



Farm Bureau Celebrates Food Check-Out Week

SALT LAKE CITY— The cost of food in America remains affordable. According to the latest statistics compiled by the Agriculture Department's (USDA's) Economic Research Service, American families and individuals currently spend, on average, just under 10 percent of their disposable personal income for food.

Applying that statistic to the calendar year means the average household will have earned enough disposable income -- that portion of income available for spending or saving -- to pay for its annual food supply in about 37 days, according to the Utah Farm Bureau Federation.

In recognition of this, the Utah Farm Bureau is celebrating Feb. 3-9, 2008, as Food Check-Out Week.

“Not only is America's food supply the world's safest, but it's also the most affordable, said Ruth Roberts, Women's Committee Chair for the Utah Farm Bureau. “The safe, abundant and affordable domestic food supply produced by America's farmers and ranchers is responsible, at least in part, for our nation's increasing standard of living.”

To mark the occasion, the Utah Farm Bureau will donate \$400 towards the purchase of food for the Ronald McDonald House in Salt Lake City. The Ronald McDonald House provides a “home-away-from-home” for the families of seriously ill children receiving medical treatment in the Salt Lake City area. The food will be used to help feed families staying at the House. Additionally, local County Farm Bureau's throughout the state will be hosting a variety of events this week.

“While bills may increase at the grocery store, taking a look to see what is in your cart reveals that food isn't the culprit,” Roberts said. “Many things we buy such as detergents, diapers, DVDs, magazines, etc. lead to rising costs at the grocery store.”

“Compared to food, Americans work longer each year to pay for their housing, federal taxes and medical care,” Roberts said.

According to the Tax Foundation, Americans must work 52 days each year to pay for health and medical care, 62 days to pay for housing/household operation and 77 days to pay their federal taxes.

Roberts said the affordable, high-quality food we enjoy as consumers is a product of our successful food production and distribution system, as well as America's farmers and ranchers continued access to effective and affordable crop protection tools.

"This week should hold meaning for most Americans," Roberts said. "Although we are concerned that some Americans cannot afford to buy the food they need, we are proud of the role Utah farmers play in producing the most affordable food in the world."

The percent of disposable personal income spent for food has declined over the last 35 years. In 1970, it took Americans 15 more days to earn enough income to pay for their food supply for the year. According to USDA, food is more affordable today due to a widening gap between growth in per-capita incomes and the amount of money spent for food.

This overall decrease is made more notable by trends indicating Americans are buying more expensive convenience foods, as well as more food away from home.

USDA's latest statistic, compiled for 2007, includes food and non-alcoholic beverages consumed at home and away from home. This includes food purchases from grocery stores and other retail outlets, including food purchases with food stamps and vouchers for the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) program. The statistic also includes away-from-home meals and snacks purchased by families and individuals, as well as food furnished to employees.

Food Check-Out Week tracks the amount of income needed by Americans to purchase food on an annual basis, Roberts said. "Despite a few fluctuations over the past few years, food prices have remained relatively stable over time."

For more information on Food Check-Out Week and the events going on in your community, please contact Aurline Boyack or Matt Hargreaves at the Utah Farm Bureau.

About the Utah Farm Bureau

The Utah Farm Bureau is the largest general farm and ranch organization in the state with more than 21,000 member families. Its mission is to improve the net income of the state's farmers and ranchers and the overall quality of life in the state and nation through political action, educational and informational means. The Farm Bureau is a non-partisan, voluntary organization, and its efforts are based on grassroots policies developed by members at the local, county, state and national levels. It is affiliated with the American Farm Bureau Federation, the world's largest general farm organization, with more than 6.5 million family members in 50 states and Puerto Rico. For more information, go to the Utah Farm Bureau Web site at <http://utfb.fb.org>.

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