

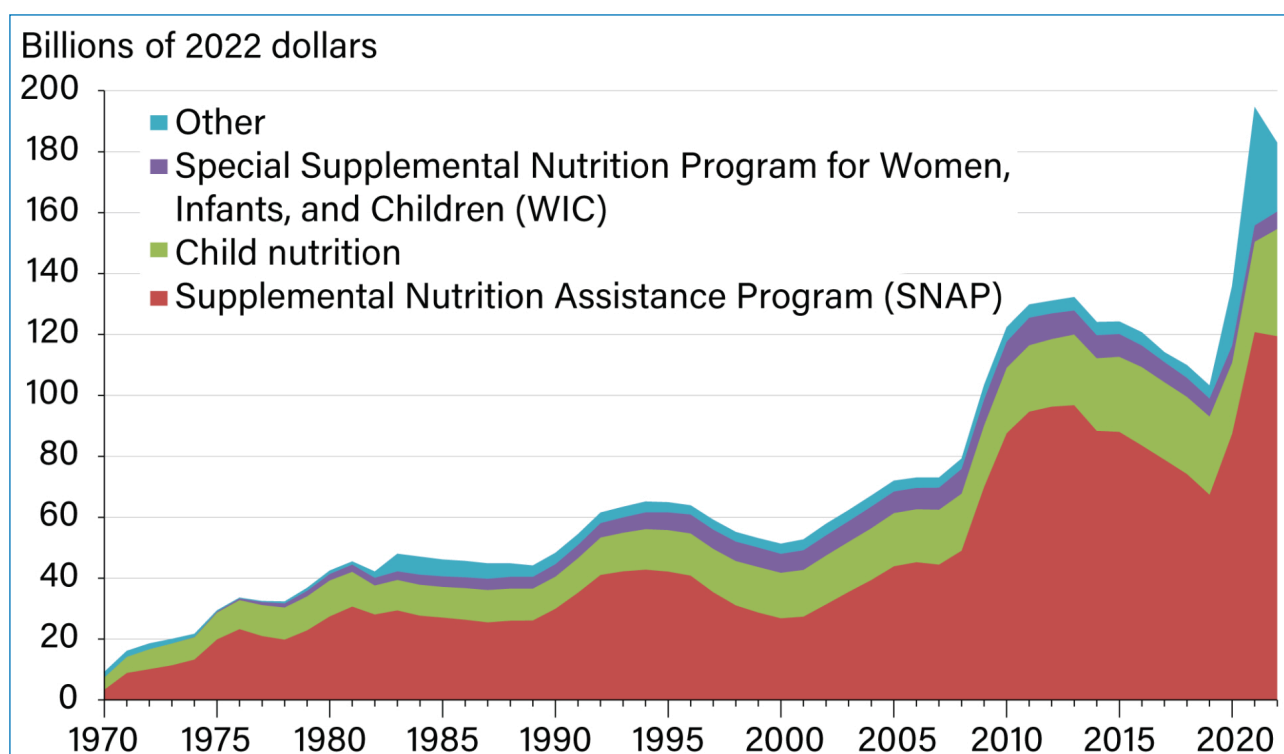
7 April 2024

United States: The improved household food security resulting from boosted food assistance during the pandemic is under threat

In an earlier article, hungerexplained mentioned that food assistance expenditure in the US had reached the unprecedented level of \$180 billion in 2021 [\[read\]](#).

In 2022, this level of support dropped significantly when special measures implemented during the peak of the pandemic (Emergency Allotments) came to an end [\[read\]](#) (see **Figure 1**) while food prices rose respectively by 9.9% and 5.8% in 2022 and 2023 [\[read\]](#)¹.

Figure 1 – Inflation-adjusted USDA spending on food and nutrition assistance, fiscal years 1970–2022



Source: [ERS/USDA, 2023](#).

