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STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC MARKETING,
CONSUMER RELATIONS, AND NUTRITION
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ON

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ADULT EXPANDED FOOD AND
NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM AND ITS OPERATION
IN CALIFORNIA

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to appear here today to discuss our review of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). In October 1979, you asked us to obtain information on the program's efficiency and effectiveness in cities such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. 1/ You also requested that we look at the coordination between EFNEP and the Food Stamp Program.

First, we would like to give our impression of the overall program based on our work in these four cities. Then, we will discuss in more detail the program's operation at the

1/See appendix I for data on EFNEP in these locations and nationally.

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State level citing California and at the county level citing Los Angeles and Riverside Counties. We will be pleased to provide testimony on our findings of EFNEP activities in Boston, New York, and Chicago at future hearings and for the record.

We believe that EFNEP is an important program. It has the potential for improving and maintaining peoples' health through better diets and for saving money through knowledgeable food purchases. During these times of inflation and fiscal constraint, helping people learn more about nutrition and food quality is particularly important. Poor eating habits have been linked to a wide spectrum of diseases and disorders, and Americans waste billions of dollars worth of food annually. Wise and nutritious food buying can be an effective way to cope with inflation by getting the most out of the food budget as well as maintaining good health.

Ignorance about nutrition is not limited to certain income levels, but spans all socioeconomic levels and cultures. However, the need to combat this ignorance is more critical at the lowest income levels because people at this level can least afford food waste and medical costs.

EFNEP's purpose and the Congressional intent is to improve the diets of low-income families through guidance on diet and food buying, care, and preparation. EFNEP, which was established in 1968, is the largest Federal nutrition education program and operates at about 1,270

sites in the 50 States and Puerto Rico. USDA's Extension Service administers the program nationally, and state and county extension offices administer it locally. Para-professional program aides from the target areas are recruited and trained to instruct and work with homemakers on a one-to-one basis in the homemakers' residences or in small group settings.

Through fiscal year 1980, the Congress has appropriated more than \$500 million for EFNEP. Annual funding has been about \$50 million since 1971. Over the last several years, however, fewer program aides have been employed and fewer homemakers have been instructed because inflation has eroded the purchasing power of the EFNEP budget. Between 1971 and 1978, the number of families active in the program decreased from 361,000 to 196,000, respectively, and the number of program aides decreased from about 7,300 to 3,700, respectively.

We interviewed program aides who were enthusiastic about their work and felt that EFNEP had improved homemakers' diet and nutrition knowledge. However, we are unable to tell you specifically the degree of EFNEP's effectiveness because of inadequate management information.

Despite this limited information, we identified four areas of opportunity which could improve the program. We believe EFNEP managers should:

- Develop communication and dissemination alternatives to offset budget constraints.
- Develop standards and evaluation tools to measure the program's success.
- Improve administrative practices.
- Improve coordination within EFNEP and with other nutrition programs.

DEVELOP COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION
ALTERNATIVES TO OFFSET BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

EFNEP funds and resources have been dwindling over the last several years due to the lack of inflation adjustments in the annual budgeting process. With these constraints and the current economy-minded mood in the Congress and the Administration, it is increasingly important that EFNEP program managers consider alternative ways to reach and educate more target families with less funds and personnel.

One-to-one communication is EFNEP's basic approach to recruiting and instructing homemakers. Although this approach has the advantage of personal contact, it is costly and limits the number of families that can be reached. Some States have been receptive to exploring new ways of reaching people. However, continued attention and encouragement by EFNEP's managers is needed in developing and adopting alternative communication and dissemination methods in addition to the one-to-one instruction to reach more people with available resources.

DEVELOP STANDARDS AND EVALUATION TOOLS
TO MEASURE THE PROGRAM'S SUCCESS

EFNEP does not have specific standards and effective evaluation and feedback tools to measure its success. To manage program resources for the best results, EFNEP needs to define achievement standards on diet and nutrition knowledge, develop resource allocation and management strategies, and develop and apply evaluation methods so program managers know their degree of success.

