**What additional information or analysis might improve your model results or work to control limitations?**

**What is SNAP?**

SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. [SNAP is a government program](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap) that provides a sliding scale of income designated for food to low-wage working families, low-income seniors, people with disabilities, and other individuals with low incomes, according to the Move For Hunger (2023).

**History**

The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1933 laid the groundwork for the creation of SNAP. In order to assist farmers who were impacted by the Great Depression, the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation program purchased essential agricultural products at a reduced cost and sent them to hunger relief organizations throughout the country.

After a few decades, the Food Stamp Act was passed in 1964 as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society Program. The [goal of the program](https://www.snaptohealth.org/snap/the-history-of-snap/) was to achieve a more effective use of agricultural overproduction, improve levels of nutrition among individuals with low incomes, and strengthen the agricultural economy.

The program underwent substantial modifications during the early 2000s George W. Bush administration, and the number of participants increased significantly. The Food Stamp Program saw major improvements when the Family Security and Rural Investment Act was passed in 2002. The Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card took the place of the stamps needed to purchase food, and it became eligible for usage for immigrants and children ages 18 and under. SNAP achieved a new high of 28.2 million participants in 2008.

The Agricultural Act of 2014, or the Farm Bill, was ratified by President Obama in 2014. The USDA awarded $31.5 million in funding to national, state, and local groups to promote initiatives that encourage Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants to boost their purchases of fruits and vegetables as a result of these modifications to the Food Stamps Program.

**Policy**

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2022), the households with the least amount of resources to buy food are the primary target of SNAP. Households with incomes at or below the federal poverty line receive roughly 92% of SNAP payments, while households at or below half of the federal poverty threshold—roughly $10,980 for a household of three in 2022—receive 54% of the program.

A table with numbers and text

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Figure 1. Source (Move For Hunger, 2023).

Benefits are gradually phased down under the SNAP benefit formula as earnings rise, see Figure 2. The benefits of SNAP recipients decrease gradually, by only 24 to 36 cents for every additional dollar earned. As a result, even as most SNAP households earn more and strive toward financial stability and self-sufficiency, the program still acts as an economic supplement, making it simpler for families to buy food. In addition, workers who join do not run the danger of having their total income (earnings plus SNAP) decrease if promised extra hours or a new, higher-paying job does not materialize. SNAP participants who lose their employment can apply for benefits and receive them swiftly. The SNAP Employment and Training program, which provides funding for job training and activities to unemployed individuals who receive SNAP, is another way that states encourage work.

A graph of a graph with blue and yellow bars

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Figure 2. SNAP Benefits Phase Out as Earnings Rise.

For example, two young Black farmers, Jeremy Peaches of Fresh Life Organics and Ivy Walls of Ivy Leaf Farms, have developed what they believe might become a sustainable and fair model to help feed and revitalize food desert neighborhoods in Sunnyside, a historically Black neighborhood in south Houston (Kehr, 2021).

After moving to Sunnyside in early 2020, Walls quickly discovered that the 20,000 residents of the neighborhood only had access to one large grocery shop, and the quality of the food was poor. Growing up in a suburban area of Pearland, Walls said, "moving from a food oasis to a food desert was very shocking for me."

Walls began sharing the vegetables she was growing for her family and herself with her Sunnyside neighbors. "I would just ask people, 'Hey, would you like a cucumber?'" Hello, what do you want to eat? Do you want some watermelon, please? And everybody was just nodding," she remarked.

A collage of a person holding dirt

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Demand for the food that Walls was growing persisted, and Ivy Leaf Farms was established in response. Walls raised money for the farm so she wouldn't have to charge for vegetables by holding pop-up events, selling home plants, and launching her own seed business. She quit her public health position in August to take care of the farm, and to continue her efforts, the NAACP and Beyoncé's Beygood Foundation awarded her a grant. But Walls and Peaches realized that one person cannot feed a community on their own, so they collaborated to develop a system that they hope, together with other farmers, will assist in doing so.

"Our goal was to create a fair and sustainable food system that would benefit not only our communities but also African American and minority farmers who lack access to traditional markets for selling their goods," stated Peaches.

Peaches stated, "We've been talking about food deserts for ten to fifteen years." How come they are food deserts? Grocery stores located in places where customers can afford to purchase their goods. A grocery store won't come to areas where the median household income is between $20,000 and $30,000, which are known as food deserts. It is imperative that we approach the growing and planting of food from a commercial or socioeconomic standpoint, as this is the only way to turn the tide and restore vibrancy to a community.

Walls just leased an extra 2.5 acres to increase the amount of food produced for Fresh Life Organics and Ivy Leaf Farms thanks to a grant she received from Kellogg's. Additionally, the two collaborated with Cropswap, an app developed in California that links customers and sustainable farms, to assist with the logistical aspects of box distribution. Customers use the app to place orders, make payments, and decide whether to have the box delivered to them or picked up at a predetermined location. Walls and Peaches have an additional chance to generate employment in the community through the relationship, as they are able to employ their own delivery drivers.

Walls and Peaches want to see Black Farmer Box become a model that other food desert communities can adopt. However, even with their combined efforts, they are aware that they cannot feed the entire Sunnyside community, so their main objective is to draw attention to the area in the hopes that a grocery store will be built there. Walls declared, "This shouldn't be our reality." "Believing that there can be only one grocery store serving more than 20,000 people is absurd."

People may help them in the interim by supporting the farmers in their local food desert communities and raising awareness of the issue. It will also help a great deal if consumers purchase 10% to 15% of their produce from urban farmers and gardeners.

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