**USDA Finalizes Changes to the WIC Program, Expanding Access to Healthy Fruits and Vegetables, Whole Grains, and Low-Fat Dairy for Women, Infants, and Children**

Washington, D.C., Feb. 28, 2014 – The U. S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) today finalized changes to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to further improve the nutrition and health of the nation’s low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and young children. The changes – which increase access to healthy fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy– are based on the latest nutrition science, and mark the completion of the first comprehensive revisions to the WIC food packages since 1980.

“The foods provided by the WIC program, along with the breastfeeding and nutrition education, are essential to supporting the nutritional needs of low-income and nutritionally at-risk women, infants and children, and strengthening the health of our next generation,” said Kevin Concannon, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. “The revisions announced today are pivotal improvements to the program and better meet the diverse needs of America’s women, infants and children.”

Along with a more than 30 percent increase in the dollar amount for children’s fruits and vegetables purchases, the final standards also:

* expand whole grain options available to participants,
* provide yogurt as a partial milk substitute for children and women,
* allow parents of older infants to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables instead of jarred infant food if they choose, and;
* give States and local WIC agencies more flexibility to meet the nutritional and cultural needs of WIC participants.

The revisions reflect public comments submitted in response to the first major changes in more than 30 years that were published as interim requirements in December 2007, which revised regulations governing WIC foods to align them more closely with updated nutrition science, recommendations of the National Academies’ Institute of Medicine and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the Federal government’s benchmark for healthy eating and nutrition.

WIC provides low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five with nutritious, supplemental foods. The program also provides nutrition and breastfeeding education and referrals to health and social services. Over 8.5 million participants receive WIC benefits each month. Recent research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified changes to the WIC food packages as a contributing factor in the decline in obesity rates among low-income preschoolers in many States.

More information about the changes and the WIC program can be found at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic).

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service administers 15 nutrition assistance programs. In addition to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for [Women, Infants and Children](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic), these programs include the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap), [National School Lunch Program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/), and the [Summer Food Service Program](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/) which together comprise America's nutrition safety net. For more information, visit [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov).

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