

December 15, 2003

Patricia Daniels
USDA, Director, WIC
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

Dear Ms. Daniels:

I am writing about the "Revisions to the WIC Food Package."

I. Retain the current package. I have worked in the community for many years, with women and families who depend on WIC to supplement their food budgets and provide adequate nutrition for their children. This package has been a key building block for good health. All the foods currently in the WIC food packages provide important nutrients and they should all be available.

II. Fruits and Vegetables. The package has been around for more than 20 years, and one thing we have learned since then is that fruits and vegetables provide crucial nutrients for a healthy diet. In fact, several researchers have found that our obesity problem would be substantially lessened if we substituted fruits and vegetables in our diets for the high fat and sugar prepared foods we eat now. Several of the non-European cultures in America would appreciate more fruits and vegetables, also.

Therefore, I strongly recommend adding fruits and vegetables to the package. These may be fresh or packaged fruits and vegetables. It's critical that children develop a taste for these foods early in life.

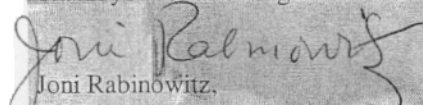
III. Expand culturally acceptable food options. Soy products (soy drink and tofu) are preferred by many cultures in America today, and many children are lactose intolerant.

IV. Don't add bread and starch. Adding more starch and bread products would not improve the food packages. People buy these low-cost foods as staples, anyway, and they are unlikely to have a positive impact on the nutritional status of WIC clients. Do not add these products.

V. More convenient packaging. Some families need smaller packages of cheese, juice, milk and cereal if their meals are not prepared at home. They might be taking food to a child care provider or to an appointment which requires eating lunch away from home.

VI. Finally, although this is not officially part of the food package, we have found the **Farmers Market Nutrition Coupons** invaluable for introducing young families to new and healthier food. Please do not eliminate this program.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you.


Joni Rabinowitz,
Co-Director of Just Harvest

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