



2017 IOWA HUNGER SUMMIT

Iowans United in Fighting Hunger – At Home and Abroad
October 16, 2017 - Des Moines, Iowa

SECRETARIES OF AGRICULTURE

Moderator: Secretary Tom Vilsack

October 16, 2017 - 9:15 a.m.

Panel Members

Secretary Tom Vilsack	U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, 2009-2017
Secretary Dan Glickman	U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, 1995-2001
Secretary Ann Veneman	U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, 2001-2005
Secretary Mike Johanns	U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, 2005-2007
Secretary Ed Schafer	U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, 2008-2009

Panel Moderator

Tom Vilsack

We are here today to discuss a pretty important and significant issue, all of which the folks on this stage have had an integral in playing and trying to alleviate hunger. And what I thought I would do is start off with Dan Glickman, since he is the senior member of our team here, and have Dan talk for just a minute or so about the people who actually receive SNAP and food assistance, because I think there is a misunderstanding about exactly who benefits from SNAP. Dan.

Dan First of all, I want to thank Ken Quinn and your great governor, Tom Vilsack, who just did a spectacular job at USDA – longest serving secretary since James Wilson, and that meant another eight years, and Mr. Trump didn't offer you the job, nor probably would you have accepted it anyway, but in any event, thanks to Ken for his [inaudible]. I've just got to digress for one moment.

So the first thing I did overseas when I was Secretary is I went to the World Food Summit in Rome. It was in November of 1995, and we're sitting in a place like this, and it was very hot, and the Pope had spoken and Fidel Castro and President Clinton and a bunch of others. And all of a sudden, a similar group – I think they're the same people, actually – stood up, stripped naked – that's what I was expecting – and had on their



bodies... (of course, I didn't look) but had on their bodies "No Gene Beans and the Naked Truth." So after..., let's see, 1995 – it's after 22½ years and nothing's changed. And it was on CNN the next night, and CNN America properly blocked out the various private parts of the bodies of the people, but my parents called me that night, and they were very agitated, because it was all over the news. And my mother first got on, and she says, "I told you you shouldn't have taken that job." And then she said, "Your father wants to talk to you," and my father got on, and he says, "Tell me, what did it look like?" But I just, here we are, 22 years later in the great state of Iowa. So what a country we have, as we would say.

So I would just make three quick points if I can. Number one is that this is a bipartisan group of people up here. Issues of hunger and food and feeding hungry people, issues of food and agriculture generally are really the last bastion of nonpartisanship and bipartisanship. Wouldn't it be nice if our government would function in the same way we do and agriculture does every day without killing each other. And Ken's done a wonderful job of making... And you've had a great state Secretary of Agriculture, Bill Northey, here, who I've worked with. And so just the nonpartisanship, the bipartisanship of food and agriculture issues are very important. And even into today the congress is still very bipartisan when it comes to hunger issues and food issues generally.

The other thing I would say is that... Number two is, with all of our imperfections in America, we have the most comprehensive food security program in the world in the United States with our SNAP program and our WIC program and our summer feeding programs and our school feeding programs. I mean, this is something to be very proud of in America, that we are ahead of the game, and it's so much a part of our culture.

And the third thing about it is, as you look at people who are on SNAP but on a lot of the other feeding programs, they don't fit the stereotypes. Yes, we do have a lot of people at the very bottom of the economic ladder, a lot of handicapped people, a lot of seniors as they grow older, a lot of people who have lost their jobs in this area of globalization, and a huge number of families with small children. And most of these people don't stay on for very long – that's the thing. There's this kind of belief system that once you're on, you're on forever, treading water. It's just not the case. People don't want to be on these programs forever. They want jobs. They want opportunities for their children. And this is something that we've recognized on a bipartisan basis in the country and something that we should be very proud of.

Tom Thanks Dan. Ann, I hope being from California you didn't take offense to Craig Hill's comment about us having per mile more food production than any other state. And I'll let you rebut that if you wish. But what I'm interested in, coming from California, a tremendous producer of fruits and vegetables, as we look at SNAP families, as we look



at the nutrition assistance programs, how satisfied are you with the mix of food that is available and that people are purchasing with these benefits?

Ann I think this is a really important question, though I want to thank you also for inviting me and, Ambassador Quinn, thank you for hosting this great gathering. It's always great to be back in Iowa. And unfortunately, or fortunately, I should say, I didn't have any of those experiences when I went to the World Food Programme in Rome. But it is always important to look at the global food situation in the context of our overall food situation. So as Dan Glickman said, we have one of the most comprehensive systems in the world. We have the WIC program for infants and children and pregnant and lactating mothers, which is a very important program for small children and the development of children in this country.

One of the things... I mean, I've dealt with hunger in the U.N. as head of UNICEF. I've dealt with hunger in the U.S. as we oversaw all of these programs. And one of the things we know is that feeding small children, your brain development is in that first thousand days from conception to the first..., through the second era of life. And that can make such a difference in your overall development, which impacts your ability to learn in school and later earn as an adult. So that's one of the very important programs in addition to SNAP. We also have other programs, whether it's Food Banks and so forth at USDA, not to mention the school lunch and school breakfast programs.

When I was at USDA – and I left in early 2005 and then went to the U.N. – the feeding programs were about 50% of the USDA budget. Today I think they're over 70%, maybe even more, and I think that shows the growth of these programs and the importance of these programs.

So while we really prescribe the kind of foods you can get, it's a truly nutrition program in the WIC program. We don't in the SNAP program. And more and more people are saying – why can you buy anything you want in the SNAP program? Shouldn't we limit the kinds of things you can buy, like sodas and so forth?

Shouldn't you begin to look at the fact that obesity in this country is growing? Last week the CDC put out new numbers on obesity. I mean, I was shocked. Adult obesity in this country is now 39.8%. That's almost 40% in 2016. In 1980 it was 15%. In 2000 it was 30.5%, and last week the new number is 39.8%. Obesity – that's overweight. That's obesity in this country of adults. So we have got... We're paying for this as taxpayers in Medicaid, in Medicare for... – if people aren't putting the right food in their bodies, we're paying it in diseases such as heart disease, diabetes. All of the non-communicable diseases are much more prevalent where we have greater obesity. And I think we need to begin to say – if the government's going to be paying Medicaid, shouldn't we be looking at what we're putting in our bodies through the food stamp program..., the SNAP program. We've changed it to the Supplemental (underscore) Nutrition



Assistance Program. We should be talking much more about nutrition and not just hunger, because Nutrition is really the key word.

