

## THANKSGIVING MEAL IS AFFORDABLE

An article written by Cyndie Sirekis, a director of news services with the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) caught my eye early in the week.

Sirekis referenced the annual AFBF Thanksgiving dinner survey which was first conducted in 1986 when the average cost of a Thanksgiving meal for a family of 10 was \$28.74. This year's average cost of \$38.10 is equivalent to \$18.99 in 1986 inflation-adjusted dollars, which means the real cost of the Thanksgiving dinner has declined 34 percent in the last 20 years. While Farm Bureau does not make any statistical claims about the data, it is a gauge of price trends around the nation.

A total of 96 volunteer shoppers from 32 states participated in this year's survey. The basic items priced for the survey included turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, rolls with butter, peas, cranberries, a relish tray of carrots and celery, pumpkin pie with whipped cream and beverages of coffee and milk, all in quantities sufficient to serve a family of 10. Farm Bureau volunteer shoppers were asked to look for the best possible prices, without taking advantage of special promotional coupons or purchase deals, such as spend \$50 and receive a free turkey.

A slightly higher price for a 16-pound turkey was responsible for much of the cost increase. Turkey prices were higher due in part to a smaller supply and greater demand for the birds, as well as increased processing costs. Other items showing a slight price increase this year included: a 12-oz. package of fresh cranberries, \$2.12; three pounds of sweet potatoes, \$2.91; a 14-oz. package of cubed stuffing, \$2.52; two 9-inch pie shells, \$1.98; a 12-oz. package of brown-n-serve rolls, \$1.78; a 16-oz. package of frozen green peas, \$1.46; and a 30-oz. can of pumpkin pie mix, \$1.89. The price of a combined pound of celery and carrots, used for a relish tray, increased to 71 cents.

Items that decreased slightly in price this year were: one gallon of milk, \$2.93 and a half-pint of whipping cream, \$1.47. A combined group of miscellaneous items, including coffee and ingredients necessary to prepare the meal (onions, eggs, sugar, flour, evaporated milk and butter), dropped in price by 41 cents to \$2.63. That's an amazing value for American consumers.

Many food-lovers who hear about the survey say the traditional Thanksgiving dinner sounds great. But then they ask, "What about...the green bean casserole? The butternut squash? Baked apples? My favorite scalloped potatoes, noodles or rice? Adding a ham or beef roast to the spread ... plus another kind of pie?"

Happily, the answer is that it's all within reach for just a few dollars more. Americans enjoy the most abundant, varied, affordable and safe food supply in the world, all produced with pride by hardworking farm and ranch families. Farm Bureau's survey menu has remained unchanged since 1986 to allow for consistent price comparisons.

U.S. consumers spend less than 10 percent of their disposable annual income on food. Consumers in other countries spend much more, in some cases more than half of their income. On-going research, ever changing production practices and abundant blessings from heaven have allowed today's farmers and ranchers to provide Americans with the widest variety of delicious and nutritious foods ever produced in the history of the world.

American consumers have enjoyed stable food costs for many years, especially when inflation is taken into account. The inflation-adjusted cost of a Thanksgiving dinner has remained around \$20 for the past 16 years despite some significant economic obstacles, such as rising fuel and fertilizer costs and ever increasing regulations. American farmers and ranchers continue to provide affordable food for consumers during the holidays and throughout the year. That is truly something to be thankful for.