



## Summary of the 2008 Farm Bill: What does it mean for Maryland?

Every five years, Congress reauthorizes and revises the Farm Bill, a comprehensive bill that includes both agricultural and nutrition provisions. There are many titles in the Farm Bill, but Title IV (the nutrition title) includes many key nutrition programs such as the Food Stamp Program, The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

**The food and nutrition provisions included in the 2008 Farm Bill are now law.** The Farm Bill makes several improvements to food stamps and other nutrition programs, with the new provisions taking effect at the start of the new fiscal year (October 1, 2008). It substantially invests in nutrition programs, with more than \$10 billion in new funding going to the nutrition title. Of that, \$7.8 billion goes to the Food Stamp Program.

### **Critical food stamp benefit changes will:**

- Increase the \$10 minimum monthly benefit for recipients (unchanged for 30 years) to \$14, and index it for inflation;
- Increase and index the standard deduction for households of three or fewer members;
- Remove the cap on the deductible amount of child care expenses in eligible households;
- Index the food stamp household asset limits (\$2,000 for most households; \$3,000 for households with elderly or disabled), which have gone unchanged for decades;
- Allow more families to save by excluding education savings (such as the 529 college savings account) and tax-preferred retirement accounts (such as IRAs) from food stamp asset limits;
- Exclude permanently special military combat pay from countable income; and
- Rename the program the "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program" (SNAP).

### **The 2008 Farm Bill also:**

- Increases funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) by \$1.26 billion to help strengthen the nation's emergency food network's ability to serve those in need.
- Includes \$1 billion for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which provides free fresh fruits and vegetables as snacks to school children with a special emphasis on schools with a large number of low-income students.
- Expands the use of EBT cards at farmers' markets.

### **Fast Facts: Maryland and Hunger**

One out of every ten Maryland households faces a constant struggle against hunger.

One out of every ten children in Maryland lives in poverty.

The Food Stamp Program helps. In FY 2007, an average of 317,825 Marylanders participated in the Food Stamp Program each month.