

FRESH PRODUCE PROCUREMENT REFORM ACT

Utilizing the Fresh Produce Supply Chain to Address Nutrition Insecurity

Overview

On average, USDA purchases around \$2 billion annually of domestic commodities to redistribute to feeding sites around the country. USDA Foods state data show that of the \$560 million that was spent on fruits and vegetables in Fiscal Year 2020, fresh-to-consumer fruits and vegetables accounted for only \$6.5 million (spread across just three varieties). USDA's long-standing model for food procurement is simply not built to efficiently and effectively move perishable fresh fruits and vegetables. Yet, demand around the country at food banks and other nonprofits serving the nutrition insecure remains high for fresh produce.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act allocated funding for USDA to address food insecurity, which led to USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service implementing an emergency response purchasing program that circumvented the traditional USDA procurement model and utilized the existing fresh produce supply chain to procure, pack and deliver consumer-ready fresh produce to those in need. While the effort had its shortcomings, the lessons learned served as a model on how to build a more nimble, responsive, and inclusive distribution tool for fresh produce. The Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act, introduced by Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), would direct USDA to implement a new fresh produce purchasing program that unlocks the potential of our diverse local and regional supply chains to distribute the bounty of U.S. grown fresh produce to those in need.

How it would work

- **USDA partners with existing growers, distributors, and food hubs** to purchase, pack and deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to local food banks, schools, youth-serving organizations, tribal governments, and other nonprofit community members serving nutrition insecure populations.
- **Recipients would have access to a wide variety of U.S.-grown fresh fruits and vegetables** guided by Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations, featuring local produce when seasonally and geographically available.
- **USDA would consider values other than lowest-cost bid** in awarding contracts, providing opportunities for a wider variety of high-quality produce sourced, packed and distributed from growers and distributors of all sizes, including veteran, women-owned, and socially-disadvantaged members of the agriculture community.

Endorsed by:

American Heart Association • Boys and Girls Club of America • National Sustainable Agricultural Coalition • Save the Children • United Fresh Produce Association

To cosponsor, please contact Christian Lovell in Rep. DeLauro's office. Christian.Lovell@mail.house.gov