



White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

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**A Fruit and Vegetable Moonshot:
Recommendations from the
International Fresh
Produce Association**

July 2022

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About International Fresh Produce Association:

The International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) is the largest and most diverse international association serving the entire fresh produce supply chain and the only to seamlessly integrate world-facing advocacy and industry-facing support. We exist to bring the industry together to create a vibrant future for all. We grow our member's prosperity by conducting advocacy; connecting people and ideas; and offering guidance that allows us all to take action with purpose and confidence. While IFPA is built on the legacy of United Fresh and Produce Marketing Association, it is not just a combination. It is transformational. Recognizing the industry required an even more powerful and unified voice, the leaders of the former United Fresh and Produce Marketing Association chose not to merge, but rather to create an entirely new organization to supersede their organizations, effective January 1, 2022.



For the first time since 1969, in September 2022 the White House will hold a conference to mobilize the public and private sectors around a coordinated strategy to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity to reduce diet-related disease by 2030.

Overview: On behalf of the International Fresh Produce Association, we thank the Biden-Harris Administration for their ongoing work to make the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health a meaningful opportunity to address our nation's nutrition insecurity crisis and appreciate the opportunity to provide formal recommendations. We also wish to thank Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Mike Braun (R-IN) and Representatives Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Jackie Walorski (R-IN) for their leadership over the past several years in making this conference a reality. The core mission of the International Fresh Produce Association is to grow consumption of fruits and vegetables to achieve a vibrant future for all.

Guiding Principle: To achieve the Conference's goal of solving hunger and addressing healthy eating, and in turn, reduce diet-related disease, we must adopt strategies that collectively reach the majority of Americans by 2030.

The federal government has established a strong framework for nutrition targets through the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) and the call to make "half the plate" fruits and vegetables. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has again reported that 9 out of 10 Americans do not meet the guidelines and many of the government's own nutrition programs fall short in delivering the resources Americans need to follow the DGA.

Despite decades of this evidence-based advice, consumption trends have not budged.

It is our belief that we cannot reverse the overweight and obesity epidemic without a targeted, systemic approach of increasing Americans' fruit and vegetable consumption. It is time that we embark on a "fruit and vegetable moonshot" through 2030 by adopting systemic, scalable policy and programs that are guided by the principle of "millions of mouths at a time" and achieve the federal government's DGA guidance to make half the plate fruits and vegetables.

We appreciate the Administration approaching the national strategy through the five pillars and respectfully put forth the following recommendations that will help achieve fruit and vegetable consumption goals.

Please note that we are not providing recommendations on physical activity, as it is outside our organization's expertise and have chosen to focus our recommendations specific to fruits and vegetables. However, as the listening sessions have indicated, we also recognize that, in order to achieve the White House Conference goals, it will take a multi-faceted approach and we encourage the White House to incorporate other stakeholders' expertise, particularly those with lived experiences of poverty and nutrition insecurity.

Appreciating that this effort cannot be achieved by the government alone, we are fully committing the industry to privately achieve these goals as a recognition of our shared responsibility in the national strategy.



Recommendation #1:

Embed a dedicated fruit and vegetable benefit within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

- Modeled after the successful cash value benefit (CVB) in the WIC program.
- Available to all SNAP participants, but could start with households with children under 18, as a resource as children “age out” of the WIC program.
- The level of the fruit and vegetable benefit should be determined by the National Academy of Sciences consistent with the process of the WIC CVB calculation to be consistent with DGA.

Rationale: Recent United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) research shows that SNAP recipients must allocate 40 percent of the SNAP benefit on fruits and vegetables to meet DGA targetsⁱ. Yet, American households allocate, on average, 26 percent of food budget on fruits and vegetables, with levels significantly lower for low-income and SNAP householdsⁱⁱ. Additionally, low-income consumers consistently cite affordability as the primary barrier to healthy eatingⁱⁱⁱ. While fruits and vegetables cost less per serving than less nutrient-dense foods, consumer perception drives consumption challenges^{iv}.