Tom And we are going to return to that topic, but I just want to give every member of the panel an opportunity. Mike, I want to turn to you, knowing that you are closely related to the Lincoln, Nebraska, Food Bank – and by closely related, I mean very closely related. Your son-in-law runs the place. Talk a little bit about not just the government programs but the important role that Food Banks and pantries are playing in trying to address this issue.

Mike Yeah, I've got very positive feelings about the Food Bank, not just because actually it's my daughter is married to the son of a gentleman by the name of Scott Young. Some of you probably... I don't know if Scott is here, but Scott runs the Lincoln Food Bank, so we have that close family connection.

But here's a thought I would offer. Certainly, I could talk to you about the important role that Food Banks play and the gaps they fill. And if there is anyone out there that really is kind of the broker of food into our system, you would look at pantries and you would look at Food Banks and say – Hey, that's such an important role for them. All of you, I think, are aware of that. You have worked around Food Banks, you've worked around food pantries and you've seen the evidence of what I just said.

But I want to offer another thought, and this actually comes from a conversation that I had with Scott, my wife Stephanie and I had with Scott, many months ago. We were sitting with him in his office, and we were talking about poverty, and we were talking about food insecurity and all of the things that kind of come from a family that is impoverished or an individual that is impoverished and what's the dynamic there. And he was talking about the fact that folks in human services in Lincoln had joined forces and actually sat down together and kind of convened this effort to try to get a better understanding of what poverty was about in that community of Lincoln, Nebraska.

And it was remarkable what he was relating to us, and I won't take you into a deep dive of that, but those of you who are associated with this cause or are associated with pantries and food banks, I want to plant a seed today. What if you did the same thing in your county and your community and you reached out to people who are working in this area? Because I think there is an enormously strong connection between substance abuse and hunger issues, between mental health and hunger issues, between homelessness and hunger issues. And so sometimes I think we look at this and we say to ourselves – if we could just get food into that family's household, we will solve the problem – when in fact that's only a piece of the problem.

And so as you think about the takeaways from this conference or from this panel discussion, I hope one of the takeaways is that you bring together people who are



involved in these various disciplines – and don't forget agriculture; that's where it all starts – and make sure that the right people are at the table and start looking at these issues in a systematic way. Don't look at hunger in isolation. There are other things going on, I believe, that are intersecting with that issue, and try to take more of a holistic approach to how you're going to address this, how you're going to solve these issues. And again make sure that you've got this collaborative effort, because it is going to be a collaborative effort on your part that will really make the difference.

Tom Great point, and I think that young people in college campuses, in high schools, FFA, 4-H, they can play a role as well in encouraging and incenting a community conversation. Ed, I'm going to turn to you for just a second to talk about a circumstance that we've recently confronted in this country – and we every year have a disaster of one sort or another, and this year we seemed to have had quite a few horrific disasters. What role does the SNAP program, do the feeding programs play in a disaster relief situation; and what steps do we need to take to make sure that at the end of the day food gets to folks who are hit by a disaster?

Ed Yes, and thank you, Mr. Secretary, and I appreciate the opportunity. I would like to follow on, to start with, a little bit with Secretary Glickman's comment about food production and the fact that the United States of America has the best food system. You know, a billion people are undernourished in the world – you know, five million kids die every year because they don't have enough to eat in the world. And it really is the United States of America food production that provides nutrition for the world. We do provide..., agriculture provides enough nutrition, over 3,000 per person per day to keep people nourished, and yet we don't get it done. And it's a distribution issue or political issues, various government issues that are put in place.

But the point is, it isn't the production. We can argue about whether California or Iowa has the best production, but it isn't a production issue. You know, these are policy issues, these are directional issues. And I would also like to point out that the United States of America, the citizens of our country, provide over one half, over 50% of the world food aid every year. So we are the purveyors of food and nutrition across the world, and yet we have hungry people right here in our streets at home. And that becomes real apparently in times of tragedy, in times of disaster, and how USDA and agriculture plays a role in that is pretty amazing.

You think, well, the first people in when people don't have power, when they don't have homes, when they're displaced, the first people in are the Red Cross, and the Red Cross creates meals and delivers them. USDA is usually the people, or agriculture, has to get the food to the Red Cross to prepare those meals. And we fortunately have a massive distribution system in the United States. USDA, for instance, can harness the Air Force that we use to fight fires, the Forest Service, and deliver food to places that don't have it. When you don't have refrigeration, you don't have a way to keep food; you need to have



a supply that comes in fast. And you have people that are impacted that just have no ability to gain food. And they aren't necessarily income levels. They're all levels, they're all education levels, they're all people who are displaced and gone, and really it is agriculture then that provide, that comes in and especially the United States Department of Agriculture, where you can stage water, stage food, make sure that it's delivered to people who need it and again as an example of how to provide nutrition and healing to people by agriculture and the food that we produce.

Tom Mike.

Mike Ed's comments so on target, and there is one other thing I wanted to mention. Actually, the Secretary of Agriculture has the power to change the rules for the SNAP program in a disaster situation so people qualify. And you're a hundred percent right—you tend to think of, you know, the people restoring electricity, etc. But probably the first people into a community to try to get things stabilized would be USDA people in some form or fashion. It's amazing the power that the Secretary of Agriculture has in dealing with disasters; it's just remarkable.

Tom I want to take Ann's point, which I think is a potentially contentious one and get the reaction of the panel. Ann, you know that when you confront poverty advocates, they will essentially indicate to you that there's a concern about the notion of restricting SNAP, because it could potentially stigmatize, and we're trying to get away from that notion of stigmatizing people with the program. So is it realistic—to the panel—is it realistic to restructure SNAP in a way that would prevent people from using SNAP benefits for certain items? And if so, where would you start, and how would you do it? Don't all speak at once. It's open to the panel.

