribute perishable donations.
- ◆ Food \$ense – a joint program with Washington State University that provides classes on how to eat healthy meals on a small food budget.
- ◆ Commodity Supplemental Food Program – a program in Second Harvest’s Washington service area that provides monthly food packages to children ages 5-7 and seniors age 60 and over. This program is federally-funded.
- ◆ Brown Bag Program – delivers monthly food bags to homebound disabled and elderly people.
- ◆ American Red Cross Program – distributes food to families who have been displaced due to fires.
- ◆ Habitat for Humanity – provides 200 pounds of food to new homeowners participating in the Habitat for Humanity’s program.⁵⁹

On a smaller scale, Backyard Harvest takes in fresh produce from local residents and small farmers and distributes it to food banks and meal programs throughout several counties in northern Idaho and eastern Washington. The grassroots nonprofit organization provided about 25,000 pounds of fresh produce in 2013. To increase the amount of fresh produce available to low-income residents, Backyard Harvest also registers local fruit trees and berry patches that can be gleaned each year and challenges community groups to create gardens to generate more fresh produce for distribution. Finally, its Shop the Market program facilitates the use of food stamp benefits at local farmers markets by turning electronic benefits into currency (tokens) usable at market booths.⁶⁰

Another relatively small program is Let’s Move Boise’s “Grow a Row” program. The goal of the program is to educate community members about gardening and to encourage the sharing of fresh, locally-grown produce with local food pantries. Let’s Move Boise provides a planting guide, gardening tips, and a directory of Boise food pantries for interested gardeners. Other local partners in this project include The Idaho Foodbank, the Boise Urban Garden School (BUGS), Idaho Botanical Garden, Healthwise, Boise Parks & Recreation, and the Blue Cross of

⁵⁸ 2nd Harvest website, retrieved October 9, 2013 from <http://www.2-harvest.org/>

⁵⁹ 2nd Harvest website, Programs, retrieved May 19, 2014 from <http://www.2-harvest.org/programs/>

⁶⁰ Backyard Harvest website, retrieved March 24, 2014 from <http://www.backyardharvest.org>

Idaho Foundation for Health.⁶¹

C. NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Nutrition education programs are designed to encourage more nutritious eating, primarily among low-income households. Programs are geared toward SNAP and WIC recipients as well as others at risk of being food insecure. The common themes in Idaho's nutrition education programs are shopping, cooking, and eating healthy food on a limited budget, and using SNAP and WIC benefits wisely.

Idaho's largest nutrition education program is Eat Smart Idaho, which is federally-funded and operated by University of Idaho Extension throughout the state. Through Eat Smart Idaho, UI Extension faculty members deliver nutrition and food resource management education in 39 Idaho counties. In 2012, UI Extension educators reached nearly 20,000 Idaho youth and adult learners. UI Extension nutrition education programs have been evaluated and found to have significant and positive impacts on diet and physical activity.⁶²

Cooking Matters™, a cooking-based nutrition education program of Share Our Strength, is a program which provides individuals and families with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to prepare healthy and affordable meals. The Idaho Foodbank partners with volunteer culinary and nutrition experts to teach classes throughout Idaho. Through these courses, Cooking Matters™ participants learn how to select nutritious and low-cost ingredients and prepare them in ways that provide the best nourishment possible for themselves and their families. In 2013, Cooking Matters™ served 265 adults and 189 children (under 18) in six Idaho counties (Ada, Bannock, Blaine, Canyon, Kootenai, and Nez Perce).⁶³

⁶¹ Let's Move Boise website, Grow A Row, retrieved April 28, 2014 from <http://www.letsmoveboise.com/resources/grow-a-row/>

⁶² University of Idaho Extension, IMPACT, Eat Smart Idaho: Healthy people – healthy communities, unpublished manuscript, received February 19, 2014 via personal communication with Paul McCawley, Eat Smart Idaho Director.

⁶³ The Idaho Foodbank website, Cooking Matters, retrieved October 9, 2013 from <http://www.idahofoodbank.org/?page=cooking-matters>

D. ADVOCACY AND POLICY APPROACHES

Many organizations advocate for policy changes related to food security and some organize community programs.

The Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force (IHRTF) is a group of 21 organizations working toward a long-term solution for hunger. Formed out of the first 2006 statewide Hunger Summit, the IHRTF coordinates the Hunger Summit every other year. Participants share information and collaboratively decide on action items for the next two years. In 2012, the summit attracted 248 participants from 41 Idaho communities, 26 Idaho counties, two tribes, and three states besides Idaho.⁶⁴ Planning for the 2014 summit is underway.

IHRTF carries out six broad types of activities:

- ◆ Research on hunger and its root causes.
- ◆ Education to raise public awareness.
- ◆ Development of recommendations for providers of food security programs and services.
- ◆ Communication of food security-related information to the Idaho Legislature.
- ◆ Active support for programs and policies to eliminate hunger.
- ◆ Facilitation of collaborative efforts to eliminate hunger and its root causes.

IHRTF founded the Cultivate Idaho initiative, a collaborative approach to improving food security at the community level. Based on a 10-month local planning process, Cultivate Idaho engages representatives from emergency food organizations, agriculture, economic development, public health, education and other stakeholder groups to assess food insecurity and develop long-run strategies to improve food security. IHRTF worked with the community of Emmett to implement the Cultivate Idaho process in 2012 and is currently working with Payette.

Catholic Charities of Idaho (CCI), founded in 2000, is a faith-based nonprofit organization. It seeks to provide culturally sensitive services to people in need using a family strengthening approach. CCI is very active on policy issues related to poverty in Idaho, including access to safe and nutritious food, housing, health care, economic security, and immigration reform.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force. "2012 Idaho Summit on Hunger and Food Security: Let's All Come to the Table." Retrieved October 4, 2013 from <http://www.idahohunger.org/summit/FINAL%202012%20HUNGER%20REPORT%20-3.pdf>

⁶⁵ Catholic Charities of Idaho website, Advocacy, retrieved May 1, 2014 from <http://ccidaho.org/what-we-do/advocacy/>

The Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger is a group of faith and goodwill communities located throughout the state that works to develop solutions to the root causes of hunger by providing education, working on public policy and supporting organizations that provide direct hunger relief.⁶⁶

E. MARKET-BASED APPROACHES

Consumer interest in purchasing local food and buying directly from producers is growing in Idaho and across the nation as a whole. In Idaho, direct sales by producers to consumers increased 33% from 2002 to 2007 and 9% from 2007 to 2012.⁶⁷ Consumers as well as policy makers are interested in local foods for a variety of reasons. These include beliefs that fresher foods are more nutritious, that large scale farming operations have more negative environmental impacts than smaller producers, and that local markets provide economic opportunities for small producers.⁶⁸

Especially since the recession began, nonprofit organizations and entrepreneurs have been looking at another opportunity presented by local foods, that is, the possibility that local food production might be used to improve food security among low-income households. If this proves feasible, it would be possible to achieve two objectives at once: business and economic development in agriculture and improved diets among low-income people. Practically speaking, this is difficult because it is harder (by definition) for smaller producers to realize economies of scale in production and marketing. Thus, they must charge higher prices to remain profitable and these higher prices may be unaffordable for people with low incomes. Some analysts have begun looking closely at the economies of scale issue to understand potential differences between farms that sell locally and all farms.⁶⁹ Given the increasing numbers of farms that sell locally, we can expect more analysis in the future.