The program's primary evaluation method is the 24-hour food recall, whereby program aides periodically ask homemakers what they ate during the previous 24 hours. The validity of this method and the findings based on this data are questionable and may be only a remote indicator of diet changes.

EFNEP does not gather and compile data on the changes in the knowledge or behavior of program participants regarding major program subjects such as food buying, preparation, and care. Program officials agreed that they should measure these changes to help insure that the program is meeting its objectives. They added, however, that evaluation methods to measure these behavior changes may not be available.

IMPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

Although the Federal Extension Service is responsible for monitoring and evaluating EFNEP nationwide, the Service has an inadequate management information system and provides limited feedback on program success and opportunities to

improve the program's effectiveness. The Service does not ask the States to report such basic information as the number of participants that graduate versus those that drop out. States receive little guidance on selecting program sites or allocating funds to program sites. As a result, the Extension Service lacks assurance that the size and location of EFNEP sites are appropriate for achieving good results.

At the state level, the Cooperative Extension Service is responsible for EFNEP in each State and its involvement appears minimal. The States also lack periodic evaluations of site operations and assurances that the program is being run as effectively as possible.

Program administration varied at the sites we reviewed. Generally, those sites with closer supervision had better records to support and assess their activities. At other sites, records were so poorly maintained that the data's unreliability precluded any meaningful assessment of the program. Poorly maintained records raise questions about the validity of information being used at the local, State, and national levels regarding the success of the program.

IMPROVE EFNEP COORDINATION

Coordination, both within EFNEP and between EFNEP and other nutrition related programs, is generally inadequate. Within EFNEP, training and instruction materials for aides and homemakers, respectively, may vary between States and at the sites within a State. While some differences in

materials are necessary to meet local needs, such as the cultural differences of homemakers in certain locations, greater sharing of ideas and materials would make better use of limited resources.

EFNEP coordination with the Food Stamp Program and other nutrition-related programs appears minimal at the Federal and State levels and varies from site to site based on local management. The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 specifically directed the Secretary of Agriculture to " * * * extend EFNEP to the greatest extent possible to reach food stamp program participants." But, as of March 1979, the Federal Extension Service reported the percentage of EFNEP families participating in the food stamp distribution program had been 49 percent since June 1976. Some attempts to encourage participation are being made at the Federal level. A joint letter from the Directors of the Extension Service and the Food and Nutrition Service was sent to the States' Cooperative Extension Service offices encouraging coordination and providing outreach suggestions. Also, 16 pilot projects were federally-funded to explore ways of increasing food stamp families' participation in EFNEP.

CONCLUSION

Based on the work we performed, the program's major problems appear to be weak program administration, inadequate evidence to demonstrate the program's effectiveness,

and dwindling funds and human resources. We feel each of these problems can be solved if program managers (1) find communication and dissemination alternatives in the face of limited resources, (2) develop standards and evaluation tools to measure the program's effectiveness, (3) improve administrative practices, and (4) improve coordination within EFNEP and with other nutrition programs.

EFNEP OPERATIONS AT CALIFORNIA
STATE LEVEL AND LOS ANGELES AND
RIVERSIDE COUNTY SITES

In California, the University of California Cooperative Extension Service at Berkeley is responsible for managing EFNEP. The university gives some guidance to EFNEP sites, compiles certain operating statistics for the Department of Agriculture, and occasionally trains program site personnel.

From fiscal year 1969 through 1979, California disbursed about \$19 million in Federal funds and enrolled about 111,000 homemakers in the program. Through fiscal year 1979, the program operated at 15 sites for 18 of California's 58 counties. We were told no State funds augment the program.

We limited our California review to the Cooperative Extension Service at Berkeley and to the EFNEP sites in Los Angeles and Riverside Counties. Our findings showed:

--No mechanism exists for coordinating this program with similar programs at the State level and coordination varies at the two county sites.