Establishing a dedicated benefit for fruits and vegetables can help directly address this barrier. Currently, the WIC benefit for fruits and vegetables represents approximately 37 percent of the value of overall benefit. Since the WIC program introduced the CVB in 2009, it has consistently been one of the most highly redeemed components of the program, has proven to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, is associated with a reduction of obesity in children participating in the program, and resulted in increases in fresh produce availability at WIC-retailers – benefiting individuals beyond just recipients.^{vi} Because the CVB operates as a dollar amount, participants can select the fruit and vegetable of their choice, proving to be a flexible option across diverse cultures, seasons, and supply chain disruptions.



Pillar I: Improve Access and Affordability

Recommendation #2:

Expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) to all elementary schools that qualify under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and work towards expanding the program to all low-income middle and high schools.

Rationale: Congress first allocated funding for the FFVP in 2002 and quickly expanded to all states and territories due to its success and popularity. A USDA evaluation found FFVP increases consumption among low-income students, helps reduce plate waste at school meals, and, most notably, can reduce obesity rates by three percent^{viiiviii}. The program is currently oversubscribed with many more districts (all low-income) applying than funded.

Expanding options to participate in FFVP to all CEP schools could significantly improve access to fruits and vegetables by expanding the number of participating schools from 7,600 today to approximately 30,000.





Pillar I: Improve Access and Affordability

Recommendation #3:

Recalibrate and modernize USDA purchasing programs to address nutrition insecurity and reach additional communities and nonprofit entities.

- USDA should procure and distribute foods, including a wide variety of fresh fruit and vegetables, in amounts that will systemically address consumption deficits for those who lack consistent access.
- Distribution programs should expand access to reputable nonprofits meeting the needs of their communities that are not currently being reached by USDA Emergency Feeding Programs.

Rationale: While USDA makes efforts to ensure purchases fall within the DGA-recommended foods, there is no systemic effort to use purchasing programs to address the foods most under-consumed. Most USDA emergency feeding programs do not include a wide variety of fresh fruit and vegetable options, including the Emergency Feeding Assistance Program (TEFAP), Food Distribution for Indian Reservations (FDIPR), and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CFSP) for seniors. The Fiscal Year 2020 USDA State of Origin report shows only four varieties of fresh produce commodities were purchased, representing \$8.8 million out of \$1.8 billion in purchases overall.^{ix}

The USDA's approach of utilizing a lowest-cost bid model, coupled with a procurement and delivery system not designed to be inclusive of fresh fruits and vegetables, has had the unintended consequence of leaving out the majority of domestically-grown fresh fruits and vegetables from USDA emergency feeding programs. Additionally, limiting distribution to TEFAP recipient agencies has resulted in many reputable nonprofits being unable to access foods to meet the needs of particularly hard-to-reach populations.



Pillar II: Integrate Nutrition and Health

Recommendation #4:

Embed Produce Prescriptions as a Covered Benefit within the Health System.

Rationale: Because 80 percent of healthcare dollars are allocated to preventable chronic disease, we believe there is no greater opportunity to achieve the Conference’s goals than using the healthcare system to deliver foods of high dietary quality through a covered benefit for fruits and vegetables^x. Federal health programs including Medicare, Medicaid and those served by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service, respectively, cover more than 150 million Americans. Providing an evidence-based produce prescription for patients who are eligible due to diet-related health risk or condition, food insecurity or other documented challenges in accessing nutritious foods, will systematically improve fruit and vegetable consumption and reduce factors that contribute to diet-related chronic disease. Nutrient-dense food interventions have been shown to reduce healthcare costs, but more data is needed^{xi}. The federal government and Health and Human Services (HHS) is well-positioned to lead this effort to deliver better outcomes for seniors and low-income consumers, and to grow evidence that can lead to a covered benefit in private insurers to cover additional Americans at risk for, or suffering from, diet-related disease.



As a founding steering committee member of the [National Produce Prescription Collaborative](#), we support the detailed recommendations of the Collaborative in making produce prescriptions a reality.



Pillar III: Empower All Consumers to Make and Have Access to Healthy Choices

Recommendation #5:

Promote Nutrition Clarity in Food Labeling of Fruits and Vegetables at FDA.

- Require foods that make fruit and vegetable claims (in name or imaging) to disclose the quantity of fruits and vegetables per serving in household measures (e.g. “contains 1/8 teaspoon of strawberries per 1-cup serving”).
- Require foods depicting fruits and vegetables (in name or imaging) that lack any meaningful amount in forms consistent with DGA, to bear “contains no fruits and vegetables” disclosure.

