



Should the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program be Expanded to Allow for Frozen and Processed Products?

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among students in the Nation's poorest elementary schools by providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to students separately from regular school meals. The program provides low income school children with a fresh fruit or vegetable snack, three to five days a week.

FFVP began as a pilot program in the 2002 Farm Bill and has been expanded several times. The 2014 Farm Bill authorized a new pilot program "For Procurement of Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables." Funding for the FFVP has risen from \$40 to \$150 million annually and is indexed to inflation.

ISSUE

The FFVP has been limited to fresh produce since its inception. Both the House and Senate versions of the pending Child Nutrition Reauthorization bills broaden eligibility to include frozen, canned, and dried produce.

The fresh produce industry strongly opposes an expansion of the FFVP because they believe that the program is an effective tool in promoting healthy eating habits among children.

Organizations representing frozen, canned, and dried produce support expanding the program to include their products. This provision was supported in early 2016 by a coalition that included AFBF and state Farm Bureaus from California, Iowa, Michigan, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. The coalition believes that frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables provide an affordable option for increasing the variety available year-round, citing USDA's 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as recommending fruits and vegetables of all kinds, "regardless of the form."

Current AFBF policy is silent on the issue of opening the FFVP to frozen, canned, or dried produce. AFBF policy does support local control of school lunch and breakfast programs, but the FFVP is a snack program not affiliated with school lunch and breakfast.

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill expired in September 2015. The House and Senate reauthorizations may be considered in the 114th Congress. Each bill would allow frozen, canned, and dried snacks to be served through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. The House Education and The Workforce Committee also expands the program to tree nuts, while requiring the USDA to create guidance on nutrition standards for acceptable food snacks. The Senate Agriculture Committee's bill creates a "hardship exemption" that allows all forms of fruits and vegetables for four years.

OPTION #1

Support expansion of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to allow for frozen, canned, or processed fruits and vegetables.

OPTION #2

Oppose expansion of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to allow for frozen, canned, or processed fruits and vegetables.