Dan Okay. This is a real complicated issue, and H. L. Mencken once said, "For every complicated problem, there is a simple and a wrong solution." Okay. This is a program that provides nutritious food but also was historically based on getting quantities of food, because when people are hungry and starving, it was calories that you needed to put in your stomach. And then the nature of the calories kind of took a second place historically. And over the years, through marketing on television and through other things, we see a lot of people, SNAP and non-SNAP recipients, eating a lot of calories, dense foods, often advertised on television in very glorified ways.

And the second factor is that we have the highest, fastest-growing part of our federal budget is healthcare. Medicare and Medicaid are the fastest-growing parts of our budget. A lot of it is because we're getting older and living longer, thank goodness; but a lot of it is because, as we get older or live longer or are poor, we get diseases. Often these are chronic diseases. Often they're diseases caused by factors like eating the wrong foods, not having enough exercise and environmental factors as well. So it's Type 2



diabetes, it's heart disease, it's arthritis, it's cardiac problems and that kind of thing; and we're finding more and more of that in children and all through the society.

So one of the discussion points is, while the WIC program does have a prescribed food group that you can use for pregnant women and infants, the SNAP program, with rare exceptions, doesn't restrict food purchases. And there are a lot of reasons why. The retailers haven't wanted to do it. The anti-hunger communities have been worried that it stigmatizes people who would find that as an impediment and embarrassing. And after all, why should anybody be treated differently in this country when it comes to buying food?

The other side of the argument is the government is spending tens and tens of billions of dollars every year to provide funds for people who need the food to survive. And if the evidence shows that those people are perhaps more prone to some of these diseases and it's costing the taxpayers giant sums of money, then maybe the government should look at, well, should you be able to take sugar-sweetened beverages or not, or other kinds of things. It's a really tough problem, because it involves gigantic judgment calls about what's good for you and what isn't good for you. And I'm not on SNAP, and I eat lots of crap—I'll have to tell you that. It's just part of my life, okay.

So we all have this human choice of things to buy and what to eat, but when you're talking about vulnerable populations, this is a debate that we need to have. And there may be other ways to skin this cat. Tom Vilsack has been very active in incentives to get people to eat better through encouraging more fresh fruits and vegetables in the retail chain and through farmers' markets and that thing and SNAP education. But this is a fundamental issue that we need to talk about. I'm sorry to go on for so long, but I wanted to try to give the whole picture if I could.

Mike You know, every secretary that has tried to deal with this has realized just how difficult it is to define the foods that people can access with their SNAP program. And then you get into literally issues of freedom. Do people have the right to go into the grocery store and make choices about what they're going to do? Now, we certainly have limitations on alcohol and tobacco and those sorts of things, but actually prescribing the individual food item is a very difficult proposition.

I'll give you example of the other piece of this, which is actually kind of a political piece. It's not really political, but it shows what the forces of a state can do. I'm in the senate, I'm sitting in the Appropriations Committee hearing; a United States senator offers a resolution on an appropriations bill that says that SNAP won't ban this specific food item. And all of a sudden in the appropriations committee, we're deciding what are the best food items for people to decide—no science-based discussion. It's just the reality is, in that senator's home state they grew this specific food item in abundance, and they want to make sure that there's a market for that. That would be like saying, well, you



can overdo it with pork. I would guess Chuck Grassley would have a few things to say about that. And those are the issues that you run into.

So here's what I think we are coming up short on. I think we're coming up short on educating people as to what good food choices are, and that's always kind of the last thing you talk about in the budget process or at the ag committee hearing, is – Is there any money left over to do some pilot education programs? And so you scrape together a few dollars on a nationwide program that quite honestly doesn't go far enough. But I think we can demonstrate results, that if you give people good information about what they should do with their diet, in most cases they're going to use that information to make good decisions, because it's a limited resource. SNAP, if you're on SNAP, it's a limited resource, so you're going to try to make good decisions about what's available for your family.

So I tend to be of the school that says – look, a certain amount of restriction, yeah, it's appropriate, but if you think you're going to solve this problem with a total restriction approach, you're not. You have to build in an educational approach that has a broader base to it than what we're doing today and actually give people good information on how to make good decisions about family diet.

Tom Okay, and so we do incentives, we do education, a few restrictions – are you satisfied with that? Can we move on to the next topic, or do you want to wade in?

Ann No. I think let me just make a few comments about what has been said. I think the issue of having you actually look at this much more as a nutrition program as opposed to a food program is extremely important. They didn't call it the SAP program, they called it the SNAP program. And there are these arguments about stigma, but when I was Deputy Secretary, we did the first pilot of EBT, electronic Benefit Transfer. Today it's all credit card based. You don't know if anybody's... You don't see the stamps come out anymore. There's no stigma of that anymore.

They talk about stigma. Well, you'd have to separate your product. Well, you do that anyway. Most people that go to the grocery store buy other items, like toothpaste, like toilet paper, things you can't..., that you separate out anyway. And clearly it happens with WIC. You can limit the amount, the kinds of food. We do it in the WIC program.

Now, I think one of the issues that I hear... And I've sat down with hunger advocates and said – why is it that you're so opposed? And one of the things is there is a strong concern – and I think this is a valid concern – that if you cut what you can buy, they're going to cut the budget. I think we ought to just have it on the table, no budget cut if you have restriction.

So the question is where do you start, and I think you start by... Because this so politically charged, you're not going to make huge changes in the Farm Bill this year on



this, but I think it is time to start with some pilot programs. Let's look at Michael Bloomberg suggested at one point, went to the USDA and wanted to limit soft drinks in the food stamp programs as a pilot. It was denied, but more and more people are saying – let's put the parameters; let's have congress say that such pilots can take place. That would be one place to start.

