

**Interim Report on the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program  
Fiscal Year 2007  
Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

**Introduction**

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) at the national level. Most participating States administer the FFVP through State Departments of Education except for Texas, where the FFVP is administered by the State Department of Agriculture.

The FFVP is intended to introduce school children to fresh fruits and vegetables. Anecdotal information from schools and State agencies indicates the FFVP improved children's eating habits. A few schools not selected to continue the FFVP for the upcoming school year indicated, due to the program's popularity, they will seek private donations to continue offering additional fresh fruits and vegetables.

The FFVP is consistent with and supports the recommendations of a recent report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to provide healthier snack choices in schools, including fruits and vegetables.

In addition to local partnerships developed by FFVP participant schools, FNS' national partners, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Cancer Institute, United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, and Produce for Better Health, continue to support the goals of the FFVP and work closely with many FFVP participant schools.

**Background**

The FFVP began as a pilot project under the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-171). The Act provided \$6 million for the purchase of fresh and dried fruits and fresh vegetables in four States: Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio and for one Indian Tribal Organization (ITO), Zuni Tribe in New Mexico. The purpose of the pilot was to determine best practices for increasing fresh and dried fruit and fresh vegetable consumption in schools. Many States expressed interest in participating in the pilot.

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265) permanently authorized the FFVP and expanded the program to include four additional States and two additional ITOs. The Act provides \$9 million each fiscal year starting in 2005 for 25 schools in each of the eight States and a total of 25 schools among the three ITOs. The eight permanent FFVP States include Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington, and the three ITOs include New Mexico (the Zuni), South Dakota (the Oglala Sioux Tribe), and Arizona (the Gila River

Pima Community and the Tohona O'odham), members of the Inter-Tribal Council. For Fiscal Year 2007, a total of 225 schools participated in the FFVP.

Agricultural Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2006 (Public Law 109-97), provided an additional \$6 million for six additional States for one year. The nonpermanent States include Connecticut, Idaho, New Mexico (New Mexico participates as an ITO and as a State), Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin, for a total of 150 schools (25 in each State). As of June 30, 2007, most schools in the nonpermanent States had expended their FY 2006 FFVP allocation and no additional funds have been appropriated. However, several schools in the nonpermanent States retained sufficient funds to continue limited FFVP operations through June 30, 2008.

Because additional funds were not appropriated for the nonpermanent States in FY 2007, FNS did not request participating school information. Attached to this report are lists of all participating schools for the permanent States.

### **Reports to Congress on the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program**

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-265, June 30, 2004) requires the Administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service to submit interim reports to Congress for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2008 describing the activities carried out during the respective fiscal year. This report represents the third report submitted in fulfillment of this requirement.

Additionally, the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS) conducted a survey of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot program and issued a Report to Congress in May 2003. The survey respondents reported being very satisfied with the program and expressed a strong desire for schools to continue participating.

In September 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released results of an evaluation of a Mississippi fresh fruit and vegetable program funded by CDC. While study conclusions were limited by the evaluation design, the data suggest the program might have had positive impacts on secondary students' attitudes, preferences, and eating behaviors, but might have been less successful at impacting 5th grade students.

This report summarizes monthly reimbursement claim reports submitted by the 225 schools participating in the FFVP permanent States, and summarizes operations gathered from program reviews of each school's Year-End Report. The Year-End Report consists of nine questions including items offered, delivery methods, and nutrition education efforts. In addition, FNS reviewed hundreds of FFVP reimbursement claim reports, including comments and observations from school food service personnel and other interested parties. Ongoing informal conversations with program operators and State agency staff administering the FFVP supplemented the school report information.

## **Program Management and Implementation**

Program management and implementation processes remained constant from the previous year's FFVP operations. Participating schools must offer fresh or dried fruit and fresh vegetables, but retain flexibility for selecting which items to offer.

FNS distributed FFVP funds proportionately among all participating schools on the basis of enrollment. The allocation per student for FY 2007 for the permanent eight States and three ITOs totaled approximately \$86.

