

Persons Getting Food Stamps Climbs 32 Per Cent in 2 Months to 5 Million

Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin today reported that a total of about 9 million needy persons were aided by USDA's family food assistance programs in March.

This is a preliminary estimate from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. Precise figures will be available later.

Secretary Hardin said the month's big gain was in participation in the Food Stamp Program, which has been significantly improved in recent months so that low-income families pay less and get more.

What's New?

Subirrigation Tested

Borg-Warner Corporation is test marketing a new porous plastic subirrigation tubing called Micro-Por. Good results have been reported with citrus trees, strawberries, corn, potatoes and roses.

The firm says the underground irrigation leaves the soil surface dry, sharply reducing water loss from runoff and evaporation as well as percolation. The dry surface also inhibits weed growth, fungus and insects.

Better yields are reported possible because water and nutrients are delivered directly and quickly to the roots at the precise stage of the growing cycle when they are needed most.

Participation in this program climbed to a record high 5 million persons in March — up 16 per cent from the 4.3 million persons taking part during February, and up 32 per cent from the 3.8 million persons participating in January.

Payments of "bonus" coupons to participating families climbed to approximately \$70 million for the month — up 37 per cent from the \$51 million in February, and up 160 per cent from the \$26.9 million in bonus stamps a month earlier. Participating families pay in approximately the same amount they would usually spend for food. Then they are given bonus food coupons to bring their total food buying power up to the level of USDA's "economy diet" (See USDA press release 3872.69 of December 18, 1963).

Participation in USDA's other family feeding program — the Commodity Distribution Program — totaled 4.0 million needy persons in February. Participation in March is expected to be approximately the same.

These results are significant, Secretary Hardin said, "and I am gratified that more people in need of food are actually getting the food I appreciate the long and hard work that has made it possible for these additional people to participate — work both by USDA's staff, here and in the field and especially by our co-

operators in the States, counties, and local governments.

"But, significant as these results are," the Secretary said, "we still have much more work to do. President Nixon has given all of us a commitment to 'wipe out hunger in America,' and we need to continue to push vigorously forward until hunger is indeed wiped out."

Secretary Hardin gave these detailed reports on some individual food stamp areas in different parts of the country.

In Cook County, Ill., bonus coupons issued to participants in March more than tripled the amount issued in February — nearly \$2 million worth, against \$647,211 worth.

In Shelby County, Tenn., the value of bonus coupons issued to participants rose to \$420,948 in March, against \$306,147 in February.

In Orleans Parish, La., the value of bonus coupons issued rose to \$1,003,105 in March, against \$849,628 in February.

Participation in the Food Stamp Program, he said, also increased significantly in all three of these areas.

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