Despite comparatively higher prices for local foods, many organizations are working on market-based approaches to improving food security. One relatively straightforward approach in Idaho and other states is to allow use of SNAP benefits at farmers markets, leveraging federal nutrition dollars to stimulate local food production. As of April 2014, 17 markets in Idaho (out of a total of 48) were authorized to process SNAP benefits in 14 cities: Boise, Caldwell, Hailey, Hayden, Kuna, Moscow, Nampa, Pocatello, Post Falls, Rexburg, St. Maries, Salmon, Sandpoint

⁶⁶ Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger website, About, retrieved October 9, 2013 from: <http://iirah.org/about>

⁶⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Census of Agriculture, retrieved February 26, 2014, and May 12, 2014 from <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/index.php>

⁶⁸ Martinez, et al. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Local Food Systems: Concepts, Issues, and Impacts. Retrieved March 6, 2014 from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err97.aspx>

⁶⁹ Low, S., and Vogel, S. (2011). Direct and intermediated marketing of local foods in the United States. Economic Research Service Research Report-128. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

and Shoshone.⁷⁰

An approach that builds on the use of SNAP benefits at farmers markets is to double the value of federal benefits for customers shopping at farmers markets. This is a strategy used by Wholesome Wave, a national nonprofit that works in 28 states including Idaho. The supplemental food dollars used by this program are provided through partnerships with hospitals, employers, and others. In Idaho, Wholesome Wave doubles the value of SNAP benefits at the Capital City Public Market in Boise. The Boise Farmers Market also facilitates a program that doubles the value of SNAP benefits for its patrons. This program is funded through a partnership with a local faith organization.

A national evaluation of Wholesome Wave's program showed that 87% of consumers using Wholesome Wave's Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) increased their consumption of fresh produce. More than half of all producers receiving income from this program plan to continue selling at participating markets due to the extra sales, and some plan to increase their acreage (15%), diversify their crops (12%), or invest in their ability to extend their season (10%).⁷¹

These types of programs show some promise in being able to increase affordability and access to fresh, locally-grown food in ways that can also impact local economies.

On a much larger scale, USDA's Farm to School is a coordinated set of strategies to connect healthy local food and agriculture with school children. "Farm to School" includes various efforts that bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; provide hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and cooking classes; and integrate food-related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) supports such efforts through research, training, technical assistance, and grants.

In Idaho, Farm to School is a joint program between the state departments of education and agriculture. A review of the 2005 pilot program found that participating schools experienced an increased variety of available produce, improved food quality, cost savings, and an improved public opinion of the school's lunch program.⁷² According to the USDA's Farm to School Census, 50 Idaho school districts currently participate in the program. Together, these districts spent \$2.1 million dollars – or 17.1% of their total food budget – on local foods during the 2011-12 school year. Two-thirds of these districts plan to spend more on local foods in the future.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Learn how you can accept SNAP benefits at farmers' markets, retrieved April 10, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm>

⁷¹ McFadden, Dawn Thilmany, and Sarah A. Low, 2012, Will Local Foods Influence American Diets? Choices 27(1), retrieved February 26, 2014 from http://www.choicesmagazine.org/magazine/pdf/cmsarticle_215.pdf

⁷² Idaho Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, Growing Farm to School: Results from the Idaho Farm to School Pilot, retrieved January 27, 2014 from <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/farmToSchool/docs/Growing%20Farm%20to%20School%20PRINT.pdf>

Districts are most likely to purchase fruit, vegetables and fluid milk.⁷³

School gardens have recently been added to Farm to School activities. Ten Idaho schools created school gardens in 2009. Another 15 schools added gardens in 2011 with \$30,000 in grants from the Idaho Department of Education's Child Nutrition Program.⁷⁴

Farm to School is a market-based solution involving large institutional buyers. Farmers that sell to schools have much greater opportunities to lower production costs through economies of scale, thanks to larger volumes purchased by institutions. High costs on the part of small producers are undeniably the greatest challenge to addressing food security through local food production.

⁷³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, The Farm to School Census: Idaho, retrieved January 28, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/state/id>

⁷⁴ Idaho Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, 15 New School Garden Programs throughout Idaho, retrieved January 27, 2014 from <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/schoolgarden/SchoolGardensIntro/>

SECTION 4: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

Federal and charitable programs worked as a powerful safety net for Idahoans during the recent recession and they continue to keep many people from going hungry. However, these programs do not produce long-term food security. The main cause of food insecurity is poverty. As long as there is poverty in Idaho, some number of the state's residents will lack consistent access to enough affordable, nutritious food for an active, healthy life. In the long term, reducing unemployment and increasing the number of people with higher wage jobs are the most effective strategies to improve food security.