Harvard University, the Health and Poverty Law Center, has just put out a new proposal to do a pilot in the Farm Bill on individuals with serious health conditions and medically prescribed nutrition, and to put that under a program like this. Because so many people... One of the things we know is that obesity actually corresponds with poverty as well – there's higher obesity rates – and therefore you have higher non-communicable disease rates, whether it's diabetes or heart disease or whatever.

So if you're income insecure, you're probably food insecure, but also these people may not be buying and taking their medicines, because there's usually a co-pay. So there is this big push now to potentially create a pilot for actual medical nutrition for people who have some of these conditions, and they actually will in many cases correspondence with those in need. So I think that's the kind of thing we also need to look at.

I couldn't agree more on the education side, but I think we have to admit that one of the things that's happened in this country is people no longer know how to prepare food. People don't know how to cook anymore. I don't know how many of you saw the Jamie Oliver segment where he went into the home and started pulling out all of the things out of the freezer, you know, all prepared foods in the freezer, all of which were very high caloric. And he said, "Don't you ever cook your family vegetables?" No frozen vegetables or [inaudible]" She goes, "I don't know how to cook." And the whole family was over 300 pounds, I mean, including the kids. But that's the kind of thing we also have to recognize is, people don't understand not only just what good nutrition is but how to prepare it. So we need massive education on good nutrition.

We've seen now, and I think the other thing that's going on is we see now a big effort on taxes on soft drinks. We have two or three places in California where we have it now. Mexico did it countrywide, and they've seen the consumption go down, probably not so much from the tax itself as from the fact that there's been so much publicity around why around you shouldn't be drinking it. So yesterday, I think it was yesterday or the day before, we saw Chicago fail. They agreed not to put it into the city council.

So there's an article in *The New York Times* this morning that I looked at. It says a 20-ounce cola contains 65 grams of sugar, which is about twice as much as the daily required amount. And they basically said... – I'm just quoting this thing – said, "Sugary drinks pose a major public health threat. Nationally, we spent \$245 billion on disabilities on diabetes in 2012. By 2030 it is estimated that the cost for direct medical costs of heart



disease will be \$818 billion. Both of these are associated with the consumption of sugary drinks." I'm just quoting you out of today's *New York Times*.

But I think it's significant to look at the concerns that we're now seeing. These huge rises in obesity, it's not just this country, it's around the world. We now have more people around the world dying of non-communicable than communicable diseases. This is a major shift in the world. And so if we don't really begin to pay attention to nutrition and not just hunger, I think we're going to continue to see this as a global problem.

Tom I'm sure we could talk about this particular aspect for the entire time. But, Ed, I want to shift to you, if I can, to talk about another controversial issue, which is whether or not there needs to be tighter restrictions on who can receive SNAP, especially those who are able-bodied adults who do not have dependency, don't have the disabilities that Dan talked about, aren't senior citizens. Tell us a little bit about that issue from your perspective as a former governor responsible for administering the program and what the challenges and difficulties might be in trying to further restrict access to SNAP for able-bodied adults without dependents.

Ed The able-bodied adult is again a very complex issue, because who decides who's able and who isn't? But there are always people who, when you're spending taxpayer dollars on a supplemental nutrition system, that, you know, who is going to access the food and who isn't?

One of the things we did in the 1990s in the Clinton administration was the Welfare Reform Task Force, and I served on that task force. And that was always the issue – who gets it, who doesn't? And one of the ways we sorted out that reform effort was to say there probably are three groups of people who are recipients of welfare programs and especially food and nutrition programs. One is the person who is able-bodied, who can go to work and who just by tradition or history or habit just doesn't get into that workforce and relies on the system. We then said – they should go to work. They should be able to, given some time, say – okay, what do you need to get to work? Do you need some training, some education, a ride to work or whatever the case may be? Let's get them into the workforce.

The second piece is the temporary one, you know, somebody that has a temporary situation either with health, with lifestyle, whatever the case may be. And we need to have programs that help them transition through that tough time, and that's important. And the third thing is, there are people who from birth issues, from physical issues, mental issues, illnesses, diseases, that we always will need to provide that nutrition for. So we tried to sort it out in that three different ways. And in doing that, it allowed us to shape the reform effort to say – well, you know, for the people who can work, they should go work. The people who are needing temporary help, whether it's some education or just time to heal or whatever the case may be, we'd give them some



supplemental issues and then move them by social contracts or whatever the case may be, into the workforce. And then we have to make sure that we fully understand, separate funding for those who always need it.

So that was kind of the way we did it in the '90s. I think we're still facing that today. One of the efforts that came out of that was a work requirement. You had to have a work requirement at least seeking a job or finding a job, to get the benefits. I think that effort was relaxed in the previous administration, or in the last few years that effort has been relaxed. But importantly, I think for the taxpayers' part of this, to efficiency segregate... Well, segregate is not the right word. I apologize. But to officially find those people and get them who are capable and making sure we take care of those who are not.

Tom So we're going to go with Dan and with Mike, and then I've got a comment. Dan.

Dan Well, a couple things. I was in congress so long ago that I was involved in the 1977 authorization of the Food Stamp Act. Many of you weren't even born then, but let me tell you a little bit about it. It used to be that you had to buy your food stamps. You didn't get them – you had to pay for them. So you might get a hundred dollars' worth of food stamps, but you had to pay \$40 for that. That was called the purchase requirement, and we got rid of that. And then over the years we've defined eligibility, so housing... You want to make sure that people have an automobile to be able to go to work, and numbers of children make a big difference. And the states have been given a lot of authority under the law to deal with issues like the work requirement, how it's administered and this kind of thing.

But let's go back to the point. The overwhelming majority of people on the SNAP program are not able-bodied people who can find work. The overwhelming majority are families with either small children or people who are disabled or the elderly. And most of them are in and out of the program over about a three-month period of time. Yeah, there are some slip through.

But we have a second problem, and that has to do with jobs in this country. It shows you how holistic these problems are. If you don't have jobs for people... Right now I think the numbers are about 24 or 25,000 for a family of four or five to be eligible for food stamps. Well, unless you're trained or you have a job or you haven't been laid off because some factory has moved somewhere else in the country, it is very difficult to find the kind of employment, for a lot of people, especially that have children, who need this kind of assistance.

