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**Updated WIC food package a win for families and the produce industry**

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November 18, 2022

The updated food package for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, which was released by U.S. Department of Agriculture yesterday, up to quadruples the amount of fruits of vegetables for program participants and aligns with current nutrition science, including the 2017 recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine and the 2020-25 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Since 2017, the industry has been advocating for an updated WIC food package to permanently increase the Cash Value Benefit for fruits and vegetables to the levels consistent with the DGA and the 2017 NASEM recommendations.



Cathy Burns

“WIC is one of the crown jewels of our nation’s nutrition programs, and today’s announcement means that WIC children and families can truly access fruits and vegetables in amounts consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” said Cathy Burns, CEO of the [International Fresh Produce Association](#). “The fresh produce industry celebrates the increased emphasis on fruits and vegetables and will continue to provide families with delicious and nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables for families so their children can grow and thrive.”

Increasing access to fruits and vegetables will promote nutrition and health for the 6.1 million individuals who participate in the WIC program. Prior research found that obesity rates were decreasing among 2- to 4-year-olds participating in the program after the food package was updated in 2009 to better align with 2005 DGA.

Additionally, since the WIC program introduced the Cash Value Benefit in 2009, which allows participants to purchase fruits and vegetables of their choice as an additional part of their WIC food package, it has consistently been one of the most highly redeemed components of the program and

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has proven to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

The amount for the CVB increased as part of the American Rescue Plan in March 2021, initially for four months. Congress later extended the WIC benefit increase in September 2021, at amounts recommended by NASEM - \$24/month for children, \$43 for pregnant and postpartum participants, and \$47 for breastfeeding participants to spend solely on fruits and vegetables.

“Preliminary data has shown that WIC participants increased their purchasing of fruits and vegetables and were able to purchase more varieties of fruits and vegetables with the increased CVB amounts — a win-win for participants, retailers, and growers,” said Mollie Van Lieu, vice president of nutrition and health at IFPA. “Most importantly, the update resulted in a one-third cup daily increase in fruit and vegetable consumption in young children. This is a win for the millions of families who rely on the program and a huge step in our fight to ensure all Americans are meeting DGA recommendations.”

IFPA has continued to advocate for extension of the increased benefit amounts through appropriations and are grateful that this action could make the increase permanent while still aligning with congressional intent to align WIC with the latest nutrition science. USDA will accept comments on the proposed update through February 2023.

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