Rationale: Labeling touches every consumer regardless of socio-economic status. While we must focus on those who are most nutrition insecure, all Americans under-consume fruits and vegetables. Every time a consumer seeks nutritious food and is sold a food or beverage that undermines their health, it is a missed opportunity to reduce diet-related disease. We know that more than half of all consumers regularly examine the nutrition facts label or ingredients list when shopping and 40 percent say they consider labeling statements about health and nutrition benefits^{xii}.

To ensure that Americans are empowered to make healthful decisions and not misled as they make food choices for themselves and family, FDA should require clear, transparent declarations on foods making fruit and vegetable claims. A meaningful amount should only apply to fruits and vegetables in forms consistent with the DGA recommendations to consume “mostly whole” fruits and vegetables.



Pillar III: Empower All Consumers to Make and Have Access to Healthy Choices

Recommendation #6:

Financially Incentive Fruits and Vegetables for All Americans.

- Make fruits and vegetables an authorized expense under both Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) and Flexible Savings Accounts (FSAs)
- Federal tax credit for fruit and vegetables that meet DGA recommendations

Rationale: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data show that nine out of ten Americans do not meet DGA recommendations, including those across all socio-economic levels. Providing financial incentives through FSAs, HSAs and tax credits could serve as a catalyst to increase consumption and reduce diet-related disease on a population level. More research is needed in this space, so we encourage the federal government to invest in measuring how these policies could positively impact dietary quality.





Pillar IV: Enhance Nutrition and Food Security Research

Recommendation #7:

Establish a cabinet-level National Director of Food and Nutrition to coordinate food and nutrition security research across governmental departments.

- Food and nutrition research spans multiple government departments, including USDA, HHS, and others. Encouraging collaboration across departments, and with private sector partners like academia, will improve effectiveness and efficiencies of nutrition research.
- Develop consistent government-wide policies that promote and support modern plant breeding and biotechnology approaches that include focus on enhancing nutritional contents of foods of plant origin and reducing allergenicity.

Rationale: Stronger federal investments should be made in nutrition research to best identify strategies to improve nutrition and health. Researching and evaluating food and nutrition programs and their impact are key to determining successful strategies to improve nutrition security and increase consumption of nutritious foods.

Currently, nutrition research is conducted across 27 institutes, centers, and offices within the federal government and lacks dedicated federal leadership to coordinate, communicate, and ensure the research is effectively influencing public policy and driving population change. Leadership coordination of nutrition research is instrumental in preventing or reducing the risk of diet-related chronic diseases and also in treatment of these conditions.



Pillar IV: Enhance Nutrition and Food Security Research

Recommendation #8:

Collect and analyze purchasing data from all federal feeding and nutrition programs as a mechanism to measure alignment with, and progress towards, achieving nutrition security.

Rationale: Achieving the Conference's goal of solving hunger and addressing diet-related disease will require continued partnership between the public and private sector including government, industry, academia, and the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. Data available on foods available and accessed across the federal government's nutrition programs can aid efforts to improve availability, demand, access, and ultimately, consumption of foods consistent with DGA recommendations. Additionally, clear data will allow the federal government to, on a consistent basis, measure progress on goals to improve nutrition security for Americans.





Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Embed a dedicated fruit and vegetable benefit within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Recommendation #2: Expand the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) to all elementary schools that qualify under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and work towards expanding program to all low-income middle and high schools.

Recommendation #3: Recalibrate and modernize USDA purchasing programs to address nutrition insecurity and reach additional communities and nonprofit entities.

Recommendation #4: Embed Produce Prescriptions as a covered benefit within the health system.

Recommendation #5: Promote nutrition clarity in food labeling of fruits and vegetables at FDA.

Recommendation #6: Financially incentivize fruit and vegetables for all Americans.

Recommendation #7: Establish a cabinet-level national Director of Food and Nutrition to coordinate food and nutrition security research across governmental departments.

Recommendation #8: Collect and analyze purchasing data from all federal feeding and nutrition programs as a mechanism to measure alignment with, and progress towards, achieving nutrition security.



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