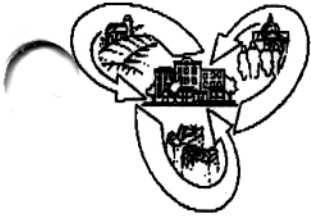


Community Food Security Coalition

PI-12



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Ms. Patricia Daniels
Director, WIC
Food and Nutrition Service
Department of Agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520
Alexandria, Virginia 22302-1594

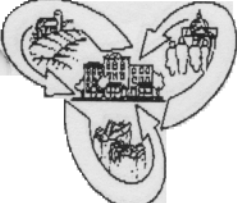
Dear Ms. Daniels,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the forthcoming review of the WIC Supplemental Nutrition Package.

The Community Food Security Coalition is a national alliance of over 250 organizations engaged in activities that support family farmers, prevent hunger, build community, and promote health. We are the leading advocate for comprehensive community-based solutions to the nation's obesity epidemic and family farming crisis. The CFSC has also played an instrumental role in the creation of the Community Food Projects Program and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

The CFSC supports the Institute of Medicine's efforts to align the WIC package with up-to-date nutritional standards. Undoubtedly, the debate will address whether additional fruits and vegetables should be added to the package, as so few children eat the USDA daily recommended allowance of these nutritious foods. We support the addition of fruits and vegetables to the WIC food package, as well as additional funding to do so. More specifically, we also believe that produce should be sourced whenever possible through the existing WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Maximizing nutritional quality requires more than simply adding fruits and vegetables to the package. It also requires considering the source of these foods. Recent studies have indicated that quality produce is often unavailable at grocery stores in low income communities. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program facilitates access to the highest quality produce while providing crucial education about the preparation of such fruits and vegetables. Each participant receives between ten and twenty dollars' worth of coupons with which to purchase fresh produce. In 2002 alone, nearly 2.4 million WIC clients received farmers' market coupons.



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"IMPACT: WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program 2002 Report" includes a survey of 24,800 recipients in 30 FMNP programs. The results reveal just how much the program facilitates fruit and vegetable consumption. Consider these findings:

- **FMNP increases access to quality produce:** Ninety-four percent of respondents surveyed said that the farmers' market produce was "as good as or better than the produce found in their local grocery store."
- **FMNP improves the diets of clients and motivates them to purchase produce outside of the program:** Seventy-three percent of respondents surveyed said they ate more fresh produce than usual because of the program and spent money at the market besides their coupons. Additionally, nearly 80% of respondents said they plan to eat more fresh produce throughout the year.
- **FMNP provides effective nutrition education:** Approximately half of respondents responded positively to each of the following:
 - 1) "I learned a new way to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables."
 - 2) "I learned a new way to store produce to prevent spoilage."
 - 3) "I bought a fruit or vegetable that they had never tried before."

Cooperative Extension agents, chefs, and, of course, the farmers themselves provided nutrition education and cooking tips at some markets.

Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among nutritionally at-risk mothers and children is an important investment. The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) maximizes this investment. We encourage its optimum seasonal use in any fruit and vegetable increases the Institute of Medicine recommends.

On behalf of the Community Food Security Coalition's 265 member organizations, I thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Sincerely,



Andy Fisher
Executive Director