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IFPA gains support on Hill for procurement bill

The [International Fresh Produce Association](#) is applauding Senator Sherrod Brown (OH) and Reps. David Valadao (CA-22) and Rosa DeLauro (CT-3) for introducing the Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act. The legislation will give the U.S. Department of Agriculture tools to diversify the produce supply chain that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks and other nonprofits that serve the nutrition insecure. This is one of 15 bills that have been introduced in Congress related to the 2018 farm bill reauthorization that has the support of the International Fresh Produce Association and the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance.

“The demand for fresh fruits and vegetables at food banks and those serving the nutrition insecure remains high but the existing model limits both the suppliers and varieties offered to consumers,” said Mollie Van Lieu, IFPA vice president of nutrition and health. “IFPA thanks Reps. Valadao (CA-22) and DeLauro (CT-3) and Senator Sherrod Brown (OH) for their support of this bill which will unlock our diverse and local supply chains to distribute more U.S grown fresh produce to those who need it most.”

On average, USDA directly purchases more than \$2 billion annually of domestic commodities for redistribution to feeding sites across the U.S. Currently only five bulk fresh produce commodities are available within the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) resulting in just under \$6.5 million in purchases. The legislation will expand USDA’s ability to tap into the established diverse, local and regional supply chains by considering a value-based bid process instead of the current “lowest-cost bid” that eliminates many growers and distributors from participating.

A value-based buying approach in awarding contracts extends opportunity to more growers and distributors of all sizes. Additionally, this makes available a wider variety of high-quality produce, providing more options reflective of the preferences of the populations served at the feeding sites.

IFPA recently welcomed hundreds of members to Washington, DC, for the September Washington Conference. During this time, members marched on the Hill to advocate for a number of industry priorities including labor, food safety, nutrition and more. The Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act is just one example of legislation IFPA has been advocating for this year.

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