Short of reducing poverty, there are opportunities for new approaches to improving food security, guided by clear and politically realistic priorities.

First, public agencies and private nonprofits should collaborate and avoid duplicating programs and competing for the same grant dollars. Already we have examples of collaboration in the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force and The Idaho Foodbank's large partner network. In the future, we might look to our neighbor, Nevada, for a larger scale, higher level of collaboration. In March, 2012, the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services implemented a strategic planning process to address food security in Nevada, with the goal of weaving together the many people working on hunger and food security into a single, efficient and effective system. The planning process brought together stakeholders from across the state to develop a collaborative approach to increasing food security. The state of Washington is moving in the same direction, with a roundtable made up of representatives from multiple public and private nonprofit organizations.

Second, Idaho should invest in the future with a focus on improving diets among children, pregnant women, and new mothers. Of all age groups, children in Idaho have the highest rates of food insecurity. They make up just over one-third of those who are food insecure. Health problems, developmental delays stemming from poor nutrition, and other challenges are compounded as children mature. Thus, given limited resources, improving diets among the youngest Idahoans is likely to have the greatest long-run impact. The 2012 Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force Summit identified establishment of a childhood hunger coalition as one of its next steps. The coalition, Nourishing Idaho's Children, was formed with leadership from Idaho Voices for Children, and is taking a collective impact approach to solving childhood hunger in Idaho.

Third, public agencies and private nonprofits should encourage market-based approaches such as Farm to School to achieve food security. Producers may have opportunities to increase net income by selling in local markets, especially institutional buyers markets that make economies of scale possible. With funding from USDA, researchers at the University of Idaho are beginning to study opportunities for producers with existing or

potential capacity to sell to buyers such as hospitals, schools, and restaurants. These producers may want to increase their presence in the market (scaling up from farmers' markets), or diversify their crop and livestock portfolio (scaling down from global markets). To the extent that producers can achieve the scale necessary to lower production costs and make nutritious food affordable for low-income households, market solutions can help address food insecurity.

Fourth, Idaho should invest in evidence-based strategies to improve nutrition literacy among low-income people. A solid body of research indicates that well-designed, culturally appropriate nutrition education programs work. A study from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service found that nutrition education among food stamp recipients led to healthier food choices, a first step in improving diets and decreasing obesity.⁷⁵

Now that the intense pressure of the recession is over and the state's economy is beginning to improve, Idaho has an opportunity to consider improvements and innovations that could lead to longer-term food security. Guided by these four priorities – collaboration, children first, market approaches wherever possible, and evidence-based education – Idaho can achieve the kind of collective impact explored by John Kania and Mark Kramer in their influential article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.⁷⁶ Kania and Kramer define collective impact as, “the commitment of an important group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.” Ideally, public agencies, private nonprofits, and for-profit organizations involved in the state's food economy and nutrition services would align their work to improve long-term food security in Idaho.

With its land-grant mission of teaching, research, and outreach, the University of Idaho can contribute to addressing Idaho's food security challenge. It can do this through basic and applied research; evidence-based consumer and producer education; convening stakeholders; and partnering with other organizations on developing strategies, grant proposals, and high-impact initiatives.

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, FNS-0013.13, Study Shows Strong Nutrition Education Can Lead to Healthier Food Choices by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recipients, December 5, 2013, retrieved March 3, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2013/fns-001313>

⁷⁶ Kania, John and Mark Kramer. (2011). Collective Impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter 2011.

APPENDIX: DIRECTORY OF IDAHO'S FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The variety of food security programs and organizations in Idaho is vast. They range in size from very large to very small. The participation numbers and dollar amounts listed here, unless otherwise noted, pertain to Idaho only.

FEDERAL FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

These federal programs get food into the hands of the families, children, and seniors who are food insecure. Many have financial and/or demographic requirements. The participation numbers and dollar amounts listed here pertain to Idaho only.

