

Walmart to Open up to 300 Stores Serving USDA Food Deserts by 2016; More than 40,000 Associates Will Work in These Stores

July 20, 2011

FAQs

Q: Why is Walmart making a commitment to help end food deserts?

A: No community should lack something so basic – so fundamental to human well-being – as access to food. This is a problem that Walmart can help solve.

First Lady Michelle Obama is helping millions of Americans lead healthier lives, and Walmart is proud to partner with her in this effort. In January, we stood together as Walmart made a groundbreaking commitment to make the food we sell healthier and the healthier food we sell more affordable. This announcement continues to fulfill one of the key commitments we made as part of Walmart's healthier food initiative.

By opening stores in the places where customers need them most, Walmart will help build healthier families and stronger communities – because every single person should have access to the food they need at prices they can afford.

Q: What is Walmart committing to do?

A: Walmart has committed to open between 275 and 300 stores serving the Department of Agriculture (USDA) designated food desert areas between now and the end of 2016 based on its current real estate plans. These stores will reach about 800,000 underserved Americans in both urban and rural areas. When combined with the 218 stores we have opened since 2007 in these areas, we will have a projected total of about 500 projects serving food deserts over ten years.

The stores will provide access to fresh and healthy food in more than 700 USDA designated food deserts and will serve approximately 1.3 million people living in these areas.

Q: What is a food desert?

A: According to the USDA, a [food desert](#) is an area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower income neighborhoods and communities.

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Q: How did Walmart calculate the number of stores that will serve food deserts and the number of people it will impact?

A: For this announcement, Walmart used the [USDA Food Desert Locator](#) to determine the number of stores that currently serve or will serve food desert areas.

In total, these stores will provide access to fresh and healthy food in more than 700 USDA designated food deserts and will serve approximately 1.3 million people living in these areas.

To be included in this figure, a person must both live in a USDA designated food desert area and be within one mile of an urban Walmart or within ten miles of a rural Walmart store.

Q: Why does the date range begin with the year 2007?

A: The USDA uses 2006 as the baseline for data used in their Food Desert Locator, including Walmart stores opened in 2006. By accounting for stores opened since 2007 this ensures a seamless transition.

Q: Do some of these stores serve more than one food desert?

A: Yes, there may be situations where more than one USDA designated food desert is less than one mile from a Walmart store.

Q: How many jobs does Walmart anticipate creating with these 275-300 stores?

A: Many areas classified as food deserts are also job deserts. More than 40,000 associates will work in these stores once they are open. These full- and part-time jobs will provide competitive wages and the opportunity to build a career with the company.

Q: How did Walmart calculate potential jobs associated with these projects?

A: Our estimate of more than 40,000 jobs takes into account a number of factors including the number of new associates needed to fill the available full- and part-time positions for a particular store format. A true determination of staffing needs will be made once these stores are completed.

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Q: What formats are included in today's announcement?

A: Today's announcement includes Walmart stores and Walmart Markets.

Q: Are Walmart's smaller formats such as the Walmart Express included in the 275-300 stores?

A: Today's announcement does not include stores yet to be considered through the company's real estate process or stores to be built in Walmart's new small format, Walmart Express. Walmart Express stores are designed to serve urban and rural areas and will likely address food deserts, but their locations are still in the evaluation process.

Q: What does Walmart's rigorous real estate process entail?

A: We evaluate each project and the benefit it will bring to the local community. Each store has been approved by the company's real estate committee, including senior executive leadership. This committee meets monthly to review each project.

The company will announce its overall capital strategy for growth at its conference for the investment community on October 12.

Q: Is Walmart adjusting the number of stores the company is remodeling, expanding and/or converting?

A: We continue to focus our growth on Walmart stores because they offer our customers the broadest assortment of items and they provide the company with the best return on our investment.

We are also finding new opportunities for growth with smaller formats such as Walmart Markets and Walmart Express stores.

We plan to add 110-120 Walmart stores (supercenters), 90-100 Walmart Markets (formerly Neighborhood Market) and 15-20 Walmart Express units (all pilots) this year.

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Q: What progress has been made on the commitments in Walmart's healthier foods initiative?

A: This announcement continues to fulfill one of the key commitments the company made alongside the First Lady in January 2011 as part of Walmart's [healthier food initiative](#). Today's commitment is an important step forward in meeting our goal to provide solutions to address the food deserts that exist all across the United States.

Walmart has also been working to address other key components of its initiative:

- **Reformulating packaged food items** by reducing sodium and added sugars on products such as Great Value branded canned pasta, pasta sauces and ketchup.
- **Making healthier food choices more affordable** by helping customers save money on fresh produce and actively tracking the prices of dozens of items.
- **Developing strong nutrition criteria and design for a simple front-of-pack "healthy food icon."**
- **Increasing charitable support for nutrition programs** by ensuring kids have access to nutritious food, and integrating nutrition education into summer programs. These programs are part of Walmart's \$25 million effort to expand services for kids this summer, by working with the YMCA of the USA, the National Recreation and Park Association and the National Summer Learning Association.

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