



Testimony
2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Listening Sessions
USDA/FNS
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Good morning. My name is Julie Morris. I am the Executive Communications Specialist with Earthbound Farm, one of the nation's largest growers and shippers of organic produce.

At Earthbound Farm, we have been promoting healthy eating habits for 24 years. Our founders, Drew and Myra Goodman, started farming organically on 2.5 acres in Carmel Valley, California. They were committed to using organic methods because they knew that it was inherently better for their health, the land and their children's health. Today, Earthbound Farm has grown to more than 40,000 acres of organically grown fruits and vegetables. We are known for our specialty salads, but are increasingly diversifying into other fresh-cut produce products, including sliced apples and carrots. We would like to see more of these delicious, healthy and easy-to-eat snacks in the nation's school cafeterias.

The 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act provides a significant opportunity to improve children's eating habits by: (1) including more fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals and (2) increasing the reimbursement rate to cover this cost.

By law, school lunch and breakfast must be consistent with the latest Dietary Guidelines. However, school meals currently include *fewer* fruits and vegetables than recommended. To meet the 2005 Dietary Guidelines schools should serve, at a minimum, *two servings of fruit and/or vegetable at breakfast and three servings of fruit and/or vegetable at lunch*. On average, America's children eat *less than half* of the daily amount of fruits and vegetables recommended for good health.

Serving more fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals is an effective strategy for increasing children's consumption, improving their health and reducing their risk for diseases and obesity. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program clearly demonstrates that students like fresh fruits and vegetables and will eat more when high quality, great tasting fruits and vegetables are provided to them in school.

Earthbound Farm recommends the following priorities for 2009 Child Nutrition Reauthorization:

1. Increase the reimbursement rate for school meals, tied specifically to serving more fruits and vegetables consistent with the Dietary Guidelines. Priority should be given to schools with the highest proportion of low-income students who may not have as much access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
2. Enact a national policy goal that every school has a salad bar in their cafeteria. Students eat more fruits and vegetables when they have a salad bar offering a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. With this national goal in place, USDA should provide incentives and training to schools to implement salad bars.
3. Provide funding for non-food assistance grants to enable schools to purchase equipment, such as refrigeration and salad bars, necessary for schools to serve more fresh fruits and vegetables consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.

4. Require USDA to significantly expand its commodity purchases of high quality fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables for schools. Last year, only 3% of all USDA fruit and vegetable purchases were fresh. In order for children to eat and enjoy fruits and vegetables at school, the lunch program must offer high quality and great tasting fresh produce.

Improving the healthfulness of school meals must be a goal of the 2009 CNR. Making more fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables and salad bars available to students and providing schools with the necessary financial resources will help accomplishing that goal. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you