

Testimony
Lorelei DiSogra Ed.D., R.D.
Institute of Medicine
School Meals Committee - Open Public Workshop
Washington, D.C.
July 9, 2008

Good afternoon, I am Dr. Lorelei DiSogra, Vice President for Nutrition and Health, at United Fresh Produce Association. United Fresh is a national trade organization representing the total fresh produce industry, including growers, fresh-cut processors, wholesaler/distributors, supermarkets and restaurants. As one of the mothers of the National 5 A Day Program, I've been engaged for 20 years in national initiatives to increase fruit and vegetable consumption at the National Cancer Institute, the California Department of Health Services and in the produce industry.

The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) Review of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program provides a significant opportunity to improve children's eating habits by increasing their fruit and vegetable consumption.

By law, school lunch and breakfast must be consistent with the latest Dietary Guidelines. However, school meals are currently 13 years out-of-date and include fewer fruits and vegetables than recommended.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**
- **Three servings of fruit and/or vegetable at lunch.**

Since America's children, on average, eat less than half of the daily amount of fruits and vegetables recommended for good health, it is critically important that school meals provide at least the minimum amount of fruits and vegetables recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for good health. It's time, its way over time, to revise school meals to include more fruits and vegetables.

Children like fresh fruits and vegetables and will eat more when they are available to them in ways that they like to eat them.

I strongly encourage the Committee to:

- (1) Recommend that school lunch and breakfast meal standards be revised to include more fruits and vegetables, consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.
- (2) Recommend that school meals include fruits and vegetables that kids like to eat and that will result in increased consumption, such as:

- Salad Bars - Every school should have a salad bar, with a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, in their cafeteria. Students eat significantly more fruits and vegetables when they have a salad bar.
- Serve more fresh produce – Build on the success of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program which clearly demonstrates that students like a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and will eat more when high quality, great tasting fruits and vegetables are provided.
- Serve more fresh-cut fruits and vegetables – When kid-friendly fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, like apple slices, baby carrots, pineapple push-ups, sliced oranges, etc. are available, children consume more.

(3) Recommend that school meals include a wide variety of nutrient dense fruits and vegetables every week.

(4) Acknowledge that it will cost more to serve healthier school meals and aggressively recommend that reimbursement rates be increased to cover the cost of including more fruits and vegetables and other healthier foods in school meals.

(5) Recommend that non-food assistance grants be made available to low-income schools so they can purchase refrigerators and salad bar equipment so they can serve more fresh fruits and vegetables.

(6) Recommend that 50% of USDA's commodity purchases of fruits and vegetables for schools be fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables. Currently, only 3% of the fruits and vegetables purchased by USDA's commodity program are fresh.

(7) Recommend expansion of the popular DOD Fresh Program. DoD Fresh enables schools to purchase a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, delivered directly to schools at the lowest cost.

School meals must serve as a model of good nutrition. Children can and will develop healthier eating habits if school meals are improved. Please seize this opportunity to bring school meals into the 21st Century to improve the health of our nation's children.

Thank you.