There's a movie I saw fairly recently. It's called the Florida Project. It's going to come out soon. It shows you about a woman who lives in the housing projects in Florida with her children. It's just an awful case of what can happen to people whose lives totally disintegrate. If it weren't for the feeding programs, they would be gone.



So I guess my bottom line in all this stuff is that, yes, able-bodied people ought to work if they can find jobs and if they can find training and if they're not disincentivized by getting that training and not being able to get the assistance during the process. Because the problem of employment in this country is... You talked about the problem of opioid addiction or the problem of mental health, and other things fit in here, so do the general economic issues in America. I mean, we've seen the food stamp numbers come down some in recent months, because the unemployment rate has come down some. But it's still not come down as fast as the unemployment rate, and that's because it's just really hard for a lot of people in the lower and lower-middle income areas to find the kind of work that would give them the incentive so they could get off the program. Because I still contend, most people don't want to be on these programs. Most people want to get off of them as fast as they can.

Tom Mike

Mike Dan's point is a good one. If you sift through the data on the SNAP program, you will see that once you identify the disabled, elderly, the families with children, that's about 70% of the program. So you have about 30%, still many millions of people, who don't have dependents; they are able-bodied, whatever that means, and therefore the natural conclusion you would reach from that is that, under those circumstances, no dependents, etc., they should work or they should be in job training.

And here's what I would say to the people in the room. This one is important to pay attention to, because I do see this as a growing debate – what to do with the able-bodied people who are receiving SNAP benefits. I do think this will be a point of discussion as we start looking at the next Farm Bill and policymakers start sorting through what that next Farm Bill will look like. And I do think you're going to see more and more pressure to put additional work requirements or training requirements or whatever on this.

The point I wanted to make, and it kind of brings you back to a takeaway that I offered in my first comments. This is a significant opportunity at the local level, the county level, the community level, to bring people together and ask yourselves the question – What's going on in our community that we have able-bodied people that for whatever reason ended up on SNAP? And, Dan, I don't think disagree with you. I don't think people are looking typically for a way to get on the system. I think they're looking for a way to get off and become independent.

But here's the problem. You have people who are able-bodied, and can they make it all work on minimum wage? And the answer to that is, probably not. It's just not enough to cover things. But again, that's a question I think is best asked and answered at the local level. That's where you can have a real impact on this in trying to figure out what's going on in your community or county that you end up with this population that I believe is going to get so much attention in the next Farm Bill. And then ask yourself –



what is it we can do that would help solve that problem in our community? It's very hard to solve from a Washington perspective, and you will end up with rules that quite honestly don't work in your community, because one size doesn't fit all. So I'd really encourage you to pay attention to this one and maybe get very proactive on this one.

Tom So I have to jump in on this. First of all, it's important for everybody to understand how the benefits are calculated. They're based on a Thrifty Food Plan calculation that was developed I don't know when – decades ago. That Thrifty Food Program suggests and indicates that people spend on average an hour and a half a day preparing meals. Ann Veneman basically has suggested that that's no longer the case. It also presupposes that people who are receiving SNAP consume around 20 pounds of beans a week. No one consumes 20 pounds of beans a week. So it begs to be reviewed, and I think if it were to be reviewed and aligned with food prices as they are today, you would probably see the need for not fewer dollars but more dollars in the program, which is going to be tough in this environment.

On the able-bodied dependents, we need to remember that the states have a responsibility here, and sometimes this I forgotten. People think that this program is administered by the federal government and the federal government alone. That is not the case. The administration of this program is essentially assigned to states, and the states have the responsibility of administering appropriately and making sure that people don't take advantage of the system.

So to Ed's point, if you are able-bodied and do not have a dependent, you have to be looking for work. You have to be securing training or education or you have to be seeking a job, or your benefits are limited 3 months out of every 36 – you get three months of benefits every three years. Now, states can request... It's states that can request a waiver, and during the course of the recession, many states actually said – hey, we can't find jobs for these people, because we have rising unemployment. So they were granted the ability to waive that requirement for a period of time. Now, many states that requested that are now beginning to say our employment situation has improved, and we want to remove that waiver so we're back to 3 months out of every 36 months.

Here is the real issue here, to Mike's point. I think folks at the local and state level do have a responsibility here, and the responsibility is to have better coordination between a state's workforce development efforts and economic development efforts and the state's human services efforts in administering the program. One hand knows where the jobs are being created and what kind of jobs are being created. The other hand knows the people who need the jobs.

And what we have tried to do is to look at states that are doing a particularly good job of this, of marrying the two, in order to get these able-bodied folks the employment that most of them seek. And we had ten pilots in this last Farm Bill, ten states that are



basically going through a very interesting set of programs to take a look at how we might get a veteran, for example, who's homeless, who's got a bit of hard luck – how do we get them off SNAP into a job? And there are a lot of barriers, and these programs are now looking at removing these barriers. Also the State of Washington is mentoring a number of states, because they do a particularly good job of marrying the two. So it is a federal issue, but absolutely the states and the local communities have a direct responsibility in this respect. And so to Mike's point, we all can make a difference in this, and I think we should encourage our local and state governments to do so.

Mike Tom, you mentioned the magic word here, and I just want to underscore it, because I think it's important. And I don't think it's important – it's critically important. I sat on the veterans' committee for all six years that I was in the United States Senate. We have all worked on veterans' issues. Folks, I'm going to say something I think you know in your heart, and that's – Don't forget our veterans. I wish I could say every veteran comes home and life is rosey and they go back to work and everything is good. We know that's not the case. And whatever we can do to help veterans, I just think, whether it's Iowa or Nebraska or California, whoever, put that at the top of your list. Because, boy, there's just too many young men and women who come home, and the world is just a very, very difficult place for them. And after the service that they've provided, I just think we owe to them to make sure that whatever you're doing at the state and local level, as Tom and I have suggested, that you've got veterans right there front and center, because they need that help.