The six nonpermanent FFVP States did not receive additional funding after the initial FY 2006 appropriation. The initial FY 2006 allocation per student was approximately \$75.

Schools with 100 or fewer students are funded at the rate of \$100 per student.

Schools are directed not to use more than 10 percent of FFVP funds for administrative costs, which may include small equipment purchases.

FNS conducts regular conference calls with all participating States and partners to discuss program operations and funding procedures, answer any questions, and receive updates. The conference calls continue to support FFVP implementation and management.

## **Delivery Methods**

No major changes were made from the previous year's typical delivery methods, including classroom service, kiosks, and free vending machines. The most popular venue remains classroom service, followed by cafeteria and kiosk services. While classroom service created cleaning issues, schools successfully addressed the issue and do not consider it an insurmountable obstacle to participation. Both previously-participating and new teachers preferred classroom service due to the opportunity to incorporate educational components with the distribution of fruits and vegetables.

While classroom service remained the most popular, many schools preferred the flexibility of a variety of delivery approaches to accommodate changing schedules.

## **Timing of Service Delivery**

Schools may choose a variety of timeframes during the school day to provide the fresh produce. FNS continued to observe most schools preferred timeframes either in the morning soon after the school day began, or between the end of lunch and before the end of the school day. Many schools chose to provide fresh fruit and vegetables several times a day.

## **Key Factors to Program Success**

The key factors to program success remain the commitment and support of school and district administration, student and parental involvement, a school's ability to purchase a variety of fresh produce, partnerships with local farmers, use of prepackaged items, and positive program publicity in the community. In the *End of the Year Reports* for FY 2007, schools often noted frequent delivery of produce provides more appealing and fresher products, resulting in more student interest and higher consumption levels.

Schools with several years of FFVP experience noted because students have had repetitive exposure to fresh produce and accompanying nutrition education, the students look forward to the fruits and vegetables offered and are starting to think more about a healthy diet. Contributing factors to program success also included the level of State support and non-school partnerships.

## **FFVP Popularity**

The FFVP remained popular with students, parents, school administrators and foodservice staff. Some States continued the program in the same schools while other States selected a few new schools and operated a mixture of old and new program schools. Anecdotal information from participating schools indicated a shift in students' preferences from processed, high calorie, and high fat snack foods to fruits and vegetables. Anecdotal information also suggested students made healthier choices in lunches brought from home.

States that solicited applications from schools each year for participation in the FFVP continued to be overwhelmed by applications and interest in the free fresh fruits and vegetables provided by the program.

## **Educational or Promotional Activities**

Many States required a detailed nutrition education plan as part of the application process. Schools varied in the extent and type of activities used for integrating nutrition education and promotion into a school's activities and events. Some schools incorporated nutrition education into multiple daily classroom activities, including math, health, geography, and science. For example, some schools highlighted a fruit or vegetable each week by developing lesson plans, school announcements, and activities focused on the highlighted food item. USDA's Team Nutrition publication, *Fruits & Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More*, helped promote fruit and vegetable consumption.

## **Most Popular Fruits**

The most popular fruits offered did not change significantly from the previous year. Berries, apples, bananas, pineapples, and grapes were again noted as the most popular. Within categories of fruits, including apples, schools made additional varieties available to broaden students' exposure. Schools also introduced more exotic types of fruits, including quince, persimmons, cherimoya, and passion fruit. Students reported while they do not always like the lesser-known fruits, the students appreciated having the

opportunity to sample the fruits and learn about their origin. Overall, schools reported fruits are generally more popular than vegetables.

### **Most Popular Vegetables**

The most popular vegetables remained constant from the previous year, including carrots, celery, broccoli, and cauliflower. The vegetables are usually served uncooked with dip. Schools also offered students vegetables that may not be popular or readily available in the students' geographic area. Schools typically made multiple attempts to serve new items, as repeated exposure was often the key to acceptance of a new food.