

WHAT IS FINI?

Background: FINI (Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive) is a grant program created in the 2014 farm bill and operated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FINI is a competitive grant program with the goal of increasing the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income shoppers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Since 2015, USDA has awarded \$85.6M in four rounds of grants to non-profit organizations and public agencies to conduct programs that provide point-of-sale incentives for the purchase of produce.

In the 2018 farm bill, the program was renamed the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program¹, funding was increased to \$250M over 5-years, authorization was created for grants for “produce prescription programs”, and funding provided for the creation of Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center(s). The FINI program’s expansion with strong bipartisan and bicameral support during the farm bill debate was a testament to the success of the FINI-funded SNAP incentive programs around the country from 2015-2018.

Program basics: The new and expanded FINI program has a total budget of \$250 million/5 years.

There are three parts to the program:

- 1) Competitive grants for SNAP point-of-sale fruit and vegetable incentives with total funding of up to \$187 in FY 2019 – FY 2023. These grants can go to public or nonprofit organizations and require a 50% non-federal cash or in-kind match.
- 2) Competitive grants for programs that provide “prescriptions” to encourage produce consumption through financial, educational or other incentives. There is a maximum of \$25M/5 years available for these initiatives. They also require coordination with healthcare providers, and data collection to assess whether the approach can reduce healthcare spending.
- 3) Funding to establish training, technical assistance, information and evaluation center or centers to support:
 - a. the development and dissemination of best practices,

¹ **Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, page 639** “(FINI) should be renamed the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, in recognition of Mr. Schumacher’s role in the establishment of nutrition incentives nationwide. Mr. Schumacher was a magnificent advocate for farmers and families and saw the importance in building access and affordability through incentive programs.”

- b. provide intensive help for programs in high-need areas,
- c. coordinate among incentive practitioners, POS and electronic payment companies, grocers and farm direct retailers, and federal and state SNAP agencies on the development and sharing of improved and cost-effective SNAP and incentive transaction systems,
- d. develop a centralized hub for the reporting of standardized program data to reduce duplication and ensure consistent information collection. The information will be used for annual reporting to Congress and USDA and will be publicly searchable in a way that will facilitate connections between programs and further research in the field.

The SNAP incentive and produce prescription programs may be implemented in grocery stores, mobile markets or various kinds of farm direct retail. Incentive programs must have the support of the support of the state's SNAP agency and produce prescriptions must be implemented in collaboration with a health organization. Incentive grants will continue to be implemented by USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) with support from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). The new produce prescription grant implementation will include the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as well as USDA. Funding for the support and reporting center(s) will be awarded through a competitive process and will not require a match.

New FINI Implementation

There is uncertainty about the process and timeline for the implementation of the new FINI Program provisions and schedule for the next round of SNAP incentive grants. The government shutdown has prevented any progress on farm bill implementation and the Secretary of Agriculture's proposal to move NIFA out of Washington DC in 2019 may further delay the process.

For more information:

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture:

<https://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>

Information on FINI programs:

https://portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/project_details

USDA Food and Nutrition Service:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/FINI-Grant-Program>

FINI Program 2015 results:

https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Consolidated-2015-Report_finaldigital-.pdf

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National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition:

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentives/>

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018

<https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CRPT-115hrpt1072.pdf>