A. GENERAL

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Called “Food Stamps” in Idaho)

Benefits Paid: \$347 million (FY2013)¹

Participation: 227k (FY2013)²

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap>

Federal nutrition assistance program that provides monetary assistance for food purchases to low-income individuals in the form of prepaid cards that can be used at eligible retailers.

Child & Adult Care Food Program

Benefits Paid: \$2 million to family day care homes; \$3.8 million to child care centers (FY2012)³

Participation: 1.5 million meals served in family day care homes; 3.5 million meals served in child care centers (FY2012)⁴

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd//Care/>

Federal nutrition assistance program that provides nutritious meals to children and adults in daycare facilities, shelters, and afterschool programs.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

Benefits Paid: \$2 million (FY2012)⁵

Participation: unknown

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/>

Federal emergency food program, administered by Community Action Partnership of Idaho, which provides emergency food and nutrition assistance to low-income people.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Program Data, retrieved June 20, 2013 and February 26, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain.htm>

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. op. cit.

³ Western Wave: Spotlight on Idaho. Retrieved September 5, 2013 from: [http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.idahohunger.org/Final%20Idaho%20Western%20Wave%20FY%202012-1%20(1).pdf)

⁴ Western Wave. op. cit.

⁵ Western Wave. op. cit.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program

Idaho does not participate

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/>

Federal nutrition assistance program that provides United States Department of Agriculture commodity foods (and funding to states) to pregnant and postpartum women, children under age six, and elderly people who are at least 60 years old.

B. MOTHERS' AND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

National School Lunch Program

Benefits Paid: \$55 million to schools (FY2012)⁶

Participation: 160k lunches served daily (FY2013)⁷, 49% of Idaho students were eligible free or reduced-price meals (2011-12 school year)⁸

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/slp>

Federally assisted meal program that provides lunches to school children, and low-cost or free school lunches to low-income children each school day.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)

Benefits Paid: \$19 million – food only (FY2013)⁹

Participation: 43k individuals per month on average (FY2013)¹⁰

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

Federal nutrition assistance program that provides grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, and children under five.

⁶ Western Wave. op. cit.

⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, National School Lunch Program: Total Participation, retrieved May 30, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/01slfypart.pdf>

⁸ Indicators Idaho: Idaho: Reduced Price School Lunch Program, retrieved May 30, 2014 from <http://www.indicatorsidaho.org/DrawRegion.aspx?RegionID=16000&IndicatorID=24>

⁹ Western Wave. op. cit.

¹⁰ Western Wave. op. cit.

School Breakfast Program

Benefits Paid: \$17 million to schools (FY 2012)¹¹

Participation: 75k breakfasts served daily (FY2013)¹², 77% of meals were free or reduced-price (FY2012)¹³

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp>

Federal nutrition program that provides cash assistance to states for breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions.

Summer Food Service Program

Benefits Paid: \$3.9 million to site hosts (FY 2012)¹⁴

Participation: 21k lunches served daily (FY 2012)¹⁵

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer-food-service-program-sfsp>

Federal nutrition program that provides free meals to children age 18 and under at approved sites in areas with large concentrations of low-income children.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Benefits Paid: \$1.9 million to schools (FY2012)¹⁶

Participation: 112 elementary schools participated in 2012¹⁷

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/afterschool/>

Federal nutrition program that provides elementary school children with fresh fruits and vegetables. The program is targeted at schools with high numbers of free and reduced-price meals, and seeks to improve children's diets and create healthier eating habits.

Afterschool Snack Program

Benefits Paid: \$434k to schools (FY2012)¹⁸

Participation: 3,900 snacks served daily (FY2012)¹⁹

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/afterschool/>

A federal nutrition program that provides cash reimbursement to schools that serve snacks to students involved in afterschool activities that promote health and wellbeing.

¹¹ Western Wave. op. cit.

¹² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, School Breakfast Program: Total Participation, retrieved May 30, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/08sbfypart.pdf>

¹³ Western Wave. op. cit.

¹⁴ Summer Food Service Program: Cash Payments. Retrieved September 5, 2013 from: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/02sfcash.htm>

¹⁵ Western Wave. op. cit.

