



New Healthy WIC Food Packages Farmers' Markets Can Play a Key Role In Providing Fruits and Vegetables

The new WIC food packages improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods in the program and in neighborhoods, increase participants' choice and expand cultural food options by offering fruits, vegetables, and other new foods.

The recommendations sent in the many comment letters on the proposed regulations helped USDA to strengthen the regulations it issued on December 6, 2007 compared to the prior proposal. Here is a summary of the rules for fruits and vegetables:

Fruits and Vegetables

- Participating women will receive WIC vouchers for \$8 for fruits and vegetables each month: children will receive \$6 in fruit and vegetable vouchers.
- Exclusively breastfeeding women, a small category of participants in WIC, will receive \$10 in fruit and vegetable vouchers each month.
- For infants age 6 to 12 months, fruits and vegetables have been added in the form of 128 ounces of baby food.

Allowable Fruits and Vegetables

- All fruits and vegetables are allowed except white potatoes.
- Fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are allowed.
- Organic fruits and vegetables can be allowed if they meet State product and price criteria.

WIC Participant Choice

- State agencies must allow participants to use their WIC fruit and vegetable vouchers to choose any WIC-eligible fruit and vegetable.

Farmers' Markets and Roadside Stands

- For the first time, State agencies have the option to authorize farmers at farmers' markets and roadside stands to accept WIC vouchers for fruits and vegetables.
- USDA adopted the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program definition of farmer: "an individual authorized by the State agency to sell eligible fruits and vegetables to participants at a farmers' market or roadside stand. Individuals who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized."
- States can modify their WIC vendor agreement to address the unique circumstances of farmers' markets, allowing them to participate as seasonal vendors and exempt them from stocking the full WIC package of foods, e.g. cereal.
- States can enter into one agreement with the farmer that includes the requirements for both the WIC and WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs.
- Farmers' markets may be excluded from WIC monitoring if they are monitored by the WIC Farmers' Market Program.
- The WIC Farmers' Market Program remains a separate program and is unchanged by these new regulations.



Fruit and Vegetable Cash Vouchers

- The split in each state will be determined by the state agency based on what is “most beneficial to participants and cost effective within the WIC redemption infrastructure and environment.” States could provide three \$2 fruit and vegetable vouchers to each child per month or one \$6 voucher, or some other breakout.
- Stores and farmers’ markets cannot give participants cash back for the unspent portion of a fruit and vegetable voucher.
- States can allow participants to pay the difference when the purchase of fruits and vegetables exceeds the value of the voucher.

Inflation Index

- The value of the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit will keep up with inflation through an annual cost of living adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index for Fruits and Vegetables.

Implementation Timeline

- States will have until October 2009 to implement the new food packages.



Next Steps

- The next step is to work with your State WIC agency to help ensure the new changes in the WIC food package work “on the ground,” including in communities where accessing healthy food often raises unique challenges.
- Working with state WIC advisory councils (or developing them in states where they do not currently exist) can provide information and recommendations to WIC agencies to help ensure that clients benefit fully from the new fruits and vegetables in the food package.
- Share your ideas with the coalitions, associations and organizations working on these issues.

Resources

- Benefits in New York State’s WIC fruit & vegetable demonstration project report:
http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/nutrition/wic/docs/vegetable_fruit_demo_project.pdf
(When this project was conducted, States couldn’t use farmers’ markets for the WIC program.)
- Journal article on the Fruit and Vegetable Pilot in the Public Health Foundation WIC program:
<http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/pubs/files/JADA.052006.pdf> (This project included Farmers’ Market.)
- FRAC’s table of the total value of the new fruit and vegetable vouchers by state, fact sheets, and a link to the new regulations/interim final rule:
www.frac.org
- State WIC agency contact information and other useful USDA materials: www.fns.usda.gov

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