Study Design, Setting, Participants: Values for total AMS-purchased food and DoD Fresh food were obtained from USDA, FNS.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Descriptive data are used to describe food use changes over time nationally and by sub-groups of states. A fixed effects regression model is used to examine how states changed their orders after the 2012 update in NSLP nutrition standards.

Results: Following the change in NSLP standards, use of USDA foods shifts towards fresh fruit and vegetables obtained through DoD Fresh, rising from 6 percent to 15 percent of total USDA Foods entitlement funds over 2012-2017 nationwide. Use of USDA Foods funds for AMS-procured foods vs DoD Fresh varied both across states and over time.

Conclusion: Findings suggest DoD Fresh foods may have been helpful to school foodservices in meeting updated NSLP nutrition standards requiring more fruits and vegetables in school meals.

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Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Nutrition Security Across the Socioecological Model in the US: A Scoping Review

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Background: With the continual rise in nutrition-related chronic diseases among the United States (US) population, there have been recent calls in the public health nutrition field to shift program and policy priorities beyond food security to a nutrition security-focused lens. Although a definition of nutrition security has been widely applied to international settings, there has been limited research on the development and validation of terminology for nutrition security in the US.

Objective: To examine the various conceptual and operational definitions of nutrition security across the socioecological model applied in the US.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: A scoping review was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist. Using an a priori inclusion criteria, two reviewers independently screened, selected, and extracted data from peer-reviewed studies and grey literature located on the US and published in English between January 2010 and November 2022.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Of the 3573 peer-reviewed studies and grey literature identified, 14 met the final inclusion criteria.

Results: Different conceptual definitions of nutrition security were applied to various US populations that were diverse in age, origin, and geographic location across all levels of the socioecological model. However, preliminary results indicate a swift transition from studies citing the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations’ nutrition security conceptual definition to the newly presented terminology proposed by Mozaffarian and colleagues in a 2021 Journal of the American Medical Association viewpoint article. Measurement tools used in research and evaluation studies varied, and a majority measured a proxy for nutrition security indicating a lack of standard operational definitions.

Conclusion: While there appears to be a quick adoption of the new terminology by many academics and government entities, there is a need for more empirical studies to ensure the widespread adoption of valid, reliable, and feasible nutrition security measurement tools to ensure robust evaluation data to compare effectiveness across and between federal food and nutrition programs and policies.

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Critical Points and Complements of the Food Pantry According to Latin-American Ph.D. Students’ Experiences: A Case Study

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Background: Campus food pantries act as emergency food assistance for students who are struggling to get food. There is limited data available to describe college students’ awareness of existing food pantries and their usage for food acquisition and its benefit among international students who rely on the use of this service.

Objective: To get a broader understanding using a case study with doctoral students from Latin-America, of the importance of the food pantry as a food resource facility on campus, drivers, and barriers to using this resource, and propose solutions to enhance the service quality.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: The case study was approached from an interpretive paradigm consistent with an ontological domain. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during fall-2022. To maintain research quality, this study follows qualitative best practices (Big-Tent). Twelve Ph.D. students from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El-Salvador, Mexico, and Panama, were sampled using homogeneous sampling technique. For purposes of a case study, the interviews with Latin participants from master’s programs (n=5) were excluded.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data saturation occurred when no new themes emerged among all participants. A two-cycle coding was conducted: elemental technique (first phase), and cumulative coding technique (second phase).

Results: Seven themes emerged in this research, four surrounding the food pantry service: 1) limited finances as a motivator to use the service; 2) churches as a complement
Distribution of Fresh Foods in Food Pantries: Challenges and Opportunities in Illinois During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background: The charitable food system distributes free food to clients across the U.S. Still, many nutrition and health-focused efforts need help to succeed, which was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective: To understand barriers and facilitators across the spectrum of the Social-Ecological Model to distributing nutritious, fresh foods in food pantries across Illinois during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: Forty-nine representatives of Illinois food pantries were recruited to participate. All focus groups were held via an online platform in October 2021.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: A script was developed to facilitate a discussion about the challenges and opportunities faced in distributing fresh foods in pantries. The script included a definition of what fresh foods were (and were not), followed by 11 open-ended questions about representatives’ experiences and perceptions with follow-up prompts and probing questions. After review from external colleagues, the script was updated to improve flow and clarity. After data collection, a codebook was created based on relevant literature, common themes heard in recordings, and stakeholder interests. Transcripts of each group were coded and analyzed using a basic interpretive approach.

Results: The analysis of focus group transcripts resulted in challenges and opportunities, which were organized into five distinct levels of influence, mirroring aspects of the Social-Ecological Model to include 1) societal, 2) community, 3) organizational, 4) interpersonal, and 5) product. Many pantry representatives felt they offered a wide variety of fresh foods that met the client’s health needs. However, distribution of fresh foods was impacted by community partners, food bank policies and practices, and the quality of the donated fresh foods. Furthermore, the physical limitations of pantries limited fresh food storage capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic posed unique stressors that highlighted additional opportunities for the charitable food system.

Conclusion: Future studies should evaluate the effects of the suggested initiatives and changes at the food pantry, food bank, and policy levels.

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Identification of Overlap of Broadband Connection and Pickup Locations for Online SNAP-Authorized Retailers Within Virginia

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Background: Online grocery purchasing is an important food acquisition strategy and may provide expanded access to fresh produce for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants, however, broadband connection is needed for access to online purchasing platforms. SNAP launched online purchasing through select retailers in 2019 and has since expanded authorizations. Virginia currently has 17 authorized retailer systems for online SNAP purchases. Exploring the overlap of broadband connection and pickup locations for online SNAP produce purchases is necessary to understand the availability of online produce purchasing for SNAP participants so that future research and policies can advance digital and nutrition equity.

Objective: To determine overlap of broadband connection and pickup sites for fresh produce ordered online with SNAP benefits within Virginia to identify potentially underserved areas.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: Broadband connection is measured by percentage of addresses served by connections with at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 20 Mbps upload speeds within a census block, current to December 2021. Pickup locations were determined by a dataset of SNAP-authorized retailers and search of retailer websites.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: The spatial representation provided an initial identification of locations within Virginia where broadband coverage and pickup locations do not overlap and can be a tool to determine geographic areas that should be prioritized for future research and infrastructure development.

Results: Of 749 retail locations, 605 locations offer pickup for online fresh produce purchases. As of January 2023, 144 locations accept online SNAP purchases but do not offer pickup. Pickup locations for produce purchased online with SNAP were concentrated in Virginia’s metro areas. Rural areas had fewer pickup locations and overall lower rates of broadband connection.

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