Dan Unrelated, but it goes back to your point about coordination and a little bit to Ann's point. The medical profession is absent without leave in this issue of nutrition. Because virtually none of them are trained in nutrition, or they don't get compensated for helping people here. And it's not just doctors, it's healthcare providers, it's nutritionists, it's dietitians. So in the way of you talking about coordinating locally, a lot of people can actually improve their health and become more productive citizens and get into the workforce again if there were also coordination with, whether it's the Iowa Medical Association or a variety of healthcare providers. And it is like so stovepiped like you couldn't believe. I've talked to my doctor about – do you talk to your people about what they ought to be eating? “No, I don't have time to do that? It's not in my bailiwick.” So this whole issue of coordination – you've talked about it in employment, in veterans – it's also true on the health side.

Tom Two topics – either one, pick what you'd like to talk about. And we've got about 24 minutes left. We want to leave a few minutes for a question or two from the audience. One of two topics – food waste and its impact on hunger. Or, the private sector's responsibility in terms of food deserts, convenience stores, adequately stocking the kinds of fruits and vegetables and so forth we've talked about. Either one of those topics – anybody want to take either one of them? Ann.



Ann Yeah, I think the issue of food waste is a huge one. You know, the estimates vary, but around the world the estimates are somewhere between 30 to 40% of waste. In the developing world it's more about storage, insect infestations and so forth. In the developed world where we live, it is much more about food waste from restaurants, from grocery stores, product that's left in the field. This is an issue that I think is growing in importance.

There's a number of startups that are really focusing now on food waste, so I'm working with a couple of them. One's called Full Harvest, which is working with farmers to get the product that's left in the field that doesn't meet grade, tying them in with people that are making, you know, juice or baby food or other things that are going to process the fruit or vegetable. That's one way to attack it. There's another one called Ugly Produce that's working on a similar thing that's getting it out there into the farmers' market, grocery stores and so forth. Because we have to read these marketing orders. We really restrict the kind of thing you can actually put in the grocery stores so that the grocery stores have this similarity of quality.

I'm also working with a little startup organization that's taking the waste out of grocery stores—so it's the meat trimmings, it is the expired produce, and some, mostly not processed product but some of that. And it runs it through an enzyme process that's much like what your stomach does, and it processes it into organic fertilizer to be sold back to the farmers, and they're also processing it into animal feed for pork and poultry primary at this point. But there is a lot going on in this space now. Also in the developing world, there's a lot of people who are developing new storage systems that are low cost and yet very highly effective to address the issue of food waste.

So I think this is an issue that deserves a lot of attention. When you're looking at 30 to 40% of our food that's wasted, plus the environmental impacts of the food that has been going into the landfill, it puts off different gases. I mean, there is an environmental impact to all of this as well.

Mike Ann's points are so on target. For those of you who are interested in the international piece of this, I think every Secretary up here has been to parts of the world—Africa comes to mind, but there's other parts of the world—where we're doing some pretty good things with production. We're working with local farmers, whether it's the Gates Foundation or whoever, they're improving production, and so you can see progress there. Where the progress has been much, much more difficult, it's—how do you get that food from there to there where it can be consumed, etc. And that one is really complicated. It's refrigeration, it's roads, it's infrastructure, it's all of the things that you can possibly imagine that go into bringing that food from field to somebody who can use it. And so consequently, you end up with this massive amount of waste. I sit on the Millennium Challenge Board that was appointed by President Obama a year or so ago, and it's not unusual that when we look at a project for a given country, we are looking at



infrastructure improvements. Why? Because that's where we see we can have the biggest bang for the buck, is improving that road system or water system or whatever. So I just think those issues are critical to address. That's what's going to be a very important key to developing a systematic approach to dealing with hunger on a more worldwide basis versus a localized basis.

Tom Ed, Dan, either one of you?

Dan Two things. With modern computers and technology and smartphones, one of the problems is, retailers and merchandisers are able to do just in time inventories much better than they ever used to. So there is not going to be as much surplus out there, which is going to... We talked about that a little bit, but it's going to create a lot of challenges for the Feeding America network, and it's more packaged goods than it's with fresh produce, but so that really is going to take a lot of our thinking.

On the issue food access, okay, so right now one company sells about 23 to 24% of all the groceries in America – Walmart. Now, it may be that Amazon equals Walmart within ten years, who knows? And I don't know if they're going to put up Whole Foods in distressed areas of this country. But I suspect, with social responsibility, with the use of smartphones and with the empowerment of consumers, we're going to just have to prevail on the private sector working with communities to do a lot more to get fresh fruits and vegetables and healthier produce, dairy products into markets all over the country. It's beginning to happen, actually, in smaller communities. But the fact is, this business is changing rapidly. The whole delivery of food, the supermarket chains of the future – 20 years from now we may not even have supermarkets anymore. You may order everything online. Everybody – and that's one of the great equalizers – almost everybody is into the social media world, rich, poor and in between. The question is – what can that world do to help the problem you just raised?

Tom Everybody connected to the Internet in North Dakota and remote areas, it's not going to be a problem. Amazon is going to come out to remote areas in Iowa and North Dakota.

Ed Good roads, and they can deliver it, and you can get on the Internet, and they can buy it. And, yeah, and drones to deliver it, too. I'd like to go back to one thing about the jobs issue and the nutrition programs. We're talking about North Dakota, my home state, and we have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. And we have thousands and thousands of jobs available. And the point isn't in our state today creating jobs – the jobs are there. The point is getting people into those jobs. And I think that the food stamp program that has a very well developed system of evaluating people and incomes and things like that, I think we can use that SNAP program to figure out those barriers of going to work. And we don't do a good enough job about that today. And often it is training or some education. Sometimes it's just transportation. Sometimes it's just habit, and you can have mentorship programs and internship programs to get people into the



habit of working. We have so many barriers for people to actually take those jobs, and we just overlook them. And I think we can use the program that we have to help develop, identify those people and identify the solutions.

