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Expand Products Available Through Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

ISSUE

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 schoolchildren with a fresh fruit or vegetable snack, three to five days a week.

The 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 million to \$150 million annually and is indexed to inflation.

BACKGROUND

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 it believes the existing 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. They believe that frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables provide an affordable option for increasing the variety of fruits and vegetables that are available all year. USDA's 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that fruits and vegetables of all kinds become eligible for the program "regardless of the form."

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill expired in 2015. The House and Senate reauthorization bills were not completed in 2016, but both the House and Senate versions would have allowed the program to use frozen, canned, and dried snacks. The House Education and the Workforce Committee version would have expanded the program to tree nuts and required USDA to create guidance on nutrition standards for acceptable food snacks. The Senate Agriculture Committee bill would have created a "hardship exemption" that allowed all forms of fruits and vegetables to be used for the next four years.

Consideration of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill in 2017 is uncertain.

FARM BUREAU POLICY

Incorporating all types of domestic fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned and dried) into the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, providing an affordable option for increasing the variety of produce available year-round for low-income school children and creating more market opportunities for producers. Priority must be given to fresh and locally grown product when available not withstanding price.