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Food Stamps Set For Guam In July

It's official: Guam will get food stamps in July.

How we got them and how many islanders will receive them is still up for debate.

The coupons, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, are designed to extend the purchasing power of every dollar spent for food. Low-income individuals and families are permitted to buy the coupon books at reduced prices - \$56 worth of food

stamps for \$30, for example. Eligibility for the program depends on the income of the individual or family and the number of persons in the family. Net income is established by deducting expenses such as auto payments, rent and school tuition.

The Division of Social Services now administers the USDA's food commodities program, with welfare clients and low-income persons

receiving food directly. Gov. Camacho yesterday claimed credit for the switch saying that his efforts had "been successful in getting the U.S. food stamp program extended to Guam." A spokesman said the Governor "firmed it up" during his recent Washington trip.

Two months ago, the Social Services division reported that "the only certain new program in the division's future is the introduction of the food stamps in July, when the Department of Agriculture ends the food commodity distribution program."

At that time, division officials said that, although formal approval had not come from Washington, the move to food stamps was next to a sure thing.

The USDA began commodity distribution in the days of mammoth stockpiles of American agricultural products, now decreased or depleted by increased foreign sales.

Camacho estimated that "nearly half our population may qualify for this program."

A Social Services source said yesterday that figure was "much too drastic."

Five per cent of Guam's population is now reached by the division, and that figure includes the blind, disabled and aged. Families now receiving food commodities alone - "borderline cases" - total 74.

The division spokesman said yesterday that the division has not received the final data from Washington that explains eligibility levels and stamp purchase prices.

A spokesman for the Governor said he understood that the criteria would "parallel" Hawaii's.