Dan Just one more quick, and then I'll stop and won't talk ever again. That's a promise. Okay, under your leadership in the Department and the congress has done this – production of farm products is becoming a lot more flexible. It used to be you couldn't grow apples if you had a wheat base. You were prohibited from doing that. You couldn't grow strawberries, because the folks in California wouldn't let you do it; and if you did it, you'd lose your entire base of wheat or corn or cotton. Now with changes in the risk management system, we're beginning to be able to produce a lot more products nationally. That should provide some benefits, hopefully.

Tom We're going to open this up, but I want just a very quick response from the panel. Do you think it's a good idea to divide and separate the nutrition programs from the farm support programs? Yes or no on a Farm Bill, future Farm Bill?

Dan No.

Ed No.

Ann No.

Mike No.

Tom Okay, that's unanimous. I think I can speak for the entire panel to tell you that our collective view is that if you were to separate those, you would find it incredibly difficult to get a Farm Bill passed. Does anybody disagree with that?

Q&A Session

Tom Okay, all right. So we've got 14 minutes left. We've got a hand right up here. We've got a microphone.

Q I wish there were more coordination at the federal level, because we all know people who stayed on the food program because they can earn some income, but then they can't afford to pay for insurance. And so somehow there has to be some coordination with the healthcare for those who are trying to become food secure.

Tom Okay. Well, I don't think anybody disagrees with that. Obviously, that gets into a very contentious set of issues today over the Affordable Care Act and its future and whether or not there's going to be that coordination. But again there are opportunities, I think, for



state and local governments to come up with ideas about how better to coordinate. I mean, most of the good ideas in my view generate from the bottom up, and usually the top down doesn't work particularly well. So that's another opportunity, I think, for the local and state folks to get engaged in this debate to see if there is a way in which you can better coordinate.

Just a second. Somebody's going to give you the microphone, and whoever has the microphone gets to ask the question. There we go, so everybody can hear it.

Q Thanks for your input this morning. How can policies change the food environment, and can we learn something from the changes that have taken place with smoking, there's been massive advances there in reduction of smoking, through policy and taxes/

Dan Well, yes. First of all, the insurance industry was very involved in that whole issue. So, yeah, the states got involved and the federal government got involved in terms of who could smoke and increasing the age level. Now some stores won't even sell cigarettes at all – CVS is one. The insurance industry had a lot to do with it, because they found that if you smoked, you wouldn't live as long, so you'd get rated. And a lot of companies, the private sector then established a lot of wellness programs. And it's been an incentive for people to not smoke and to live better. So this whole area offers enormous opportunities to actually encourage people to take better care of themselves.

Tom But doesn't it require the healthcare system to transition from a sick care system to a wellness and prevention system? I mean, that hasn't really happened much.

Dan Not very much, a little bit. And where the private sector has gotten involved (a lot of them are self-insured), they do a better job of doing this than a lot of the other insurance companies.

Mike The other thing I would just offer, really in all due respect, it's a little bit of a clumsy comparison. You know, I smoked at one point in my life and came to the realization I wasn't going to live very long if I continued to smoke. It wasn't – hey, Mike, you can get by smoking 12 cigarettes a day versus 20 or 40 or 60. It was an either/or proposition – you quit or you don't quit. You don't have that kind of human choice with nutrition. You're going to eat, and there are certain foods we grew up with that we probably enjoy, and so it's just a much more complex human dynamic.

Tom Well, it is on this access issue. I mean, the reality is, we have food deserts. The reality is that in many remote areas today they're serviced by convenience stores that have very limited choice. And the reality is that we need to do more education in terms of cooking and preparing meals and getting back to that day when you had three square meals. We tried to do this with the "My Plate." Frankly, when I became secretary, we had the food pyramid. You all had the food pyramid. I literally tried to understand that food



pyramid, because I figured I'd get asked about it. I just couldn't... It didn't get through to my head.

Dan No one understood it very well.

Tom So we developed the My Plate, and I get the My Plate, you know, half fruits and vegetables, the other half carbs and protein, a little dairy on the side – that made sense to me. And I think it's an education process, and it's a marketing issue as well. We get inundated with ads, right? So it's a combination of a healthcare system that reforms itself, the private sector who understands the importance long term to their survival in terms of productivity, worker health, reduced healthcare costs, and some personal responsibility on our part to better understand how we can make better choices. Who's got the microphone?

Q Good morning. Food shaming is an enormous issue throughout the country and in our state as well; 41% of our Iowa kids are on free and reduced lunch. That's deplorable to me. That makes no sense in a state that is feeding the world. So what would you suggest in terms of solutions to address this food shaming that is occurring in our schools where kids are actually having trays taken away from them. They are made to feel different because they are on free and reduced lunch. What are your suggestions? What has worked in other places? We've been looking at free lunch for all, which some cities have adopted. Is that working? And then how do we make that quality of school lunch better?

Tom Well, let me try to respond to a couple of those questions. First of all, there are more and more school districts that are using community eligibility as a way of essentially creating and eliminating the paperwork that's involved in having people distinguish between free, reduced and fully paid. And I think we're seeing more and more school districts understand that it's in their long-term best interests in terms of reducing the shaming issue but also saving money in terms of administrative cost, getting into that system.

In terms of improving the quality of the meals, I think we've taken a step forward with the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act that was passed in 2010 that established certain criteria and certain requirements. Now, there's been a little pushback on that by local school districts. There's been some flexibility provided. And I hope and believe that we've taken several steps forward. We might take a step or two back, but I think we're headed in the right direction. I think school districts understand the importance of this. And while most school districts still use some kind of commercial food preparation process that delivers food to the schools, more and more schools are taking advantage of school equipment grants that the federal government is providing to create and get back in the business of preparing meals onsite, which I think will lead to more nutritious meals and better-for-you meals. So I think that kind of activity is taking place.



The last thing I would say is – there are some school districts that basically use the food program as a cash cow. They take money from the food program and put it into other school programs because they monkey with the administrative expense associated with that program. So that’s something for state legislators to keep an eye on in terms of whether or not the money that goes for the school lunch and school breakfast programs is in fact being used for that purpose or for some other purpose.

Way over here.

Q So how about when people start drinking like soda and Pepsi and all those sugary drinks? How are we going to get people to stop drinking them? Because usually when they start, they become addicted to just start buying them on and off and on and off forever. And how are we going to get those people to stop buying those sugary drinks?