--Funding is poorly managed and allocated. (Since 1971, an average of 28 percent of Federal funds were carried forward to each succeeding year--funds which could have been used to reach more families.)

--California's EFNEP has not been evaluated in depth by State or Federal officials, and the reports generated by the individual EFNEP sites give little insight into program effectiveness and improvement opportunities.

--The Los Angeles site has had (1) no permanent home economist for the past 2 years, (2) inadequate supervision of aides, (3) a lack of demographic data, and (4) no volunteers or community involvement to augment its program.

Coordination with other programs
is not well established

State level coordination between EFNEP and other programs trying to reach the same target audience is poor. State program officials said greater coordination is desirable but they think local sites must initiate this coordination themselves. No documentation was available at the State or county levels to determine the extent of coordination with the Food Stamp Program or other programs, nor was any data available on the numbers of people EFNEP may have referred to other programs or vice versa.

Little has been done to reach Food Stamp Program participants as directed by the Food and Agriculture Act

of 1977. Based on available data, the percentage of EFNEP families receiving food stamps in California in 1978 was less than the national average of 49 percent. The percentage had decreased from a high of 45 percent in 1972 to less than 35 percent in 1978. In Los Angeles County, which had a participation rate of 30 percent as of September 30, 1979, past coordination was generally limited to distributing posters about EFNEP to some food stamp offices. This action, we were told, had little effect because food stamps are usually mailed to recipients. In Riverside County, which had a participation rate of 21 percent as of September 30, 1979, coordination included mailing information about EFNEP to food stamp families by the Riverside Department of Public Social Services. In addition, food stamp personnel gave program aides materials and some orientation about the Food Stamp Program.

Coordination with other programs, such as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, and the Head Start program, occasionally occurs in Los Angeles and Riverside Counties.

A State program official said the State Food Stamp Program office was recently given the names of the EFNEP home economists to contact at each of the 15 California sites. Also, attempts are being made to obtain the names of food stamp families for a proposed project being funded by the Department of Agriculture to explore various ways

of increasing food stamp families' participation in EFNEP. This project will be conducted in two counties where there is a large Hispanic population. It will use various control groups to measure the impact selected communication strategies have for teaching nutrition education. The strategies include television, one-to-one instruction, and a combination of the two.

State's Management and Allocation
of EFNEP Funds Needs Improvement

The State's lack of criteria to determine how much money should be allocated to program sites and how much should be retained for other purposes may be a primary cause for the recurring large carryovers of Federal funds each year. These carryovers have averaged about \$546,000 or 28 percent per year, since 1971.

The average carryovers were substantially greater than the combined funds available in fiscal year 1979 to the Los Angeles and Riverside sites. These funds could have been used to reach more families and offset California's reported enrollment drop from 21,000 families in 1972 to 8,200 families at the end of fiscal year 1979. During the same period, the number of equivalent full-time program aides dropped from 168 to about 100.

State program officials acknowledge the carryovers have been excessive. They said carryovers usually happened because (1) funds were reserved to cover contingencies, such as possible salary increases, and (2) counties failed to spend

all their allocated funds. These officials agree State guidelines should be established to determine reasonable carryovers for covering operating contingencies.

The State also needs criteria to determine how much money each of its EFNEP sites should receive and where the sites should be located to best reach the low-income target groups. According to 1970 census data, 43 percent, or 752,000 of the poor in participating EFNEP counties live in Los Angeles county. Yet, only 14 percent, or \$290,000 of the total 1979 funds allocated went to Los Angeles County. In contrast, the Tulare-Kings Counties site, with a reported 2.7 percent, or 47,000 of the poor, was allocated 7.7 percent or \$151,000 for 1979.

