

**STATEMENT OF  
SUNKIST GROWERS**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE  
CHILD NUTRITION/WIC REAUTHORIZATION LISTENING SESSION  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2008  
SAN FRANCISCO**

Good morning. I am Michael Wootton, Senior Vice President of Sunkist Growers.

Sunkist is a 115-year-old non-stock, non-profit membership cooperative marketing association, headquartered in Sherman Oaks, California. We are owned by and operate for the benefit of our several thousand citrus growers in California and Arizona. Sunkist was formed to market its members' produce, to develop and maintain reliable markets, gain the best return for their fruit, and to consistently supply consumers with top quality fresh citrus fruit and processed citrus products.

On behalf of Sunkist's growers, I'd like to thank the Department and the Food and Nutrition Service for creating this opportunity and similar sessions in other areas of the country for interested parties to share their perspectives as you undertake a review of the operation and effectiveness of programs designed to address the nutritional needs of targeted consumer communities.

In the brief time available, I would like to focus on a few simple messages:

First, our interest and our industry's interest in improving children's diets;  
Second, urging the rapid implementation of the 2005 Nutritional Guidelines;  
Third, increase funding specifically for fresh fruit and vegetable products.

Like many others in the fresh fruit and vegetable industry, we at Sunkist take very seriously the alarm bells raised by the health community, the USDA itself, Members of Congress and many others concerning the increasing threat to public health in our country posed by obesity and poor diet among our children.

Our growers are particularly worried that if we do not get kids eating and enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables while they are young, we may lose them forever to less healthful dietary habits. To help address this risk, we strongly urge the prompt implementation of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines and that more fruits and vegetables be incorporated into school meal standards.

Nearly five years ago, as the issue of childhood obesity became a focal point of concern in public policy circles, Sunkist was approached by the lead nutritionist at the Boston Public Schools with the challenge of creating convenient healthful products, attractive to young consumers, while meeting established serving requirements. We responded by creating a

“sweet snack” experience for kids, without the additives of salt and sugar. We did this with our fresh cut line of fruits and vegetables called FUN FRUIT ®. These individualized, pre-packaged ready-to-eat fresh fruit and vegetable items have benefits beyond the tasty nutritional value including reduced school kitchen labor costs, improved food safety, portion controlled serving size and consumer friendly packaging. All fresh. No added sugar, no salt, no fat, no trans fats.

The availability of convenient, good tasting, fresh cut, ready-to-eat produce in school feeding programs has demonstrated dramatically improved dietary results in those schools. For example, U.S. consumption of carrots increased from 8 lbs to 12 lbs per year per capita following introduction of “baby carrots” into the marketplace. We have seen similar results in nutrition improvements with delivery of our Pineapple Pals® in North Carolina, Apple Grins® in New York City, Grape Giggles® in Iowa, and Orange Smiles® in Los Angeles.

Unfortunately, this eating experience is far too infrequent in our school feeding programs. On average, America’s children eat less than half the daily amount of fruits and vegetables recommended for good health. Changing the standards to better reflect the 2005 Dietary Guidelines is a critical first step. In the 2007/08 Farm Bill enacted earlier this summer, Congress wisely increased resources in several nutritional programs that will now offer improved opportunity for fresh fruit and vegetable offerings in our schools and other public feeding programs. Implementation of these programs must be a top priority for USDA. Improving kid’s diets today will improve America’s health tomorrow.

USDA should increase the reimbursement rate for school meals, tied specifically to serving more fruits and vegetables consistent with the Dietary Guidelines. Incentivize schools to establish salad bars in their cafeterias offering a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. To enable schools to better meet the needs of perishable commodities, provide funding for non-food assistance for the purchase of refrigeration and salad bars for schools to serve more fresh produce consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. USDA should significantly expand its use of the Commodity Purchasing Program for purchases of high quality fresh and fresh cut fruits for schools. We also recommend increased funding for the DOD Fresh Program which makes it easier and more efficient for schools to purchase a wide variety of fresh produce at the lowest costs delivered directly to schools.

The fruit and vegetable industry – both suppliers and processors – have invested significantly in the ability to distribute quality fruit and vegetable products with R&D and equipment to help manage the cold chain for perishable products. With your help and the implementation of needed policies, we look forward to delivering more innovative and healthful products to school districts across the country.

Thank you again, for the opportunity to express our views to you today.

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