

Food Check-Out Week Focus Shifts to Nutrition

By Cyndie Sirekis

During [Food Check-Out Week](#), February 15-21, farmer and rancher members of many local Farm Bureaus will reach out to consumers with practical information and tips on how to put nutritious meals on the table with fewer dollars. Public health experts are concerned that today's tough economic times could lead consumers (many of whom are already overweight) to resort to cheaper, high-calorie foods, which can lack important vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients.

To proactively address this issue, Farm Bureau, working with a registered dietician, has produced consumer educational material on a variety of topics including "[Tips for Better Nutrition on a Tight Budget](#)," "[Understanding Food Labels](#)," "[Understanding What My Pyramid Means](#)" and "[How Much Should I Eat?](#)" "Stretching Your Grocery Dollar With Healthy, Nutritious Food," the new official theme of Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Week, reflects the fact that many Americans are feeling an economic squeeze and as a result, are eating out less and preparing more meals at home.

Although the emphasis of the program is evolving, the Farm Bureau-Ronald McDonald House Charities connection that began more than a decade ago remains strong.

"Through continued charitable donations to local Ronald McDonald Houses, as well as other charities during Food Check-Out Week, we recognize the need everyone has to find solutions to feed their families healthy foods on a stretched budget," says Terry Gilbert, a Kentucky farmer and chair of the American Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee. "While America's farmers are committed to producing safe, healthy food, they share with consumers the same issues of putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget."

[Ronald McDonald House](#) provides a "home-away-from-home" for the families of seriously ill children being treated at nearby hospitals. Donations provide families staying at the houses with needed staple foods, so they are better able to focus their attention on taking care of their children.

Participating county and state Farm Bureaus will hold events throughout Food Check-Out Week. Links to state Farm Bureau Web sites may be found here: <http://www.fb.org/state/>.

On the national level, the [AFB Women's Leadership Committee](#) will pilot supermarket tours for consumers to help them increase their knowledge of how to stay on a budget while purchasing healthy food for their families. The committee also will make cash and food donations to Ronald McDonald Houses in Phoenix and Louisville, Ky.

Since the program was initiated in the mid-1990s, Farm Bureau members have donated more than \$2.6 million in food and monetary contributions to Ronald McDonald Houses and other worthwhile charities during Food Check-Out Week.