State program officials agree the State should assess its allocation of EFNEP funds to insure proper program location and size. They said program site locations were chosen based, in part, on the 1960 low-income census and the counties' willingness to participate in EFNEP. They also said that where the largest number of poor people lived was not a critical factor in the 1969 decision on how to distribute funds. Instead, the decision was based on how widely the funds could be distributed to reach the maximum number of counties.

Evaluations are limited

Periodic indepth evaluations of California's EFNEP effectiveness or efficiency are insufficient. Limited

evaluations have been performed by (1) the U.S. Department of Agriculture, (2) the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and (3) the University of California's Internal Audit Staff. The evaluation reports, based on data furnished by the sites, give little insight of the program's effectiveness or ineffectiveness in improving homemakers' nutrition knowledge or diet.

State program officials said they are developing a mechanism for evaluating the program's effect on homemakers. They also plan to hire a program coordinator to provide overall leadership in planning, implementing, reporting, and evaluating the program.

The 24-hour food recall data required by the Federal Extension Service has been the State's primary basis for measuring the program's effectiveness. State program officials told us they generally discount its use as an evaluation tool. They suspect that some homemakers alter their responses to please the program aides and some do not remember all the foods they had eaten in the past 24 hours. Also, the data's validity is questionable because aides can take another recall if they feel the first one does not represent a typical day.

In addition to the 24-hour recall, the counties routinely collect other information from program sites and submit the data to the Federal Extension Service which uses it to evaluate program operations. The data, however,

is not verified and is inadequate to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Program officials stated that the Department of Agriculture's progression model, developed in 1976 to help program aides teach homemakers and evaluate their progress, is not widely used in California. Its use is encouraged but not required. The progression model is not used in Los Angeles County and is partially used in Riverside County. According to several program staff members in Los Angeles and Riverside, the model was too complex.

Past EFNEP evaluations in California were limited, but provided some feedback to program managers on opportunities to improve the program. They consisted of two limited surveys by the Extension Service in 1974 and 1979; a 1974, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare financial audit of California's Cooperative Extension Service operations at Berkeley; and a limited audit in 1976 by the University of California's Internal Audit Staff. Each evaluation touched on the State's management of the program. The Extension Service surveys and the University internal audit included visits to some sites. Riverside County was visited in the 1974 survey, and Los Angeles County was included in the 1979 survey.

A number of the findings we are discussing were disclosed in past EFNEP evaluations. Limited action, however, appears to have been taken on these findings.

California's State and Local Levels of
Program Administration Need Strengthening

Management controls at the State and local levels appear to be too weak to insure that EFNEP is administered as efficiently and effectively as possible. At the State level, no one seems to be in a leadership position or devoted full-time to administering EFNEP. The person most directly responsible for the program statewide is the Assistant Director of Human Resources; less than 15 percent of this person's time in fiscal year 1979 was spent with EFNEP. The State does, however, plan to establish a full-time EFNEP coordinator position. The person assigned will provide leadership and coordinate the county programs, assess program needs, identify priorities, recommend policy changes, require ongoing program evaluations, implement program reviews, facilitate exchanges of information, and handle most administrative duties.

At the local level, we found varying degrees of management control. Most of the major problems were observed at the Los Angeles site. The site did not have (1) a permanent home economist to supervise the site, (2) adequate supervision over program aides, (3) a demographic assessment of the Los Angeles urban area, and (4) volunteers and community support.

We will comment briefly on each of these points:

1. No permanent home economist

California Cooperative Extension's failure to permanently fill this first-line supervisory position in over 2 years raises a question about the priority given to EFNEP in Los Angeles County. Even though the position was temporarily filled during the last 2 years, it does not have the accountability associated with a permanently assigned supervisor. Program officials said they are still looking for qualified candidates.

2. Lack of adequate supervision

Inadequate supervision has resulted in homemakers not being seen for long periods and incomplete records. Yet, compared to Riverside, the Los Angeles site has a higher ratio of supervisors to full-time equivalent aides.

