

## AVAILABILITY OF FRESH PRODUCE IN NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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### Summary

Fruit and vegetable consumption is an important component of a balanced diet consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food Guide Pyramid. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) promotes the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, in all forms – fresh, frozen, canned, dried and juices, through its nutrition assistance programs. Some nutrition assistance programs, such as the National School Lunch Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program, provide foods directly to eligible recipients, while other nutrition assistance programs, such as the Food Stamp Program, provide recipients with the financial support to purchase foods, including fruits and vegetables directly from retailers and farmers. In fiscal year 2001, almost \$7 billion of FNS program funds went to support consumption of fruits and vegetables by children and low-income families. FNS has encouraged the increased availability of fresh fruits and vegetables by partnering with the Department of Defense to purchase and deliver a greater variety of fresh produce for schools and Indian reservations. USDA continues to explore ways to offer a greater variety of commodities in the nutrition assistance programs, while providing nutrition education that promotes the acceptance of these offerings in recipient's diets.

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