PRIMER: Agriculture Subsidies and Their Influence on the Composition of U.S. Food Supply and Consumption

PAULINA ENCK | NOVEMBER 3, 2021

The federal government has long subsidized America’s farmers, significantly affecting our food supply and what we eat. In a new primer, Director of Human Welfare Policy Tara O’Neill Hayes breaks down the various federal agricultural subsidies for certain crops.

Key points:

- The most highly subsidized crops—corn, soy, wheat, and rice—are the most abundantly produced and most consumed, often in the form of ultra-processed foods.
- Sugar is also highly subsidized in the form of indirect price supports that benefit producers and drive-up prices, yet sugar is also widely overconsumed.
- Fruits and vegetables, on the other hand, receive relatively little subsidization—and Americans eat much less produce than recommended.
- It is critical that both policymakers and the American public understand the influence that federal agricultural subsidies have on our food supply and diet and, in turn, our nutrition and health.

Read the analysis