Lax supervision results in supervisors not always knowing the aides' whereabouts, and some aides having case-loads that exceed the national average from four to six times. As a result, many homemakers are not seen for 1 year or longer. Lax supervision in Los Angeles may be due, in part, to time taken by the aides' supervisors to perform clerical tasks done by the EFNEP secretary in Riverside.

We found inadequate records to support the quantity and quality of training given each aide. Also, there was no information to show how closely supervisors work with the aides to insure that homemakers' nutrition education

needs are met and that their progress through the program is satisfactory.

The program aides' records had a number of discrepancies which could be an indication of inadequate supervision, lack of training, or poor guidelines. For example, one aide's records showed that numerous EFNEP subject categories were covered only sporadically with homemakers. Another aide's records, covering 143 families, could not be located. The acting home economist and the aide said the records were either destroyed or lost.

3. Lack of demographic data

The Los Angeles site has no EFNEP demographic assessment of the city's urban area. Such an assessment is critical to identify EFNEP priorities. Without demographic data, the site has no assurance the program is (1) in the best administrative setting, (2) concentrating resources on the target group, and (3) logically and systematically progressing through a community. State program officials told us the county is responsible for developing this data. County program officials acknowledge the need for such data, but had no explanation for not developing it.

4. No volunteers and community support

Federal EFNEP guidelines encourage sites to use volunteers and elicit community support to aid program operations. State program officials told us they neither encourage nor discourage their sites from using volunteers or getting

community support. Los Angeles site officials could not explain why volunteers are not used. Riverside County uses some volunteers.

In summary, we have identified some of the same problems of EFNEP that were previously disclosed by other studies conducted by the State and Federal Governments. Action taken to resolve these problems has been limited. We feel more attention to correct these problems is needed to reinforce the importance of nutrition education toward improved food purchasing and consumption patterns and health.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. We would be pleased to answer your questions.

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADULT EFNEP NATIONALLY
AND AT FOUR STATE LEVELS AND LOS ANGELES, RIVERSIDE,
CHICAGO, NEW YORK CITY AND BOSTON EFNEP SITES

Characteristic	As of	Nationally	California		Illinois		New York		Massachusetts		
			Statewide	Los Angeles County	Riverside County	Statewide	Chicago (Cook County)	Statewide	New York City	Statewide	Boston (Suffolk County)
Total population	1970 census	203,235,298	19,953,134	7,036,457	459,072	11,113,976	5,493,766	18,241,266	7,893,329	5,689,170	735,190
Eligible EFNEP population	1970 census	28,751,754	2,152,716	752,559	60,680	1,112,145	866,810	1,985,954	1,245,166	473,200	107,716
Cumulative enrolled families since the start of EFNEP	9/78 9/79	1,694,450 N/A	111,777	20,627	8,396	56,000	13,680	72,561	15,064	22,567	6,278
Enrolled families	9/78 9/79	196,099 N/A	8,236	2,159	919	5,800	1,914	9,047	2,203	2,181	703
Percent of EFNEP families participating in the food stamp distribution programs	3/79 9/79	49 N/A	34	30	21	54	73	57	60	N/A	71
Total counties	FY 1979	-	58	-	-	102	-	57	-	14	-
Total sites	FY 1979	1,270	15	1	1	23	4	59	4	14	2
Federal appropriations (note a)	FY 1979	\$51,810,000	\$2,734,072	-	-	\$1,819,671	-	\$2,864,060	-	\$825,462	-
State distribution of Federal funds (note a)	FY 1979	-	-	\$357,722	\$198,982	-	\$363,634	-	\$807,630	-	\$174,587
Program aides full-time equivalent	9/78 9/79	3,717 N/A	102	17	7	125	37	174	46	48	13
Average number of families per full-time aide	9/78 9/79	53 N/A	81	127	131	46	52	52	48	45	54

N/A - not available

a/Includes 4-H component of EFNEP--States can allocate 15-20 percent of Federal appropriations to 4-H. Funding for adult component only was not readily available.