

# Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) provides SNAP recipients with resources on top of their SNAP benefits to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets, farm stands, and grocery stores large and small.

GusNIP also includes a produce-prescription program administered by health care providers to low-income patients with chronic, diet-related medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardio-vascular diseases. Moreover, GusNIP provides economic benefits for food retailers and farmers. Many attest the nutrition incentives are crucial to their revenue.<sup>1</sup>

## GusNIP promotes healthy food choices

GusNIP helps participants gain access to the healthiest foods that are often out of reach to them. Increased fruit and vegetable consumption is associated with decreased risk of chronic diet-related diseases. In fact, studies on produce prescription programs find impacts matching or even surpassing the effects of prescription drug therapies.

SNAP participants often cite affordability of healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables, as a barrier to access, leaving many low-income households unable to meet recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption. The latest national evaluation shows that **GusNIP participants consume more fruits and vegetables than the average American.**<sup>2</sup>

## What the 2023 Farm Bill Can Do for GusNIP

GusNIP has enjoyed strong bipartisan support from the beginning. The program was established in the 2014 Farm Bill, at the time known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) program, with \$100 million in funding over five years. In 2018, funding was made permanent and increased to \$250 million over five years. **GusNIP deserves a robust increase in funding.** The program reaches only a small share of SNAP recipients and even fewer who would benefit from produce prescriptions.

Although an increase in funding may be hard to come by in the 2023 farm bill, there are other ways to improve the program. Government grants to partner organizations that implement the program in their communities require a 1:1 match in funding. This poses a formidable challenge to partner organizations and would-be partners. Reducing the match for the grantees or eliminating it altogether would allow the partners to focus more on implementation and less on fundraising, as well as making programs available in communities where partners simply don't have capacity to raise resources to meet the match.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bread.org/article/improving-u-s-nutrition-through-the-2023-farm-bill/>

<sup>2</sup> Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE): Impact Finding. Available at <https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/fjohmr2n/gusnip-ntae-impact-findings-year-2.pdf>.

