

Arizona Daily Star

Arizona food-stamp recipients won't feel farm bill funding cuts

8 hours ago • [By Colton Gavin Cronkite News Service](#)

WASHINGTON — The farm bill signed by President Obama includes \$8 billion in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, but experts say the cuts will not affect food-stamp benefits in Arizona.

That was little comfort to advocates who worry about the long-term impact on food-stamp recipients in Arizona, and the immediate impact to low-income families in those states that will see cuts to benefits.

Advocates note that food-stamp funding was just reduced in November. They worry that the cuts in the farm bill are part of an alarming trend that will continue “balancing the budget on the backs of SNAP recipients,” in the words of **Angie Rodgers**, CEO of the Association of Arizona Food Banks.

But more cuts are just what is needed, according to critics, who say the current bill did not go far enough.

“The food-stamp cut was just 1 percent of the \$80 billion program. That’s after the program quadrupled in cost over the last decade from about \$20 billion,” **Chris Edwards**, an economist at the conservative Cato Institute, said in an emailed statement.

“So a much larger cut was in order from my perspective,” Edwards said.

The farm bill — costing almost \$1 trillion over the next 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office — includes funding for forests, farms and rural development, among other programs. But the largest part of the bill is SNAP, or the food-stamp program. The final bill set the cuts to SNAP at \$8 billion for 10 years, starting with \$84 million this year.

But the cuts will only be felt immediately by food-stamp recipients in those states that tie SNAP to energy subsidies for low-income families — the “heat and eat” program.

“It’s a crackdown on the ‘heat and eat’ program that is in many states, but not Arizona, said **Amanda Lee**, spokeswoman for the Arizona Community Action Association.

Even though the cuts will not directly affect Arizonans, Rodgers sees the latest cut as part of a trend that has already hurt Arizona recipients and could hurt them again. “We already had a major cut last November that averaged \$26 per recipient family,” she said.

Lee said many Arizonans continue to struggle with hunger, with 1.1 million state residents on food stamps.