



FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROGRAM

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

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. The bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized FFVP as a fresh only program.

FFVP is available in all 50 states and implemented by the state child nutrition agency. The FFVP is voluntary for schools. Districts interested in participating apply to receive funding with the state agency and priority is given to schools with the highest percentage of free/reduced price lunch rates.

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. Approximately 95% of commodities purchased by USDA are canned, dried, frozen, or juiced. FFVP aims to expose students to a wider variety of fruits and vegetables through access to fresh products.

Evaluation: FFVP has been evaluated through several studies over the years, showing that serving fresh fruits and vegetables within FFVP can reduce childhood obesity and increase fruit and vegetable consumption both within the program and at lunch.

Some groups representing canned, dried, and/or frozen commodities, often referred to as “all forms”, continue to push to eliminate the fresh only status of the program. As a result, the 2014 Farm Bill authorized a multi-state “all forms” pilot. 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.

United Fresh continues to support FFVP as a way to not just feed children, but expose them to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that they might not otherwise have an opportunity to try at home or school. Students continue to have adequate access to “all forms” of produce through school breakfast and lunch programs. Maintaining the program as *fresh only* is the only proven way to ensure the best outcome for students and schools, and align with congressional intent of the program.

For more information please visit unitedfresh.org/nutrition.

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