¹⁶ Western Wave. op. cit.

¹⁷ "School snack program offers Idaho kids a chance to taste the unusual." Retrieved September 5, 2013 from: <http://www.idahoreporter.com/2012/school-snack-program-offers-idaho-kids-a-chance-to-taste-the-unusual/>

¹⁸ Western Wave. op. cit.

¹⁹ Western Wave. op. cit.

C. SENIORS' PROGRAMS

Nutrition Services Incentive Program

Benefits Paid: \$684k to state agencies and tribal organizations (FY2014)²⁰

Participation: unknown

http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/nsip/about_nsip.htm

Joint federal program that provides rewards to state agencies on aging and Indian tribal organizations that efficiently deliver nutritious meals to older adults.

D. MINORITY-FOCUSED PROGRAMS

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Benefits Paid: \$1 million to tribal organizations (FY2012)²¹

Participation: 1,518 (FY2012)²²

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpi/>

Federal nutrition program that provides United States Department of Agriculture commodities to low-income residents of Indian reservations and Native American families in designated areas near reservations.

²⁰ Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Nutrition Services Incentive Program for the States/Territories FY2014 Annual Cash Allocation, retrieved May 30, 2014 from http://aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/OAA/Aging_Network/State_Allocations/docs/FY2014NSIPStateAwards.pdf

²¹ Western Wave. op. cit.

²² Western Wave. op. cit.

CHARITABLE PROGRAMS

These programs provide food to individuals with an immediate food need. They are funded by a variety of sources, including federal funds and private donations.

The Idaho Foodbank

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 12.8 million pounds of food distributed (FY2013)²³

<http://www.idahofoodbank.org/>

An independent nonprofit organization that works with community and state partners to distribute emergency food to those in need. Programs include a mobile pantry, the grocery alliance program, a children's backpack program, and picnic at the park (a summer feeding program).

Second Harvest

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 3.3 million pounds of food distributed in northern Idaho (FY2013)²⁴

<http://www.2-harvest.org/9/programs/>

Provides food to food insecure people in five Northern Idaho counties and 21 eastern Washington counties through a network of local food pantries and special programs. Programs include a mobile food bank, providing food to new Habitat for Humanity homeowners, providing food to families displaced by fires (in conjunction with other American Red Cross relief), and a brown bag program for homebound individuals.

Private Food Pantries & Kitchens

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: unknown

Scattered individual pantries and kitchens that provide emergency food to individuals in need. No set system or network.

Backyard Harvest

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 25k pounds of food distributed (2013)²⁵

<http://www.backyardharvest.org/>

With help from volunteer gleaners, farmers, and gardeners, this nonprofit makes local produce available to low-income individuals in the Palouse region (parts of eastern Washington and northern Idaho).

²³ Idaho Food Bank: Annual Report 2013. Retrieved October 3, 2013 from: http://www.idahofoodbank.org/pdf/reports/The_Idaho_Foodbank_Annual_Report-2013.pdf

²⁴ Second Harvest website, retrieved April 23, 2014 from <http://2-harvest.org>

²⁵ Backyard Harvest website, retrieved March 24, 2014 from <http://www.backyardharvest.org>

"Grow A Row"

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: unknown

<http://www.letsmoveboise.com/resources/grow-a-row/>

Program of Let's Move Boise that educates community members about gardening and encourages the sharing of fresh, locally-grown produce with local food pantries.

NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

These programs focus on educating consumers to shop wisely and prepare nutritious, low-cost meals. Funding is often provided through grant programs.

Eat Smart Idaho

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 20,000 individual learners (2012)²⁶

<http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/nezperce/fcs/extensionnutritionprogram>

Includes two federally-funded nutrition education programs administered by University of Idaho Extension. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Extension Education Program both target limited-resource families and individuals. Programming is designed to help food dollars stretch further while providing healthy meals for families.

Cooking Matters™

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 454 individuals (2013)²⁷

<http://www.idahofoodbank.org/?page=cooking-matters>

A cooking-based nutrition education program of Share Our Strength, led in Idaho by The Idaho Foodbank. Cooking Matters™ provides individuals and families with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to prepare healthy and affordable meals.

