



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Bob Wise
Governor

Paul L. Nusbaum
Secretary

December 12, 2003

Patricia Daniels
Director, Supplemental Food Programs Division
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520
Alexandria, VA 22302

Re: Revisions to the WIC Food Packages, 7 CFR Part 246

Dear Ms. Daniels:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Public Notice 7 CFR Part 246, Revision to the WIC Food Packages. Much consideration has been given to the redesigning of the WIC food packages. A revision to current WIC food packages is not only needed to better meet current dietary guidelines, but also to better meet the needs of WIC participants.

In order to better understand WIC participants' needs, a Focus Group was recently conducted. The Focus Group contained a total of 60 individuals – 39 adult heads-of-household who are eligible but not currently participating and 21 adult heads-of-household who are currently enrolled in West Virginia's WIC program. The following statements include some key findings that were found:

- Vouchers for formula were valued more than vouchers they receive when their child is two-years old.
- Many would like food to be better distributed throughout the month and would like a wider variety of food.
- The enrollees with more than one child in the program mentioned receiving multiple gallons of milk for each and lacking space in the refrigerator to store it.
- When asked what they would like to see included in the WIC program were quick to come up with a list which included the addition of fruits and vegetables.

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Since we cannot fully implement Farmer's Market Nutrition Program due to limited state matching funds, we strongly urge the addition of fruit and vegetables to food packages to increase all WIC participants' access to fruits and vegetables year round.

Other recommendations for the revision of food packages include the following:

- Allow for more food package tailoring/combinations to better meet the needs of each WIC participant.
- Reduce the total amount of juice on the infant package and allowing jars of a variety of fruit and vegetable baby food when age appropriate on the infant food package.
- Decrease partial or total quantity of juice on adult and child food packages by instead offering fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables.
- Allow the use of alternative milk/calcium-rich food sources, such as tofu, yogurt, leafy green vegetables, or fortified soymilk as replacement for milk on women and children food packages.
- Allow the use of alternative protein-rich food sources such as nuts/seeds, or canned beans.
- Allow substitutions between protein rich food such as eggs, peanut butter, canned/dried beans and tuna which is currently allowed on the women exclusively breastfeeding package.

The West Virginia State WIC Program appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations on the revising of the WIC food packages.

Sincerely,



Denise Ferris, RD, LD, Dr. PH
Director, Nutrition Services