Ann Well, as I indicated earlier, there are a number of cities who have passed local ordinances. Some, many of them, require, including San Francisco, a two-thirds vote to tax soft drinks. Now, that's not taking them off the market, but there are increasing numbers of political subdivisions, whether it's cities or countries like Mexico who are taxing soft drinks. I think the education around soft drinks is, because of the tax issues, because of some of the other discussions, you're seeing a decline in the overall purchase of soft drinks today and increase in bottled water. Because people are really recognizing the health detriments of sugar-sweetened beverages, I think. And so I think, while taxing is not going to be the complete answer, it is one that some people are using. I mean, we're talking here about, if you did a pilot program, for example, on SNAP, what are some of the things you could start with. And perhaps the one that has been stated most often is begin a pilot program with sugar-sweetened beverages.

Dan To be honest with you, consumer empowerment is much greater today than it ever was before. I mean, your smartphones again give everybody in this room as much power as Warren Buffett – well, maybe not as much power as Warren Buffett, but you get the point. So what has the American Beverage Association done? Now, they probably haven't done it willingly, but now they're advertising smaller sizes. They're advertising more waters, more reduced sugars, other kinds of products. So the marketplace can work if consumers demand it. And the ability to communicate with the world, each one of you, without having to go to somebody else to get their approval, can make a huge difference here.

Ed One other piece. Norman Borlaug, our namesake, the last time I had a chance to visit with him, I said, "What is the best thing we can do... What's the one thing to do for agriculture?" He said, "Research." And there's tons and tons of research going on, many millions of dollars being spent on sugar equivalents, on sweeteners that are naturally based sweeteners without the caloric content. I mean, there's a lot of research going on



that we need to fund and continue to support in changing the Americans' diet on sugar and sugar substitutes.

Tom Just a couple things, and again to Mike Johanns' point about the capacity at the local level. There are opportunities to talk and visit with childcare providers to make sure that what they're offering at the childcare site is consistent with nutrition. There are opportunities, obviously, to make sure that school districts are complying with the rules in terms of vending machines, so that young people, when they get something from the vending machine at school, they're getting a healthier choice. There are opportunities to work with universities. To Ed's point about research, I would hope that that research isn't just private sectorally funded research. I would hope that we would see expanded increase in publicly financed research so that research information is available in a broad way and perhaps available to everyone.

We have also made an effort within the SNAP program. You mentioned Mayor Bloomberg. I was the recipient of his call when we denied the waiver. We offered the mayor a pilot—it was just a smaller pilot than what he had proposed, and he rejected it. We offered that to South Carolina, and then Governor Haley and it for whatever reason didn't work out. So there was a willingness on the part of the Department to look at pilots that would be confined. At the same time we did put a research project behind incentives. And what we found was that, if you actually incent it, if you allow people to stretch those SNAP dollars by buying more nutritious choices, that actually people responded to that incentive. So I think there are a number of things that are in the pipeline. And I think, you know, we didn't get into this mess overnight, and we're not going to get out of it overnight. I think we're heading in the right direction if we can just maintain the progress.

We've got time for perhaps one more.

Q I'd like to ask a question about agricultural diversity. Iowa produces corn and soybeans and alfalfa primarily. We import \$16 billion worth of food into this state, which is absurd. What is the USDA doing to help farmers promote more diverse production and at the same time benefit them to have another income source and also using that in the same way to... You know, you take a thousand acres and you take ten acres and you grow food, and you might serve it to the community in the school system and other things, restaurants. Thank you.

Tom Well, we have three seconds left on the timer, so we'll take the couple minutes more. And as the moderator, I'm going to take this question on if that's okay, because I was sort of the last secretary to deal with this. There is a tremendous amount of activity in this space that people are not fully aware of.



First of all, creating market opportunities for more diversified production – and you’ve seen an expansion of farmers’ markets. You’ve seen an expansion of local and regional food systems as a result of support from the USDA. So there’s now an economic market opportunity that didn’t necessarily exist in as much existence when these folks were secretaries – much more today than 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago.

Secondly, we’ve looked at risk management. Dan Glickman mentioned this. It may seem like a fairly technical thing, but the reality is – corn and soybean producers have crop insurance. If Mother Nature doesn’t cooperate, you don’t lose the farm, necessarily, if you’ve got adequate crop insurance. Those, specialty crop producers, didn’t have the benefit of risk management tools in the same way that commodity products did. Today that’s not the case. We’ve expanded significantly the number of crop insurance and risk management tools now available to especially crop producers.

So creating additional markets, additional risk management tools, more research – a substantial amount of research money dedicated to organic production in the last Farm Bill, a hundred-million-dollar research initiative – so there’s more research; and also making sure that we see conservation as a crop in a sense to encourage ecosystem markets in the development of more conservation practices on farm. So I mean, there’s a multitude of things that are going on.

We also created the Farm to School Program where we encourage school districts with \$5 million, \$6 million in grants to look at ways in which they could purchase more locally. And we saw thousands of schools now get involved in trying to figure out what is grown in their vicinity and being able to create standard contracts so that people can make it easier to purchase locally. So there’s a tremendous amount of activity in this space.

And I think the last thing I would say is – with the establishment of climate hubs that’s looking at the vulnerability of every single part of this country in terms of agricultural production and forestry, if people think that what we’re growing today will continue to grow in the same places in the same quantity with the same methods 20 years from now, 30 years from now, they just simply don’t know what’s going to happen here. There’s going to be a change in weather variability, weather patterns, intensity of weather, that is going to impact and affect. In some cases you won’t be able to grow the crops that you’re growing today. In some cases you’ll be able to grow more because you’ll have double or triple growing seasons. I mean, there’s going to be significant change.

And I think the key here for the future of agriculture is diversity not just in crop production and in methods but also in producers and in size of operations, so that we have opportunities for both and big and small, for men and women, for people of color and more opportunities for growing, and conservation practices. And I think that’s all happening within the USDA programs today.



On that note, Ken's going to come up.