²⁶ Paul McCawley, University of Idaho

²⁷ The Idaho Foodbank website, Cooking Matters, retrieved October 9, 2013 from <http://www.idahofoodbank.org/?page=cooking-matters>

ADVOCACY AND POLICY APPROACHES

These organizations advocate for individuals who are food insecure, often through policy and mutually beneficial partnerships between diverse stakeholders.

Catholic Charities of Idaho

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: N/A

<http://ccidaho.org>

Faith-based nonprofit organization that seeks to provide culturally sensitive services to people in need. Catholic Charities of Idaho is active on policy issues related to poverty in Idaho, including access to safe and nutritious food.

Farm to School Advisory Council

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 50 schools participating as of January 2014

<http://idahopreferred.com/farm-to-school/>

Farm to School connects local food producers with Idaho's schools. The Farm to School Advisory Council advises this process. Roster includes farmers, dietitians, school administrators, Idaho Department of Agriculture and Idaho Department of Education officials.

Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: N/A

<http://www.idahohunger.org/>

Working group of hunger relief and emergency food organizations working toward a long-term solution to hunger.

Idaho Interfaith Roundtable Against Hunger

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: N/A

<http://iirah.org/>

Group of faith and goodwill communities located throughout the state that works to develop solutions to the root causes of hunger by extending education efforts, working on public policy, and supporting organizations that provide direct hunger relief.

MARKET-BASED APPROACHES

Local food systems advocates have long embraced a lifestyle of healthy, from-scratch cooking and eating. However, food security has more recently become a topic of interest to many. Several programs have been established that connect goals related to the intersection of local food and food security.

A. GENERAL

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program at Farmers' Markets

Benefits Paid: \$53k (FY2012)²⁸

Participation: 17 markets in Idaho (2014)²⁹

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits may be used at farmers markets throughout the state that are set up to receive payments.

Cultivate Idaho Initiative

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 2 pilot communities as of September 2013

http://www.idahohunger.org/cultivate_idaho.html

Community led initiative of the Idaho Hunger Relief Task Force that addresses food insecurity and long-term strategies for eliminating hunger. The initiative is meant to be very inclusive, and seeks to bring together agricultural producers, educators, health care providers, local leaders, and other interested parties. Currently being piloted in Emmett and Payette.

Double Value Coupon Program

Benefits Paid: unknown

Participation: One Idaho farmers market participates (2013)

http://wholesomewave.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/DVCP_DataReport_FINAL.pdf

Private program funded by Wholesome Wave, a nonprofit organization, that matches the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits at the Capital City Public Market in Boise.

²⁸ Western Wave. op. cit.

²⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Learn how you can accept SNAP benefits at farmers' markets, retrieved April 10, 2014 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/>

Farm to School

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 50 schools participating as of January 2014

<http://www.idahopreferred.com/farm-to-school>

A joint program between the state departments of education and agriculture that consists of efforts to bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and cooking classes; and the integration of food-related education into the regular standards-based classroom curriculum.

Idaho Community Gardens Program

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: 40 community gardens listed on the website (2013)

http://idahofoodbank.org/community_gardens/?page_id=2

Program of The Idaho Foodbank that supports community gardens through volunteers, education, promotional events, and community partnerships. Overall goal is to address poverty and eliminate hunger.

Idaho Farmers' Market Association

Benefits Paid: N/A

Participation: unknown

<https://www.facebook.com/IdahoFarmersMarketAssociation/info>

The goal of the Idaho Farmers' Market Association is to connect communities with their local food and farming through farmers markets.

B. MOTHERS' AND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children: Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Idaho does not participate

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp>

Federal nutrition program that allows participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children to use benefits to purchase produce at farmers' markets and roadside stands.

C. SENIOR'S PROGRAMS

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Idaho doesn't participate

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp>

Federal nutrition program that allows low-income seniors to use benefits to purchase produce at farmers' markets and roadside stands.