

August 31, 2018

Dear 2018 Farm Bill Conferees:

Thank you for your important work on the 2018 farm bill. We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for keeping the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) “Fresh” in the 2018 farm bill. We urge you to oppose efforts to change FFVP by including canned, dried, frozen and pureed (all forms) in conference.

For more than a decade FFVP has been a model of success. FFVP provides a fresh fruit and vegetable snack to low-income elementary school students outside the school lunch and breakfast program. Due to its success and popularity, Congress has continued to support the program, expanding it nationwide in 2008. It has benefited more than four million young students in 7,600 of our nation’s lowest income elementary schools in school year 2017-2018.

A comprehensive national evaluation of FFVP demonstrated that the program can reduce childhood obesity and significantly increases children’s consumption of all forms of fruits and vegetables. FFVP is helping children create healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. Participating schools also report that FFVP is key to encouraging children to try new fruits and vegetables. FFVP has also been proven as an effective companion to nutrition education in schools.

A pilot program included in the 2014 farm bill allowed some schools to test introducing canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables in four states: Alaska, Delaware, Kansas and Maine. A 2017 evaluation found that the addition of alternatives to fresh produce had a detrimental impact on students. The pilot resulted in a 25 percent decrease in fresh fruit and vegetable consumption; the variety of fruits and vegetables did not increase; the caloric content of the snacks increased; and parents and students preferred fresh fruits and vegetables over canned, frozen and dried. When canned products were added to FFVP, there was less leftover fresh produce to use in meals. This change directly influenced the amount of fresh produce used in school meals. Instead these schools started serving more canned and dried fruits and fewer fresh fruits and vegetables at mealtimes.

Weakening the integrity of this highly effective, popular program by allowing non-fresh fruits and vegetables endangers the progress FFVP has made improving children’s health. This is inconsistent with the goal of FFVP to help schools create healthier school environments by expanding the variety of fruits and vegetables children experience; enhancing nutrition education; providing healthier food choices; and increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.

We urge you to keep the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program “Fresh” in the 2018 farm bill and oppose permanently altering FFVP to include all forms in conference.

Very respectfully,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Diabetes Association  
American Heart Association  
American Public Health Association  
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Fair Food Network

FoodCorps

Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Program in Nutrition, Teachers College Columbia University

National PTA

National WIC Association

Nemours Children's Health System

Public Health Institute

The Food Trust

United Fresh Produce Association