State SNAP Waivers

Key Takeaways

- Six states have passed legislation requesting waivers for certain items including candy, sodas, and other items to be removed from SNAP benefits; those have all been signed and approved by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.
- Tennessee had legislation put off to 2026 for SNAP waivers on candy and soft drinks.
- Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation (TFBF) does not have policy on the issue. American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) has policy in place supporting the removal of carbonated beverages that are non-fruit, vegetables, and dairy beverages.

Questions

1. Should TFBF have more policy surrounding the implementation of SNAP?
2. Does the precedent of states signing up for SNAP waivers cause concern for similar action taken on other farm bill programs?
3. Would farmers in your area be affected by these products being removed from SNAP benefits?
4. If so, how?

Background

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, provides food benefits to low-income families so they can afford nutritious foods that are essential to human health and overall well-being. SNAP is funded and operated through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) while the states are responsible for issuing these benefits.

SNAP benefits allow individuals access to purchase food from all five major food groups - fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins, and dairy - which includes foods like chips and other snack foods. Seeds and plants are also available for those with SNAP so they can grow their own food at home. Some of the ineligible items are alcohol, tobacco, hot foods, and personal care items.

In May of 2025, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, at the direction of President Trump, signed the first ever waiver to amend the definition of food for purchase for Nebraska's SNAP, removing soda and energy drinks from the benefits. Since then, five more states have had their waivers signed by Secretary Rollins changing the statutory definition of food for purchase for SNAP.

Six states have passed legislation requesting waivers for certain items including candy, sodas, and other items to be removed from SNAP benefits.

While there is currently no waiver pending Secretary Rollins's signature from the State of Tennessee, there is a bill titled the "Tennessee Healthy SNAP Act" which has been deferred to 2026. The bill would require the Tennessee Department of Human Services to submit a request for a waiver from the USDA to prohibit the use of SNAP benefits for the purchase of candy and soft drinks. All the sweeteners listed in the bill are all products derived from corn, sugar cane, milk, or other agricultural products. In its current form, the bill has an amendment which would allow for any drink with less than five grams of sugar to be purchased with SNAP benefits.

Policy

Tennessee Farm Bureau
Farm Policy (Partial)

We oppose separating nutrition programs from other titles of the farm bill. The farm bill is America's food security policy. We believe it serves the nation well for Congress to enact legislation ensuring a safe and abundant food supply and access to food for those in need.

American Farm Bureau
464 / Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Partial)

4. We support:

> 4.2. Items purchased by SNAP benefits should be limited to the five basic food groups.
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> 4.9. Efforts to expand the purchases of meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables.
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> 4.10. Elimination of carbonated beverages from food available in/under assistance programs and those non-fruit, vegetable and dairy beverages with bottle deposits.
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> 4.11. The use of SNAP for U.S.-produced agricultural products when available.
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> 4.16. SNAP exploring new ways to ensure fresh food access in food deserts.
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> 4.17. Continued use of SNAP for seasonal farm markets, farm stands, CSAs and other retail farm markets.