

## Conclusions

Despite the numerous data limitations discussed throughout this study, the food supply servings estimates reported here represent the first attempt to measure changes in food consumption over a continuous time period using the Food Guide Pyramid as a dietary assessment tool. These results build on recent similar research which estimated Food Guide Pyramid servings from food-intake data collected from individuals over 2 nonconsecutive days during 1994-96. Both studies consistently conclude that most consumers have a long way to go in bringing their diets closer to Food Guide Pyramid serving recommendations. However, substantial differences between the servings estimates for the two data sets for some food groups suggest the need for additional research to determine the reasons behind these differences.

Information on how much average diets differ from Federal dietary recommendations is key to Federal efforts to monitor the dietary and nutritional status of the population under the Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan for National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Program mandated by the National Nutrition and Related Research Act of 1990. Also, because the servings estimates reported in this study are generated from commodity-based food supply data, food servings can be readily converted back to farm-level data, easing the translation of dietary recommendations into production and supply goals for farmers and the food industry. Finally, the time-series estimates reported here can be used as a baseline to project future trends in food demand and for comparing those trends against Federal dietary recommendations.