



Using Scanner Data To Answer Food Policy Questions

Conference

**Wednesday, June 1 -
Thursday, June 2, 2011**

**Economic Research Service
1800 M Street, NW
Waugh Auditorium
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Thrifty Food Plan: Development and Use of Nielsen Data

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Thrifty Food Plan (TFP)

- Provides a healthy, minimal-cost meal plan that shows how a nutritious diet can be achieved with limited resources
- Used as basis for SNAP (food stamp) allotments
- 1 in 7 people receive SNAP





Dietary Standards of TFP

- **1997-2005 Dietary Reference Intakes**
(e.g. RDAs for vitamins)
- **2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans**
(e.g. saturated fat and cholesterol recommendations)
- **2005 USDA Food Guidance System intakes**
(e.g. fruit and vegetable recommendations)
- **Currently being updated to reflect 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans**



TFP Does Not Contain

- Food away from home
- Dietary supplements
- Alcohol





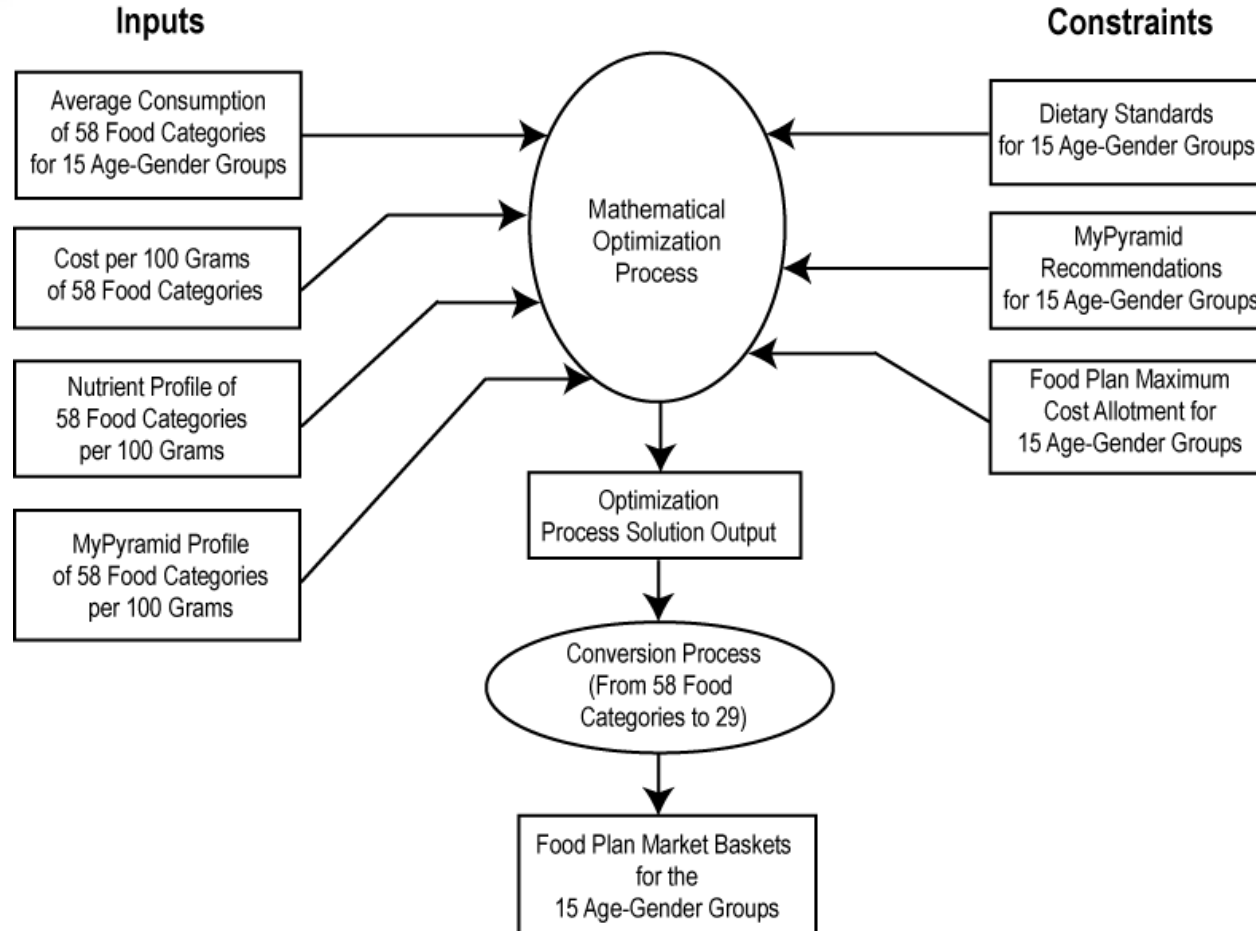
TFP Market Baskets

- Plan has 15 market baskets (for 15 age-gender groups) specifying the type and quantity of foods that people could consume at home to obtain a nutritious diet
- Ease of preparation and convenience factored in (e.g. frozen vegetables, ready-to-serve bread, canned beans)





Model





Example: Thrifty Food Plan for Male, Age 51-70

- Weekly cost (March 2011): \$44.40
- Market Basket (example items):
 - 2.1 lbs of whole-grain breads, rice, and pasta
 - 2.3 lbs of potatoes
 - 1.2 lbs of dark-green vegetables
 - 7.7 lbs of whole fruits
 - 11.0 lbs of lower fat and fat-free milk and yogurt
 - 1.0 lb of poultry
 - .05 lbs of sugars and candies, etc.