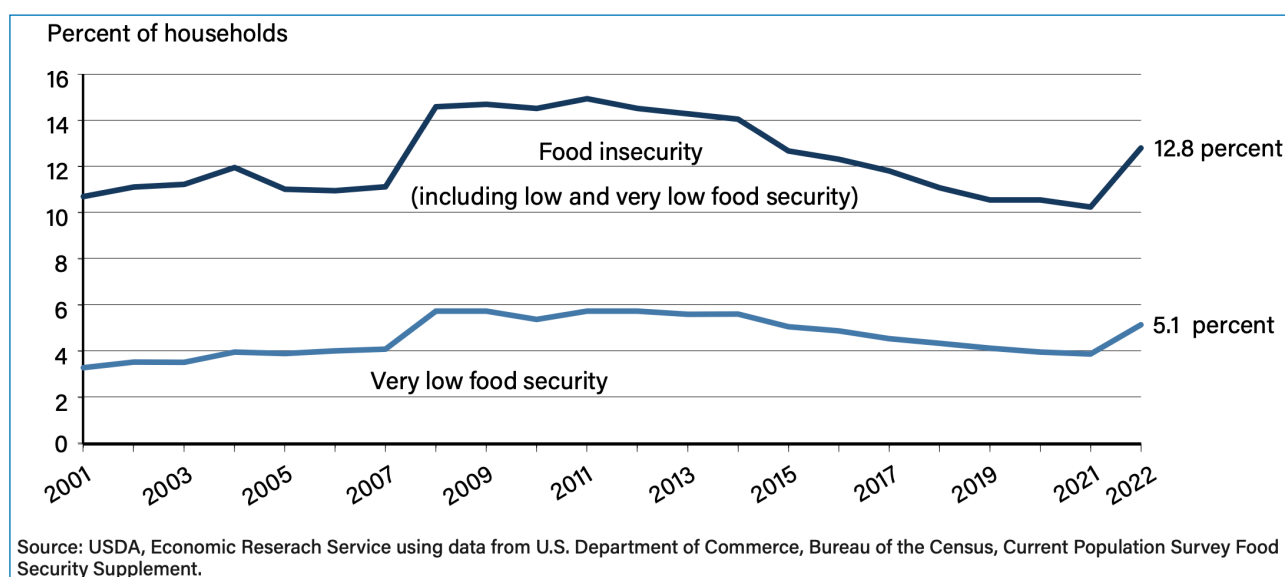
The rumours say that food assistance funding, which is a major line of expenditure under the Farm Bill, could be in danger as a new Farm Bill is being discussed. This is the view presented in a recent article by N. Khairunnisa published by Population Reference Bureau ([PRB](#)), a US nonpartisan, not-for-profit

¹ By comparison, in France, food prices increased by 6.8% in 2022 and 11.3% in 2023, and only 0.6% in 2021. [\[read in French here and here\]](#)

research organisation [\[read\]](#). Such a change of policy would repeat what happened after the food price crisis earlier this century [\[read\]](#).

The Report on Household Food Security in the United States [\[read\]](#), released last October by the Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture ([ERS](#)), shows that over the decade 2011–2021, food insecurity decreased in the US, falling from around 15% of households to only 10%. Then, in 2022, it rose again to reach almost 13% (see **Figure 2**). This situation should evidently be related to the drop of food assistance expenditure and the food price hike during that year.

Figure 2 – Prevalence of food insecurity in the US during the period 2001–2022



Source: [ERS/USDA, 2023](#).

Indeed, on the basis of several research works conducted during the pandemic, Khairunnisa reports that 'Federal assistance programs lifted 45.4 million people out of poverty in 2021. And more children benefited [as]... 27% of US children were in families receiving public assistance, up from 23% in 2019'. She adds that 'Racial disparities persist in child well-being and hunger', noting that 'Perhaps surprisingly, the pandemic time period – buffered by extra financial assistance – was beneficial to many in poverty, especially Black children and their families.'

These results prove that it is possible, through policies and related programmes, to reduce substantially food insecurity, with considerable positive impact on the development of children and their future.

The likely U-turn in policy, if rumours are confirmed and if the new Farm Bill does cut resources for food assistance, would have dramatic consequences on food security, reversing the positive trend observed during the last decade with probable consequences for social stability and for the long-term perspective in terms of the general well-being in the US.

To know more:

- Khairunnisa, N., , Population RefereUS Bureau, 2024.
- ERS, [Food Security and Nutrition Assistance](#), Economic Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture, 2023.
- Rabbitt, M.P., Hales, L.J., Burke, M.P., & Coleman-Jensen, A., [Household Food Security in the United States in 2022](#) (Report No. ERR-325), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
- Long, C., [SNAP Emergency Allotments are Ending](#), Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 2023.

Selection of past articles on hungerexplained.org related to the topic:

- [Hunger, food assistance and poverty in rich countries \(with illustrations from France and the US\)](#), 2023.
- [US Farm Bill: farm lobby interests preserved, food aid to poor US citizens cut; limited improvement in the US food aid policy abroad](#), 2014.
- [The New US Farm Bill: more for the favoured, less for the poor?](#) 2013.

and our thematic pages on [food security](#) and [world hunger](#).