

FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROGRAM

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The Evidence is Clear: Fresh Works

Program Background: The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) was first authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill and provides a fruit and vegetable snack to elementary school students outside the traditional school lunch and breakfast program. Due to its success and popularity, Congress has continued to support the program, expanding it nationwide in 2008. FFVP is available in all 50 states and implemented by the state child nutrition agency.

Congressional Intent: Congress has stated the goal of FFVP is to help schools create healthier school environments by providing healthier food choices; expanding the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience; and increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.

Evaluation: Despite its success, which has shown that serving fresh fruits and vegetables in FFVP can reduce childhood obesity, increase fruit and vegetable consumption both within the program and at lunch - there has been steady pressure to expand FFVP to include “all forms” – which include fresh, canned, dried or frozen.

A 2017 report commissioned by USDA and conducted by Mathematica Policy Research compared outcomes in schools that transitioned from serving only fresh fruits and vegetables in FFVP to participating in a pilot that allowed canned, dried or frozen (referred to as “CDF” here). The study found:

- **Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Decreased** - Students in the CDF pilot consumed one quarter fewer fruits and vegetables *per day* from fall 2014 to spring 2015. A substantial decrease in the consumption of fresh fruit during the pilot was the largest single cause of the overall decrease.
- **Dried and Canned Fruit Most Frequently Served** – During the CDF pilot, the most frequently served fruits and vegetables were dried (cranberries, raisins, and trail mix) and canned fruit (canned mandarin oranges and applesauce). Less than 1% of the CFD items served were frozen fruits or canned vegetables. No schools offered frozen or dried vegetables.
- **Variety Did Not Increase** – The CDF pilot did not increase the variety of fruits and vegetables served.
- **Students and Parents Prefer Fresh**– Students in the pilot reported preferring fresh fruits and vegetable compared to those that were CDF. Students preferred fresh oranges over canned mandarins, fresh pears over canned pears, and fresh apples over applesauce or dried apples. Two-thirds of parents in the pilot want the FFVP to only serve Fresh fruit and vegetable snacks.

- **Pilot Impacted School Lunch** – When schools participated in the CDF pilot, more canned fruit and less fresh fruit was served during lunch.
- **Calories Increased** – during the CDF pilot, the caloric content of the snack increased by 20 calories/day on average; this increase was attributed to the higher sugar content of dried and canned fruit compared to fresh.

In the 115th Congress, the *Fruit and Vegetable Access for Children Act* (H.R. 3402/S. 2064) was introduced to expand FFVP to include all forms. United Fresh Produce Association opposes this legislation because the evidence remains clear that maintaining the program as *fresh* produces the best outcome for students and schools and aligns with congressional intent of the program.

September 2017