USDA Periodically Updates TFP Market Baskets

- To reflect latest dietary standards
- To reflect latest food consumption trends and food prices





Current TFP Based on

- 2001-02 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey: contains food consumption and nutrient content of food information
- 2001-02 Food Prices Database: based on Nielsen Homescan data
- For TFP, food prices paid by low-income households are used

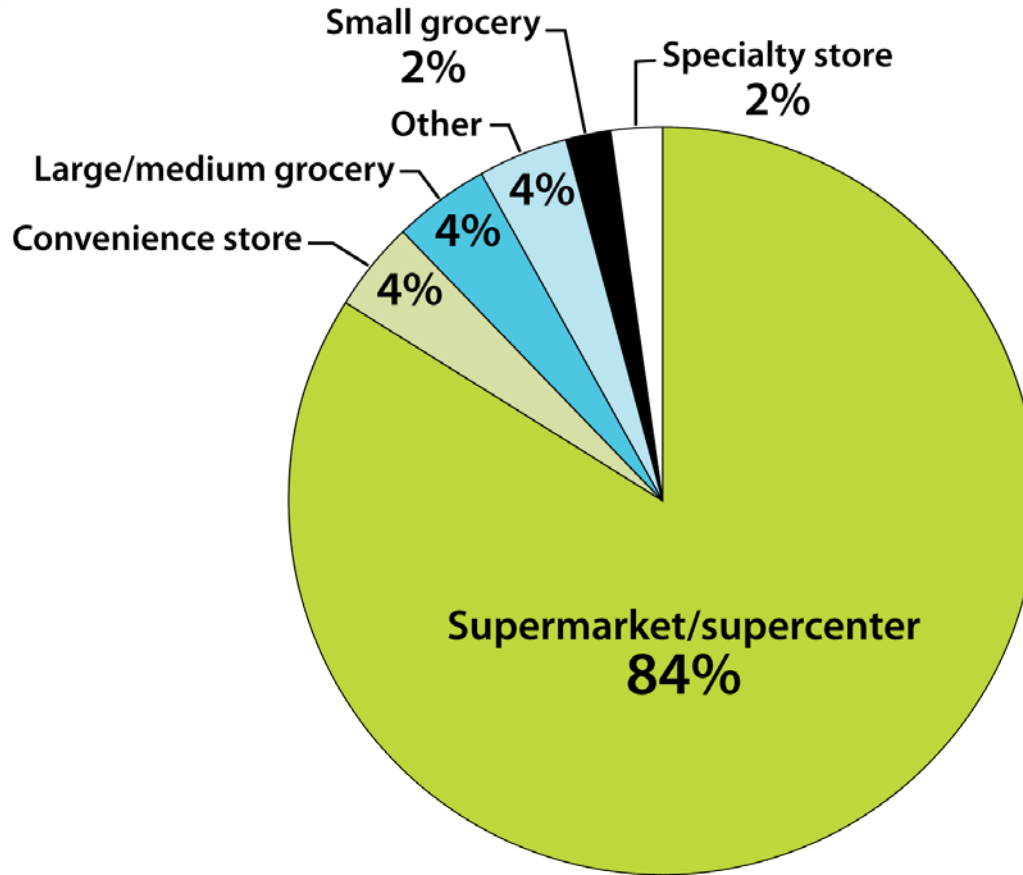


2001-02 Food Prices Database

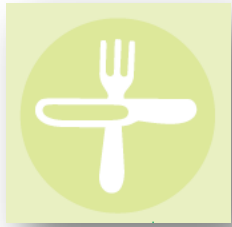
- NHANES dietary intake data merged with national food price data from Nielsen Homescan Panel
- Cooking and waste conversion factors applied
- All brands, sizes, and purchase occasions by households used in determining prices



Where SNAP (Food Stamp) Benefits Spent (2009)



Source: FNS, "Benefit Redemption Patterns in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program."



USDA Office of Inspector General Report

“TFP a reliable baseline for establishment of SNAP benefits.... While noting a lack of statistical basis for the food pricing data obtained through the A.C. Nielsen Homescan Reporting Service, we were unable to identify any better source for use in developing a food price database.”



TFP Cost Updates

- Plan updated monthly using Consumer Price Indexes
- Indexes for each food group
- Cost of Plan increasing at high rate in recent months



Future Plans

- Update TFP with 2007-08 National Health and Nutrition Examination data and 2009 Food Prices data
- Cost targets of the TFP will not change
- New dietary standards of TFP:
 - 1997-2010 Dietary Reference Intakes
 - 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
 - 2010 USDA Food Guidance System intakes